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Handloom Industry in the District of Pabna

The Bengal Pact, 1923

Jasim Uddin's Creative World

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# Language Planning of an Ethnic Minority Group of Bangladesh : The Chakma

Maniruzzaman

The ethnic minorities of Bangladesh are gaining their political importance in recent times. Any attempt of planning their speech is subject to a sensitive reaction. However, by way of narrating the situation and giving alternate suggestions from an academic point of view, we shall indicate the direction of change from the point of view of language planning.

The tribal people of Bangladesh are varied in terms of their ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic characteristics. They are scattered in the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Tangail, Mymensingh and Sylhet in the northern and eastern part of the country. The most significant concentration is however in the south eastern district of Chittagong Hill Tracts (hereafter CHT)<sup>1</sup>.

My choice of the ethnic group, the *Chakmas*, here is due partly to the fact that it is the major tribe of Bangladesh and partly because of my early experience with them while working on the Chakma phonology of their language (Maniruzzaman, 1980).

Studying languages scientifically in this part of the world is still a recent phenomenon. One may have informations in Grierson (1903), Chatterji (1926) and Hai (1965) but the actual language situation has never been studied in depth and in a scientific manner. Government's participation as regards this has always been negative. Regarding the ethnic minorities, there was no policy as such. Studying the situation and planning the language in the perspective of Bangladesh situation would be a timely step in this regard. It will also help in minimising the group tensions which will otherwise pose problem to the planners as well as the politicians. In the mosaic of the Bangladesh culture, the small but significant components must be recognised in the framework of principle of unity in diversity.

Linguists advocate three processes in language planning. First, the ethnic groups or the ethno-political community divided into sub-groups on the basis of language varieties they use constitute a *supra-group* and

their vernacular acts as the binding factor. Fishman (1971) calls it the 'unified symbol'.

To deal with this point a short background of this group would be necessary.

Originally a Tibeto-Burmese race, the Chakmas adopted Buddhism as their religion with an admixture of their original practice, found a kind of centilo society divided into *Gozas* or kinship clans and spread all over the district. The ritual practices of the clans vary from wearing the Brahminical thread to taking Muslim proper names, especially in the fashion of women's last names (viz. Chand Bi etc.). These people have been living there for several hundred years approximating sovereignities. Intrusion of Government apparatus from outside dates back only 100 years (vide Bengal Govt. Act XXII, 1860). Pakistan Government's policy was same as it was during the British time untill 1960 when the Kaptai Dam over the Karnafully with US aid was constructed. It was a major catastrophe for the people of CHT, especially for the Chakmas. This caused inundation of 50,000 acres of cultivable land (40% of the total areas in the district) and made 90% of the Chakmas homeless. As a consequence, Almut May (1968 : 3) reports that, 40,000 Chakmas migrated to the neighbouring Indian States. The present population is about 4 lacs. The district headquarters is at Rangamati which had previously been the administrative headquarters of the Chakma Kings.

Further changes took place since Bangladesh came into being. First was the withdrawal of the special status of CHT. In view of the change brought about by the emergence of Bangladesh as a new nation, the general status hitherto enjoyed by the Chakma kings seem to have undergone certain procedural and formalistic changes, but a sort of distinct status of an ethnic group is not altogether absent. Government has also introduced a dual system of administrative authority there. It is evident from the fact that while revenue in all Bangladesh districts is collected by regular government bureaucracy, it is done by Chakma clan leaders in CHT (Chowdhury *et al* 1979 : 157-8-, 169 pp, 186 pp, 231).

Second, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman advised the tribals to become Bengalee. Of course it did not mean giving up their ethnic distinction (See Siraj *et al* 1980 : 7), but simply to belong to the larger political entity as citizens of Bangladesh. Third, during and before the present regime a large number of outsiders settled in Ramgarh, Feni Velly and in other places including Rangamati area, with the assistance of the government. Many tribals were either killed or driven out by these settlers. The shifting cultivation (*Jhum*) has been threatened too by settled cultivation (see Wolfgang May 1980). And lastly the brutal killings in Kalampati,

near Betbunia micro wave transmission centre, operated by the military troops in the name of destroying the insurgent stronghold may also be mentioned here.

All these developments found expressions in the demand of autonomy and recognition of the ethnic entity, of course, within the Bangladesh state framework (see Investigation team's report in Seraj *et al* 1980 : 8). The seed was already existing in this part of the subcontinent (see Hamdi Beg, B. Datta Roy, L. P. Vidyarthi and others' papers read in a national seminar on the problem of integration in the border regions and published in Rafiq Khan 1970). The government's policies in the respective countries where such problems existed, perhaps, may have been made responsible for this. The approach has been basically uniform throughout the world for the last 150 years (Bodley 1974 : 166).

The role of Chakma language has a decisive role here in a number of ways. The sense of the cultural identity and cultural distinction among the young educated Chakmas is reflected in such expressions as the Chakmas are a special ethnic group in Bangladesh, 'Ours is a rich and ancient language', 'Both Bengali and Chakma have evolved from the same source viz, the Prakrit, but independently of each other,' and 'that Chakma is not broken Bengali'.

It is interesting that the Chakmas are looking out for a cultural identification heightened by an identity crisis, at a time when the Bangladeshis themselves have been engaged in locating their source of 'origin' (See Anisuzzaman 1976, Umar 1970). At any rate such cultural revivalism must recognise certain limitation in the formative phase of nation building and the language planning of ethnic group.

Fishman's second point of consideration in Language Planning is *Authentification*. Proper authentification of the proforma is needed for better result. Government, Academic agencies or the personal references of institutional nature act as tools here for the process. It may act in a reverse way too.

Government had never any programme of meeting the demand of the linguistic minorities who form very microscopic minority groups in terms of demographic distribution in the country. The Constitution is silent about their languages. In section 23 of Part II however, the participation from all the sections of people is urged for fostering and improving the national language i.e. Bengali and it was ensured that, 'the state shall adopt measures to conserve the cultural traditions and heritage of the people.' From the Census Reports as well as a recent study done in the University of Chittagong (Choudhury *et al* 1979 : 33), we come to know about the existence of about 13 tribes in CHT alone

having separate languages mostly belonging to Sino-Tibetan group or others.

We may discuss here about the government's policy of educating these groups in the present time. The National Curriculum Committee drew up a curriculum for the Primary and Secondary education in the country. It introduced English from class III and reintroduced religious instructions (Committee Report 1977, 1978). It has introduced the use of the *chalit* style or the standard colloquial Bengali replacing the *Sadhu* style. Vernacular studies have been ignored here too. The dialects or the tribal languages remained only to be studied on individual initiative.

The planning section for the Primary Education in the CHT has a programme of establishing 383 schools with 119 tubewells at a cost of Tk. 76 lacs 56 thousand 4 hundreds. Out of this Tk. 55 lacs 28 thousand have been allocated and Taka 41 lacs have been utilised for 99 schools which have been completed and 16 new units of 4th grade (category) have been nationalised (data given by the ADPI Planning at an interview on 21-5-80). In all these schools the medium of instructions is the same and the prescribed religious and other books are published by the Text Book Board, Dhaka.

In the secondary education, the Govt. policy is to have one school for the boys and one for the girls in each Thana. There are 350 rural thanas but practically there are 550 schools. However, Tk. 21 crores have been allocated in the present budget for this purpose. How much the tribal students got out of it is yet to be seen.

In the Mass Media, the tribal cultures are focussed occasionally. The participants are very often some known voices or faces only. The singers and dancers in the TV add nothing beyond a variety that may have some entertainment value for viewers. The ethnological Museums preserve some general samples only. Institutes like Bangla Academy had never undertaken any programme towards collecting or developing materials from amongst these ethnic groups.

However, the establishment of the three Tribal Cultural Academics in 1978 mark a break in the above situation. The one established in Rangamati has by now collected a number of folk cum ethnic materials from CHT. However their publications are all in Bengali only and the collections cannot be said to have been done on a scientific basis or by trained collectors.

The role of the kings may also be referred to here. In the Chakma king's residence, there was a good library. A good number of Chakma scripts and other materials related to this speech was collected and kept there. During the time of Queen *Kalindi* towards 1382 B. S. (Bengali

year) there was a total break in the history of patronising Chakma language and culture. It was at her instruction that the poet Nil Kamal translated the religious text *Thaduttoang* into Bengali. This Bengali version was edited and published by Abdul Hakim Mia, Headmaster of the Rangamati H. E. School shortly after the death of the queen and was named as *Buddha Ranjika*. The royal family also brought out journals like the *Parvatya Vani* and the *Gairika*.

Among the Associations, especially among the younger generation of the Chakmas, the activities of the Jumia Bhasa Publicity Daptar (JBPD) deserves a special mention here. Salil Ray's collection of the *Uva geet* and other folk songs published in the *Parvatya Vani* in a series brought about a sense of cultural distinction among the educated Chakmas. The JBPD published a number of books and leaflets in Bengali or in Bengali script including a bilingual (Chakma-Bengali) dictionary and a history of Chakma Language and its Phonology (Sugoto Chakma 1973, 1974a, 1974b). A collection of modern Chakma poems in Bengali script, titled as *Ranjuni* the 'Rainbow', was also brought out from this organisation in 1974.

The increase of education and interactions among them obviously make the Chakma people feel for their language in terms of a state of common level of development or at least a recognition. In the process of *Modernisation*, as Fishman theorises it, it is to be a must for every language entering such a state. Providing the technological aids, choice of style or simplifying the language are some of the requirements made in the process.

However, the Chakma problem can better be looked at from the point of view of the identity crisis. In other words, it is a problem of their relationship with the sister tribes, and their languages on the one side, and the Bengalees, Bengali language and script on the other.

It is interesting to note that they want to shrugg off any relationship they have with the Mags or the Kukis, so far as language is concerned. Though in the border area there are instances of Aryan groups heavily influenced by the Sino-Tibetan languages (viz. *Myang* in Manipur), the Chakmas being a Tibeto-Burmese race, never admit of having any non-Aryan vocables current in them. The publication of the Dictionary 'Changma-Bangla Kadatara' by the JBPD (see 'Preface', Sugoto Chakma 1973) and the discussions in Dewan (1978: 124-5) etc. suggest the above theory. Dewan clearly states that only three words of Mag-origin (*Keyang*, 'the temple', *thamaytong* 'heap of rice served on religious occasions' and *fara* 'referring to Buddha') are to be found current in Chakma. However, the old place and river names also seem to be of Tibeto-Burmese origin. Language of their religious texts are yet to be decided. The gender marker {Pa}{M}/{Pi}{F} in the Manipuri languages

seems to have its counterpart {a} (M)/ {bi} (F) in Chakma. Moreover, Chakma never shows the cerebral series and the distribution of the affricate [c] is also limited to final position and in geminate form only. (For details see Maniruzzaman 1980).

In determining the relationship between Chakma and Bengali, a review of the earlier history has been referred to. This history had been reconstructed by the foreigners from a number of sources and is now made available in Sattar (1963), Dewan (1978), Chowdhury *et al* (1979: 35-8) and others. According to some, the Chakmas are the migrants from the Arakan and akin to Mags. According to others they are of Mongoloid origin, coming from the foot-hills of the Himalayas. Still others are of the opinion that they were originally Mughal Muslims, made a cross-current race to Arakan or upper Burma after a defeat in war. Their offsprings came later to be known as the *tsak*. The suffix *-ma* stands here for 'kingly origin'.

The existence of many theories based on popular beliefs and unsupported evidences only leads one to believe that they are an unknown race with a Tibeto-Burmese substratum. However, the younger generation views it from a different angle and puts forward the theory that they were the kings of the *Sakya House* of the Eastern Magadhan Empire and spread upto the upper Burma through some smaller tribal states of the Western Assam and Tripura (Sugoto 1974).

This genetic theory gave rise to a linguistic theory about the classification or subgrouping of the Chakma language and its development, showing its origin to be different from that of Bengali. Referring to the Assamese, a Tibeto-Burmese mixed group adopting a NIA language, the Chakma protagonist (Sugoto 1974) wants to establish the theory that the phonetic similarities with the Assamese on the one side and the morphological and lexical similarities with the Bihari group of languages on the other (and also syntactical similarities with the Pali) give evidence that Chakma sprang up from the NIA (Eastern) group of language and closely related to the Western Magadhan languages through the Assamese. It became isolated and developed independently of Bengali. However due to a created bilingual situation, the prestigious Bengali has gradually replaced Chakma in many a domain of language use. Sugoto Chakma (1974), Surid Chakma (1386), Dewan (1978) and others argue in favour of the above framework with differences in the minor details only. This claim is made both from the point of view of establishing a new identity with emotional bonds with the neighbouring languages and from the desire of putting forward a new linguistic theory.

The problem is not separated from its writing system. Bengal had a tradition of developing regional scripts. The Sylheti 'Nagari Script'

can be cited here as an instance. It was written in Arabic script too in Chittagong and other places. Similarly a Chakma script quite similar to a Khmer script was also found in practice. Some historical anecdotes and religious texts were written in this script. Hutchinson (1876: 49) added that some Pali excerpts from an unknown language was transliterated in Chakma script. But so long the general tendency was never against the dominant Bengali script.

The dominant script has integrative potentialities and is practical from linguistic point of view for easy acquisition in terms of economy of time, effort and cost of typing-printing. We know of Bengali-Assamese, Hindi-Marathi, Kannada-Telugu and other situations, accommodating two languages in a single writing system on the basis of tolerance than conflict. The group tension in this regard has been looked at as uneconomic and unpractical and linguistically unsound.

Current attitude among the non-literate linguistic minorities is however different from that of the above. It is to exaggerate the minor differences in order to assert their different identities. Thus we come to a situation where we find cases of Santhali, Kurux, Tulu, Bodhi, Bodo or Sora and others claiming different scripts. They are posing problems both to language planners and the politicians (Pattanayak 1977b). Generally such cases involve sentiments which contend that a speech form having a separate script is a separate language altogether. In other words, a speech form is not a language unless it has a script. Chakma shows almost a similar attitude. The Sylhetis do not suffer from any identity crisis but the Chakmas do.

The Chakma script is therefore favoured as the proper vehicle for the language and demand grew up for its development and saving it from extinction.

The protagonists of reintroducing this Chakma script have their own suggestions.

Traditionally there are 33 letters in Chakma (Grierson 1903 : 321). *ā* is treated as much the same way as the letter *Alif* in Arabic. There are altogether four vowels and one diphthong. However there are *matras* or signs for all vowels found in the Bengali alphabet. The letter *ch* is often pronounced either *c* or *s* in different positions. The compound letters with *yā* or *rā* etc. have also forms other than demonstrated in the alphabet chart. Cerebral letters are regularly converted to denti-alveolars. This character is derived from a form of *khmer* which was current in south India in the 16th and 17th century (Grierson 1903 : 321) and in spite of the resemblance between the two, the point of difference in the inherent vowel of the Chakma alphabet is *ā* and not *a*.

Of late, Dewan (1978:17), Surid Chakma (1979), Sraddha Lankar Sraman (1979) and Sugoto Chakma (1974:4) suggest various changes in the chart. Sugoto's view will be discussed later on. Dewan gives the number as 37 and others as 40. In the Sraman's chart, letters for the aspirate stop sounds both in voiced and voiceless series except *Th* and *th* and also for *j*, *z* and *r* look different and simple. Surid, however, differs from him as regards the above.

Following Noaram Chakma (nodate), Sugoto Chakma looked at the problem from a different point of view. He worked out a 30 letters system. Later on he added 3 more characters which were never mentioned before. Thus he shows a series of aspirated counterparts of the nasals (*m*, *n*), laterals, trill and also a tense form of the alveolars (voiceless *t* and *th*). No letter for the retroflex sounds are incorporated in his scheme.

All these proposals for reforms, however were made in individual capacities. From these attempts one point is clear that there is a search for a way of establishing this script on a scientific base. But still it seems they are not free from a wrong idea about the writing system. Pattanayak rightly points out that writing is endowed with magical power in popular mind and has lead to the belief that script is the soul of a language. Just on the basis of this it is easy to stir people emotionally especially on the question of separate identity.

From the above discussions we may summarise the problems in the following way.

1. With the advent of education, the modern or bilingual educated Chakmas are gaining a prestigious position in their society and they feel the urge to develop a separate identity.
2. Govt. policies never favoured this changing attitude among the Chakmas, so the friction is growing. The intrusions of the outsiders into their land and free society has stirred the Chakmas a great deal.
3. In education the position of vernacular has never been a subject of discussion and it has remained a subject of use in intimate domains.
4. A switching over process from the vernacular to the school language, thus providing pace for a balance in the education and language groups has now been felt necessary.
5. Demand grew up among the minority language group for developing their own script system, saving it from extinction and simultaneously checking its failures in spreading literacy. Both graphization and ensuring provisions for gaining potentialities (through a process of making literatures available, publishing dictionaries,

and other materials of linguistic importance) are being provided in the above cause. The old manuscripts and the bulk of unwritten literature are now becoming a subject of serious concern.

Any planning entails an alternate suggestion and should give a proper view of its respective implications. As we have seen above the situation poses the following problems:

1. In making choice of language for every day's work, a *supra dialectal* spoken variety is preferred to the various Chakma dialects ( see Maniruzzaman 1980) used for interactions among the *Gozas* ( kinship clans). This may be called, choice *A*.
2. In a conscious situation where they are moving for their identity and status, they have a choice *B*. This is an extension of *A*. It is a situation like language conflict. Here the users are in favour of purism both on the speaking and writing levels. Hence the question of a separate script, *Chakma script*, is put forth.
3. In a third situation, where social interaction is necessary with the neighbouring tribes or the settlers, or the outsiders the choice goes for *C*. It demands *lingua franca*. A mixed Chittagonian dialect used in the bazars and meeting places is referred to here.

It may be mentioned here that the protagonists claim that Chakma was once used as a *lingua franca* in the whole region of the eastern part of the then Magadhan empire.

4. Another situation, *D*., prevails where the Chakma is being used in the dominant script in the country. Chakma creative and critical writings are being published in this script both within the CHT and outside.

All these A to D situations may be divided into main three levels:

1. Oral level
2. Written level
3. Written level extended.

In the oral level they are bilinguals. So is the case in level (3) where they are biscriptals. In the written level (2) the situation is as follows :

- a. People who can read and write both Chakma and Bengali.
- b. People who can read and/or write Bengali
- c. People who cannot read and write Bengali.

Nevertheless the majority language group has completely dominated the situation. The settlers also ignore the local language while they use or compel others to use the Chittagonian, a second *patois* of Bengali as the *lingua franca*. The Govt. policy is patronising Bengali

every where in the country. All these rather reflect pressures on the regional speech forms towards a unimodal and unidirectional change.

In a conclusion we can only say that there is immense scope of planning the Chakma language. All variables of the choices relevant to the community should be focussed. And making choice of any without thorough investigation into it, and examining its implication would lead the implementation agencies to nowhere. The Government which has given considerable importance to the development of ethnic culture may take up the subject for a serious consideration.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The district is situated between 21°.15' and 23°.45' north latitude and between 91°.45' and 92°.50' east longitude. It is the south easternmost district of Bangladesh. It extends over an area of 5,073 sq. miles from the forest hills of the Tripura state of India in the north to the border of the Akyab district of Burma in the south and from the Lusai hills and the Arakan mountains in the east to the coastal plains of Chittagong Division in the west. CHT was once a part of Chittagong district and was created as a separate district known as 'Chittagong Hill Tracts' on August 1, 1860 (B-G Act, 1860). Presently it has been divided into three separate administrative 'zillas', namely Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban. The density of population of these zillas per sq. miles is 100 whereas in other 'districts' it is about 1,000 or above. The tribes living in CHT are : Chakma, Mogh, Mro, Tipra, Kuki, Khumi, Lushei, Khyang, Reang, Bon, Pankhu etc.

*Collophone* : The author expresses his gratitude to Professor Anisuzzaman, Department of Bengali, Chittagong University and Dr. D. P. Pattanayak, Director, CIIL, Mysore (India) for going through the earlier version of this paper and making valuable comments. The author is also grateful to Professor M. Anisuzzaman, Ex-Chairman, Department of Public Administration, Chittagong University and Mr. Aditya Dewan Asstt. Professor, Department of Sociology for helping me with some valuable materials in preparing the paper.

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# Lindsay's View of Democracy and its Applicability in the Developing Countries

M. Ayeshuddin

Though democracy as a political concept is as old as human civilisation, the modern democratic state as understood by A.D. Lindsay<sup>1</sup> and many others<sup>2</sup> is comparatively of recent origin. Lindsay views the modern democratic state, nay democracy itself, from an angle of vision as is hardly older than the nineteenth century. In fact, it is in Lindsay's idea of democracy that the ordinary plain man finds himself in his just and proper perspective.

## Democracy—A Theory of Society

It is a common belief and a host of definitions of democracy<sup>3</sup> vouchsafe this belief that democracy is only a form of government. The upholders of this belief find its essence in the extent of franchise and the character of the electoral system prevailing in a country.<sup>4</sup> But A.D. Lindsay declares that "democracy is a theory of society as well as a theory of Government. If the end of the state is to serve the community and

<sup>1</sup>A. D. Lindsay, later Lord Lindsay of Birker, was born in Scotland in 1879 but he lived most of his life in England. "In many ways, Lindsay's life followed the pattern originated by such Oxford Idealist philosophers as T.H. Green; in other ways, he followed the lead of Benjamin Jowett, perhaps the most famous of Lindsay's predecessors as Master of Balliol". (Melvin Richter in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. Macmillan & Co. 1968, Vol. IX, p. 307) Among his works on democracy *The Modern Democratic State* (1943) was the best. He died in 1952.

<sup>2</sup>Among others who held the views almost similar to that of Lindsay we may mention the names of R.M. McIver, H. J. Laski, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, G.D.H. Cole, Graham Wallas, Ernest Barker, Arnold Toynbee and R.A. Dahl.

<sup>3</sup>Dr J.P. Suda mentions the names of Sir Henry Maine for whom democracy is 'simply and solely a form of government'; of James Russell Lowell to whom it is 'nothing more than an experiment in government'; of Lincoln who defines it as, 'the government of the people, by the people, and for the people'; and of Lord James Bryce who says that, 'in its old and strict sense, it denotes a form of government in which the will of the majority of qualified citizens rules' *A History of Political Thought*, Vol. IV (Recent Times), Meerat K. Nath & Co. 1974, p. 335.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 334.

to make it more of a community, that will mean in a democracy making it more of a democratic community".<sup>5</sup>

He says elsewhere that "Democracy is not just a constitutional theory, a view as to how Governments are to be constituted; is not simply concerned with questions about adult suffrage and parliament or congress, and the relation of the executive to the popularly elected representatives and so on. These are matters of democratic machinery. Democracy is a theory of society. Its conception of the nature of Government follows from its conception of the place of Government in a democratic society . . . It cannot abide a government which tries to absorb into itself all the power and interests and purposes of the community—for its most essential belief is that the state exists to serve, not to absorb, society".<sup>6</sup>

### Need of Skill and Knowledge in Democracy

After making it clear that democracy is not only a theory of government but a theory of society as well Lindsay proceeds to show how democracy spells itself out in a vast society of today. "Real democracy" he says, "when experienced in such a thoroughgoing and satisfactory form of government that men are always trying to extend it and to give it more to do. The tried success of democratic government in Europe and North America in the second half of the last century was accompanied by the extension of the area of democratic government, and an enormous increase in the functions which men expected democratic government to perform . . . . And all the time their area was specialised . . . . needing expert skill and trained specialised knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

Lindsay further maintains that function of the state is to serve the community, to remove the disharmonies which threaten its common life and to make it more of a community.<sup>8</sup> As the life of a modern community has grown very much complex and delicate the question has very pertinently been asked if it is possible for the ordinary democratic machinery to serve this community. Lindsay answers this question in the way that, the task of the government of a democratic society implies a wisdom and understanding of the complicated life of modern societies very far remo-

<sup>5</sup>*The Modern Democratic State*. (New York : Oxford University Press, 1962—a Galaxy Book), p. 249.

<sup>6</sup>A. D. Lindsay, *I Believe in Democracy* (London : Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>*The Essentials of Democracy* (London : Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 8.

The view of Professor Arnold Toynbee is worth-mentioning in this connection. He says : "The world's electorate has been diluted with an overwhelming majority of . . . helpless voters at a time when public affairs have become much more difficult to understand . . ." *Democracy In the Atomic Age* (Melbourne : Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>*The Modern Democratic State*, p. 249.

ved from the simple 'horse sense' which is sufficient for the running of small and simple democracies. It is clear that a modern state can do its job only with a lot of expert help, expert statesmen, expert administrators.<sup>9</sup>

He says earlier that if democracy is to survive it will have to employ and use every bit of skill and leadership it can hold of. This complicated interdependent modern world in which we are living cannot be run without knowledge and skill, foresight and leadership.<sup>10</sup> But he adds to it that "A modern democratic state is only possible if it can combine appreciation of skill, knowledge and expertness with a reverence for common humanity of everyday people."<sup>11</sup> Not only that he says very emphatically that those who have power and expert knowledge are to serve the community and be controlled by the ordinary people who have neither power nor knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

### The Ordinary Plain Man in Democracy

If administration of modern democratic state is overwhelmingly a matter of "skill, knowledge and expertness," how does then an ordinary plain man come in picture? If this plain man is incapable of this "skill, knowledge and expertness," "what is the justification" asks Lindsay "of submitting the expert work of all these superior people to the control of the ordinary voter"?<sup>13</sup> We recognise that the man in the street cannot, in the strict sense of the word, govern a modern state. The ordinary person has not the knowledge, the judgement, or the skill to deal with the intricate problems which modern government involves.

It is here that the crux of the problem starts. The totalitarian doctrines of the present century<sup>14</sup> draw their inspirations mainly from this simple fact that since the ordinary person has not the knowledge, the judgement

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 261

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 281

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>14</sup>Fascism of Italy, National Socialism (Nazism) of Germany and Communism of Soviet Russia are the three most typical doctrines of totalitarianism of the twentieth century. For a fuller exposition of these doctrines reference may be made to William Ebenstein's *Today's Isms : Communism, Fascism, Socialism, Capitalism* ; 4th ed. (New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1964) ; W. M. McGovern's *From Luther to Hitler—The history of Fascist-Nazi Political Philosophy*, (Cambridge : Houghton Mifflin Co., 1941). Those who are interested in a comparatively brief but compact account may refer to Peter H. Merkl's *Political Continuity and Change* (New York : Harper & Row, Inc. 1967) Part III, Chapters 13 and 14.

or the skill to deal with the intricate problems which modern government involves he deserves only to be controlled by the authority of the government and not himself to control the government. The totalitarians believe "It is possible, as Nazi Germany has shown, for a government to get such control over the minds and wills of a people and to have imposed such discipline upon them, that they, the government, can make their wind about what they intend the nation to do and then make their people ready to undergo almost any sacrifices in obedience to their will."<sup>15</sup>

But A.D. Lindsay spurns with contempt this audacious claim of totalitarianism and emphatically asserts that "a democratic people is not disciplined in that way".<sup>16</sup> He says, "we are clearly conscious that the system of government which has arisen in Germany is not only undemocratic, but the contrary of democracy, with which its whole spirit and method is at fundamental odds".<sup>17</sup>

But it is a great effrontery that those totalitarian states call themselves democratic. "The Soviet Communists have appropriated that label 'democracy' because it arouses so many favourable feelings, but have cleverly given it quite different meanings. Elsewhere in the world too, dozens of other groups do the same, until we may well wonder—half sadly, half cynically—whether language is not more useful at hindering rather than helping the communication of ideas".<sup>18</sup> "After three centuries of the march of democracy, . . . civilisation has finally arrived in an age almost universally beholden to at the word democracy. Even dictators pay lip-service to democracy and communist countries call themselves 'people' democracies".<sup>19</sup> To prove the hollowness of the claim of democracy by the totalitarian states Lindsay says "Hitler has from time to time taken a referendum of their German people, and has secured overwhelming majorities every time. We might have something to say about the methods of intimidation by which such majorities were secured, but we should not feel that plebiscites

<sup>15</sup>*The Modern Democratic State*, p. 274.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*I Believe In Democracy*, p. 6. [First in the series of radio broadcasts in the BBC Empire Programme, 1940. In this broadcast Lindsay enumerates the fundamental odds as (1) totalitarian concept of National Socialism, (2) Its concentration of authority, (3) Lack of any such will as can dispute the will of the government, (4) absence of opposition parties, of independent trade unions, of free press, of free school, of free cooperation movement etc. and (5) lack of opportunities for organised criticism and independent discussion.]

<sup>18</sup>H.B. Mayo *An Introduction to Democratic Theory*, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Peter H. Merkl, *Political Continuity and Change* (New York : Harper & Row, 1967), p. 94. Prof. Merkl by applying four major tests of liberal democracy has successfully unmasked the pretentious claims of the totalitarian dictators to be democratic. (Vide pages 95 to 101).

even without intimidation made the regime democratic. A man might freely sell himself into slavery: he would still be a slave; and the same is true of a nation".<sup>20</sup>

### Wisdom of the Plain Man

Thus emphatically rejecting the claim of democracy by the totalitarian states and establishing beyond doubt that the liberal democracy of the West is the only real democracy, Lindsay moves ahead to give the justification of "submitting the expert work of the superior people to the control of the ordinary voters" in a modern democratic state. He says that "the ordinary plain people have a certain wisdom which is denied to the expert, that therefore they are the best judges of ends, if not of means".<sup>21</sup> He says further, "we all recognise that expert and technical knowledge must come from specialists—that the ordinary man or woman is not capable of judging the detail of legislative proposals. We say that public decides upon broad issues. That is what the working of modern democracy is supposed to imply. An election makes clear that the public insists, for example, that something pretty drastic must be done about unemployment, or that the United States should support Great Britain by all means 'short of war',<sup>22</sup> and so on. One party rather than another gets into power because the public broadly approves of its programme more than the programme of its rivals and judges well of its capacity to carry out its programme. The public is not supposed to have any views as to how that programme should be carried out but it is supposed to have decided that it prefers the main lines of one party's programme to another's".<sup>23</sup>

Government, in a democratic state, is actually run by the experts but under the broad control of the people. "In a democratic state", says Lindsay, "those who have power and expert knowledge are to serve the

<sup>20</sup>*I Believe in Democracy*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup>*The Modern Democratic State*, p. 276. Cf. Arnold J. Toynbee: "The political ideal of democracy assumes that ordinary adult human beings have the virtue to choose what is best, as well as the intelligence to see what is best" *Democracy In the Atomic Age—The Dyason Lectures*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) p. 7.

<sup>22</sup>In 1943 when *The Modern Democratic State* was published the Second World War was in the fullswing. The American Administration was confronted with the serious question as to whether to join Great Britain, or broadly speaking the Allied Powers, in the war efforts or not. The American electorate clearly demonstrated that the USA should support Great Britain by all means but should not be a party to the war. That is why America appeared very late in the scene in the Second World War.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 268. Cf. R.M. McIver: "Democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining who shall govern and, broadly to what ends".—*The Web of Government* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 198.

community and be controlled by the ordinary people who have neither power nor knowledge. The first problem of a democratic state is to ensure that government is kept to its proper task. Democracy is not, properly speaking, government by the people. For the people, if we mean by that, as we ought to mean, all the members of the society in all their multifarious relations, cannot govern."<sup>24</sup>

### Arguments in Favour of Ordinary Man's Control in Democracy

Lindsay believes that although the ordinary plain people or the men of the street have neither skill nor knowledge to govern they demonstrate through their votes such a rare virtue as lends greater soundness to the judgement pronounced by them. But it is not merely for this soundness of their judgement that they are allowed to exercise control over the expert. Lindsay places this control of the plain man on two solid arguments, viz., (1) the argument of 'shoe pinching' and (2) the argument of 'what the people are prepared to do'.<sup>25</sup>

#### (1) The Argument of 'Shoe Pinching'

The first argument is expressed by the famous proverb: 'Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches'. Lindsay says, "we can say when our shoes are pinching without making any pretensions to be able to make shoes. If someone said to us: 'who are you to judge shoes as compared with the expert shoe-maker who has been at the business all his life?' We should answer we don't pretend to be able to make shoes. We know we can't. We are quite prepared to take it from you that shoe is constructed on the best scientific principles. But however much you may say that it oughtn't to pinch my feet, the fact remains that it does, and it is for me to know that, and not for you".<sup>26</sup> This argument applies equally to government and legislation. Government and legislation need skill and wisdom; they need experts; but the skilled legislators and able administrators cannot tell whether their laws and arrangements really cure the grievances they are meant to cure.<sup>27</sup>

This argument is based on the assumption that "the end of the democratic government is to minister to the common life of the society, to remove the disharmonies that trouble it, then clearly a knowledge and understanding of that common life is a large part of knowledge essential to the statesman. But the common life is the life lived by all members of the society. It

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>26</sup>*I Believe In Democracy*, p., 15.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

cannot be fully known as appreciated from outside. It can only be known by those who live it. Its disharmonies are suffered and felt by individuals. It is their shoes that pinch and they only who can tell where they pinch".<sup>28</sup>

## (2) The Argument of 'What the People are Prepared to do'

The second argument of 'what the people are prepared to do' emanates from the apparent limitation of the first one *vis a vis* foreign policy of a country. On the basis of shoe-pinching argument the ordinary people claim control over the expert because none other than they have the better experience of the common life the interest of which the expert has to serve. Since "foreign policy involves a judgement as to how the internal life of the country is to be preserved from danger from abroad. . . the ordinary man or woman has on the argument of 'the shoe-pinching' no particular competence to control foreign policy".<sup>29</sup> Does it then imply that the foreign policy has to be left entirely to "his betters"?<sup>30</sup> It is obvious that no democrat would agree to it. But why?

In giving reply to the above "why?" Lindsay says, "Errors in foreign policy may mean that a country is faced with the threat of war which may mean that a country is faced with the threat of war which may involve, unless that threat is met in one way or another, the destruction of all in its life which its people hold dear. But there are only two conceivable ways in which a threat of war can be met and both involve the severest sacrifices falling on the ordinary men and women in the country".<sup>31</sup>

The two alternative ways of meeting the threat of war are either to accept the challenge and to resist it actively or to put up passive resistance. The second alternative i.e. the alternative of passive resistance is advocated by the extreme pacifists and has not till now been experimented anywhere in the world. But supposing it is put in experiment to meet the threat of war, is it less fraught with danger than the first one? The answer is emphatically in the negative. If the people are not prepared to accept the alternative of passive resistance and if they are not allowed to accept the challenge and actively resist it, it will simply spell a complete disaster for the country. So far as the first alternative is concerned that too cannot be resorted to unless the statesman is fully ensured that the people will favourably react to it.

Thus whatever alternative be resorted to no statesman has a right to commit his country to action unless he has reason to believe that the people will respond to the challenge which that action involves.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup>The Modern Democratic State, p. 269.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 272-273.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

### Lindsay's View

Lindsay therefore asserts in conclusion that because of these two cogent arguments and because the ordinary plain people possesses a wisdom by virtue of which he can better judge the ends, if not the means, and further because in democratic leadership "political wisdom needs more than anything else an understanding of the common life; and that wisdom is given not by expert knowledge but by a practical experience of life"<sup>33</sup> in a democratic state those who have power and expert knowledge are to serve the community and be controlled by the ordinary people who have neither power nor knowledge. The first problem of democratic state is to ensure that government is kept to its proper task. "Democracy is not, properly speaking, government by the people. For the people, if we mean by that as we ought to mean, all the members of society in all their multifarious relations, cannot govern".<sup>34</sup>

### Applicability of Lindsay's View in the Developing Countries

There is no gainsaying the fact that democracy of the sort described by Lindsay has been the cherished goal of mankind ever since its birth. But it has come to its fruition only partially in some countries of the world. Professor MacIver indeed very aptly said, "Democracy grows into its being. There may be centuries of growth before we can say, 'Now this state is a democracy'".<sup>35</sup>

There is, therefore, no doubt that we have still to go a long way to see the prevalence and predominance of the wisdom of the common man, as Lindsay said, in the governance of the affairs of the states. The violation of and the deviation from the democratic norms and values have been rampant, specially in the newly emerging and developing states of today. Personal absolutism, dynastic rule, ideological and party dictatorships, military intervention in politics and the like have been the commonplace phenomena even at the later half of the twentieth century. In many of the countries democratic institutions have been tried only to meet their dismal failure.

Of the various factors responsible for this failure of the democratic institution, in these countries the weaknesses on the part of the populace is, perhaps, the most important one. The people, in fact, in these countries, have not yet attained the extent of maturity and personal independence

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>35</sup>R.M. MacIver, *The Web of Government* (Rev. Ed. New York : The Free Press, 1966), p. 132.

as is necessary to exercise control and supervision over the experts, effectively and judiciously. If the individuals are not mentally and intellectually free it would be simply futile to expect that they would be politically free to exercise supervision over the administration in a democratic state. It is, of course, gratifying to note that the examples of such states as are at the low level of political culture<sup>36</sup> are not too many.

In most cases the failure of the democratic institutions has been due to the causes external to the bulk of the population of the state. In some cases and mainly in the totalitarian states the people have been put in a position of moral and intellectual bondage through elaborate use of propaganda and indoctrinating machinery. Here, in these countries, the people have been exposed to the pernicious influences of the modern science and technology as well.<sup>37</sup> This has, perhaps, also been true in most cases of the modern military dictatorships. Practical necessities of law and order and of economic stability might have some justification for the military regimes in some countries.<sup>38</sup> But in most cases the military intervention in politics has led to *defacto* situations where the people found themselves defenceless in the face of superior military might in terms of organisations and weapons.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the various shortcomings of democracy and particularly the non-realisation of the control of the common man in the political systems of the developing countries we have no reason to be pessimistic about the future of democracy and the popular control in the modern political systems, notwithstanding their intricate and complex nature today. It is not merely a wishful thinking that in these countries democracy will one day come to the stature in which it is found in some countries of the West and that the control of the ordinary man will be as firmly saddled as in these countries.

It will not be out of place to mention here that a positive trend has already been perceptively in process with the beginning of the study of 'political development' in these countries. The definition of 'political

<sup>36</sup>For a definition of 'Political Culture' see G.A. Almond and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture : Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1965), Ch. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Bertrand Russell, *The Impact of Science on Society* (London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1952).

<sup>38</sup>Such views are held by some scholars dealing with developing countries. See for example Samuel P. Huntington (ed.) *The Changing Pattern of Military Politics* (New York : The Free Press, 1962) ; Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations* ( Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1964).

<sup>39</sup>For strength and weaknesses and the cause of military intervention in Politics see Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback : The Role of the Military in Politics* (London : Pall Mall, 1962.)

development<sup>40</sup> has been numerous and diverse. It has been described as the function of many factors such as, economic development, industrial societies, political modernisation, operation of a nation state, administrative and legal development, mass mobilisation and participation, building of democracy, stability and orderly change and the multi-dimensional process of social change.<sup>41</sup> In this study scholars have identified six crises in the process of political development, namely, the identity crisis, the legitimacy crisis, the participation crisis, the penetration crisis, the integration crisis and the distribution crisis.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

In the ultimate analysis, however, political development connotes democratic development, that is, the development of the democratic ideal, values and institutions, such as, equality, participation, increased governmental capabilities and institution building. The future of democracy and the success of the principle of control of the ordinary man which Lindsay and others so emphatically stressed will, it is certain, largely depend upon the success of the political development in these countries because it is only through the process of development that the real development of the ideals and institutions of democracy and particularly of the concept of popular control in a modern political system can be brought to its fruition.

We can, therefore say in conclusion that it may take us centuries to arrive at the cherished goal but the goal we must arrive at. "The ex-colonial peoples of the world will be exposed to such dangers as they face the long ascent ahead. Self-seeking demagogues will attempt to lead them astray—through the lure of Communism, revolutionary nationalism, Fascism, nativist authoritarianism, or other substitute religions which respond to their yearning for a better life—to the short intoxication of rebellion, or to the long hangeover of dictatorship".<sup>43</sup> "But yet there is a real chance that the lasting promise of a dignified life (for the common man embodied in their broad supervisory control over the government) which democracy holds",<sup>44</sup> will gain in appeal and will lead us to ultimate triumph as the developing countries of the world grow to their adulthood through the process of development.

<sup>40</sup>For definitions see Myron Weiner (ed.) *Modernisation* (New York : Basic Books, Inc. 1966) ; Joseph La Palombara (ed.) *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1963).

<sup>41</sup>See L.W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1966), pp. 31-45.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid* ; pp. 62-66.

<sup>43</sup>Peter H. Merkl, *Political Continuity and Change* (New York : Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), pp. 93-94.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid*, p. 94. (the words in the brackets are the author's own).

# “Evolution of the Union Parishad as a Rural Self-Government Unit in Bangladesh”

Md. Moksudur Rahman

## Introduction

There is a four tier system of local self-government for the rural areas in Bangladesh, i. e. the *Zilla Parishad*, the *Thana Parishad*, the Union Parishad and the *Gram Sarker* (Village Government). Still to-day no Zilla and Thana Parishads have been established at the district and thana levels respectively instead of provisions in the Local Government Ordinance of 1976. On the other hand the Gram Sarker is under criticism and the government is re-examing its feasibility.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Union Parishad is the only rural self-governing institution.<sup>2</sup> The representatives of this body are directly elected by the local people and in the system of rural self-government, the Union Parishad has attained a significant position.

The Union Parishad of our country has come to the present form through a process of gradual evolution over a long period of time during which the Mughals, the British and the Pakistan government ruled this territory. It has indeed, a long historical past.

Since time immemorial the *Gramini* or Village headman was the sole agent of the village life and the main duty entrusted to him was the maintenance of peace and security in the village areas. The then village affairs were managed by the village people themselves. Charles Metcalf identified the Bengal villages with ‘little Republics’.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The *Daily Ittefaq* April 23, 1982.

<sup>2</sup>Najmunnessa Mahtab *Local Government in France and Bangladesh : A Descriptive Analysis of Executive Action* (Dhaka : Dhaka University CENTAS, 1978), P. 16.

<sup>3</sup>“Charles Metcalfe observed, “The Village Communities seems to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty trumbles down, revolution succeeded revolution but the village communities remain the same. Thus the Union of Village Communities each of one farming a separate state itself has. I conceive contribute of the people of India through alrevolutions and changes they have suffered and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment, a great position of freedom and independence”. Quoted from Rokeya Rahman Kabir; *Administrative Policy of the Government of Bengal, (1870-1890)*. (Dhaka NIPA, 1965), Part II, P. 11.

The Mughals were essentially an urban people and they did not care for the villages. They divided the whole administration into *Subhas*, *Sarkars*, *Parganas* and *Mahals*<sup>4</sup> (corresponding to modern Provinces, Districts, *Thanas* and *Unions*) only for revenue purposes. The government was highly centralised autocracy and the local initiative was usually left to the local people.<sup>5</sup>

The Mughal system of rural administration changed radically under the British in India. The village panchayat from time immemorial had been responsible for the collection of land revenues, but the British radically changed the land revenue system. The introduction of Permanent Settlement in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis, created a new class of *zamindars* in our social system.<sup>6</sup> Local affairs were managed by the local *zemindars*. But in practice they did nothing for the rural people, except to collect the taxes from them as the agents of the government. The Permanent Settlement of 1793 destroyed the old village community, changed the property relation, created a new social class and caused a social revolution in the countryside.

With the passage of the Government of India Act, 1858, the rule of the East India Company came to an end. The Act provided the direct rule of the Crown in the country. In 1861, the Finance Minister in his budget speech advised the government to delegate certain powers to the local institutions for the maintenance of minor works of local interests. To give effect to his policy, Parliament took a direct initiative to solve the problems of rural Bengal, because the problems were more serious than anywhere else in British India.<sup>7</sup>

### The Village Chowkidari Act

#### Act VI of 1870

On December 14, 1870, Lord Mayo adopted a resolution on financial decentralization. On the basis of Mayo's resolution a Bill was introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council on January 22, 1870 which after usual discussion became the Village Chowkidari Act VI of 1870. The Act was

<sup>4</sup>I.H. Qureshi ; *Administration of the Mughal Empire* (Karachi, The Inter Service Press Ltd., 1966), P. 272.

<sup>5</sup>Sir Jadunath Sarker; *Mughal Administration* (Calcutta, Sarkar and Sons Ltd. 1952), P. 10.

<sup>6</sup>Tara Chand ; *History of the Freedom Movement in India* ( New Delhi, Ministry of Information 1961) P. 272.

<sup>7</sup>Elit Tepper ; *Changing Pattern of Administration in Rural East Pakistan* (East-Lanching ; Michigan State University, Asian Studies Centre, Occasional Paper No. 5, 1966), P. 45.

introduced experimentally only in a few places, but with the passing of the Act the foundation of rural self-government was laid in Bengal.<sup>8</sup>

The Act of 1870 divided the countryside into a number of unions, each of which comprised an area of about 10 to 12 square miles. These areas were placed under the Panchayat or a committee appointed by the District Magistrate. The Act empowered the District Magistrate to appoint by a 'sanad' a Panchayat in any village which contained more than 60 houses. As a rule of the government the Panchayat consisted of not less than 3 and not more than 7 persons. The members of the Panchayat had the power to elect their chairman from among themselves (Section VI). They were responsible for collecting chowkidari tax for the regular and punctual payment of the chowkidars. Though the chowkidars were appointed by the Panchayat, they could only be dismissed by the District Magistrate (Section XL).<sup>9</sup> During the discussion of this Bill Moharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore seriously criticised this provision. He argued that if the chowkidars were appointed by the Panchayat, they should be dismissed by the Panchayat and no sanction of the District Magistrate should be necessary in this regard.<sup>10</sup> But the government did not pay any heed to his objection and the problem remained unsolved for years to come.

No doubt, the Chowkidari Panchayat Act of 1870 was the first attempt to develop the rural self-government in Bengal, but it had some serious drawbacks and ultimately it failed to achieve the desired objectives. The Panchayat had no authority in regard to local sanitation, communication, education or similar functions of municipal nature.<sup>11</sup> The most serious defect was its nominated character. Since the Panchayat was not an elected body the system continued to be unpopular. The Panchayat was appointed by the District Magistrate but the actual job of nomination was done by the officials subordinate to him. The membership of the Panchayat was compulsory and if any body refused to be a member of the Panchayat he could be fined upto Rs. 50.00 (Section-V). On the other hand the Magistrate had the power to discharge any of the members of the Panchayat (Section-VIII).<sup>12</sup> If the Panchayats would failed to raise the local taxes there was also charge of penalty or if the amount assessed was not collected fully, the District Magistrate could realised the arrers from them. Another criticism

<sup>8</sup>Rokeya Rahman Kabir *op. cit.*, P. 8.

<sup>9</sup>*The Calcutta Gazettee*, 9 March 1870 (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariate Press, 1870).

<sup>10</sup>N.C. Roy; *Rural Self-government in Bengal* (Calcutta; Calcutta University 1936), P. 133.

<sup>11</sup>*Bengal District Administration Committee (1912-13) Report* (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariate Press, 1915), P. 98.

<sup>12</sup>*Calcutta Gazettee*, 9 March 1870.

of this system was that, the taxes levied by the Panchayat were in many cases unfair. While the influential people were left off with only a light contribution, the poorer villagers were heavily assessed.<sup>13</sup> Though the chowkidars were appointed by the Panchayat, it had no controlling authority over the chowkidars.<sup>14</sup> The chowkidari Panchayats were not created for the welfare of the rural people, but for a specific purposes of helping the administration. They acted not as the representatives of village people, but as the servants of the 'sarkar' or the government.<sup>15</sup> As a result it failed to perform any welfare functions like water supply, sanitation, education, public health etc. The basis of the system remained narrow and called for further reform.<sup>16</sup>

### Lord Ripon's Resolution on Local Self-Government

The introduction of the local government in the country had all along been an idea from above. It was encouraged by Lord Lawrence and Mayo for administrative purposes. There was little demand for it from the people. It was Lord Ripon who took it up as an instrument of political and popular education. On 18 May, 1882 Lord Ripon's government issued a resolution on local self-government. This resolution provided that the policy of financial decentralisation already introduced by Lord Mayo, should be carried further to the level of local bodies. It further provided that the local bodies should be developed as an instrument of political and popular education for the local people. He also suggested that more units of local self-government with definite functions and duties should be set up throughout the country.

The resolution emphasized that all local bodies, urban and rural, should have a two-third majority of non-officials, and in no case should the number of the official members exceed one-third of the total member. Ripon's resolution was based on the active support of the then Prime Minister Mr. Gladstone, who was in favour of introducing representative institutions in India. So that the people might have the chance of political education. The Famine Commission of 1874 also emphasized the need for the extension of the local self-government to facilitate relief works rapidly. On the basis of the support of the Prime Minister and on Report of the Famine Commission, Lord Ripon laid down in a resolution on 18 May, 1882, the

<sup>13</sup>John Mathai; *Village Government in British India*. (London; 1915), P. 146.

<sup>14</sup>*Report of the Bengal Administration (Rowland Committee) Enquiry Committee (1944-1945)* (Dacca; NIPA Reprint, 1962), Para 395, P. 166.

<sup>15</sup>Hugh Tinker; *Foundation of Local Self-Government in India Pakistan and Burma* (London; The Athlone Press, 1954), P. 40.

<sup>16</sup>M. Rashiduzzaman, *Politics and Administration in Local Council* (Dacca; Oxford University Press, 1968), P. 2.

general principle of local self-government.<sup>17</sup> To give effect to Ripon's proposal a Bill was introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council in February 1883.<sup>18</sup> According to this proposal, in rural areas Union Committees were to be established for managing the affairs of immediate interest to the villagers.<sup>19</sup> The Bill drew attention as the first detailed legislative proposals for the establishment of the self-governing bodies in rural Bengal. Its stated purposes was to give the people of Bengal a share in administrative responsibility.

The Bill provided for a committee to administer a union of villages for the maintenance of immediate interests of the villagers. The Union Committee was to control the primary schools, ponds, roads, and other public works of the union and to be generally responsible for the maintenance of sanitation and vital statistics.

In order to give effect to this idea Mr. E. K. Westman Cott, an I. C. S. officer (District Magistrate of Howrah) was placed on special duty to prepare the way for the introduction of the new law by the creation of the Union Committee throughout the province. Mr. Westman Cott formed 180 Unions in several Sub-divisions in Burdwan, the Presidency Division and the Munshiganj Sub-division of the Dacca District. Experimental election of the Union Committees was held under the supervision of the District officers. A large number of the people took part in the election but in their political behaviour they were shy. Mr. Westman strongly recommended the setting up of Union Committees in the rural areas. His task revived the recommendations of the Government of Bengal in a resolution of 1884, but passage of the bill was delayed due to objection raised by the Secretary of the State for India and the whole framework of the scheme had changed. But after much discussion and deliberation the Bill was sent to a Select Committee which spent one year to reintroduce the Bill. At last, after a short modification, Mr. Macaulay, the secretary to the Government of Bengal, reintroduced the Bill in March 1885, and on 4 April 1885, the Bill was finally accepted as the Act III of 1885.<sup>20</sup> The Bill actually reflected Lord Ripon's views and he is in fact the real founder of local bodies in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup>C.E. Buckland, *Bengal Under the Lieutenant Governors* (Calcutta, Kedar Nath Bose Ltd. 1902), Vol. II, P. 805.

<sup>18</sup>*The Bengal District Administration Committee Report 1913-14, Ibid.*, Pp. 81-82.

<sup>19</sup>S. Gopal, *Vice Royalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884* (London, Oxford University Press, 1953), P. 106.

<sup>20</sup>*Bengal District Administration Committee Report (1913-14)* Calcutta ; Bengal Secretariat Press, 1915), Para 99.

<sup>21</sup>Najmul Abedin, *Local Administration and Politics in Modernising Societies—Bangladesh and Pakistan* (Dacca; NIPA, 1973), P. 42.

## Bangal Local Self Government

### Act III of 1885

The Act was extended to the whole of the province except the district of Singhbhum, Santal parganah and in Chittagong Hill Tracts.<sup>22</sup> The Act created a three tier system of local government for the rural areas i.e. District Board at the district level, Local Board at the Subdivisional level and Union Committee at the Union or village level. According to the provisions of the Act, each Union Committee consisted of not less than 5 and not more than 9 members.<sup>23</sup> The members of the Union Committee were elected from among the residents of the unions, but if the electors of any union would fail to elect the requisite number of members within the prescribed period, the Commissioner had the power to appoint the rest.<sup>24</sup> There was no mention of the Union Committee's chairman in the Act of 1885. An amendment Act was passed by the West Bengal Government in 1908, which was extended to East Bengal in 1914. This Act provided that Union Committee should elect the chairman from among its members and it became paragraph 41 A of the original Act of 1885. But election of any member to be a chairman by the members of the Union Committee became the subject of approval by the District Board and if they would fail to elect the chairman on due time, the District Board had the power to elect any of the members to be a chairman.<sup>25</sup> The term of office of the Union Committee was two years from the date of election or appointment.<sup>26</sup> Union Committees were empowered to do many welfare activities for the development of rural areas. These activities included the construction and repair of village roads and bridges, management of the primary schools, maintenance of birth and death registrar, etc.<sup>27</sup> But peace and security in the village areas was maintained by the village Panchayat.

### Working of the Union Committee from 1885 to 1919

Though there was provision for the establishment of Union Committees at the village level to develop the rural areas, but in practice the government

<sup>22</sup> *Report on the Administration of Bengal (1885-1886)* (Calcutta ; Bengal Secretariat Press, 1887), P. 100.

<sup>23</sup> *Bengal Local Self-Government Act III of 1885* (Calcutta ; Bengal Secretariat Book Dept, 1933), Sec. 38.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Sec. 39, 40.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Sec. 41A, 41A(2) and 41A (3).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Sec. 42.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Sec. 108, 109, 112, 114 and 115.

did not take any direct initiative to establish the same within the 10 years of passing the Act. In 1889 the possibility of utilizing Union Committee as an agency for the improvement of village sanitation came under notice but no definite action was taken until the beginning of 1898, when instructions were issued in the Bengal Government Resolution 3600 L.S.G. of the 4th January of that year for the creation of one or two Union Committees in each Sub-division of the Presidency, Burdwan, Dacca and Chittagong Divisions. Very little was done but in 1896-1897 the subject was again brought into prominence in connection with the threatened waster famine in Bengal, the Government of India was asked to sanction a scheme of legislation by which the Union Committees would be enabled to levy certain local rates for expenditure on sanitation, water supply and other works of village improvement. The Government of India was not sympathetic and attention was diverted from the subject and the matter was again allowed to drop.<sup>28</sup>

During the period of 1900-1901 Union Committees were of little use to the administration, except in some districts, for example, Midnapore, Hooghly, Hawrah, Jessore and Noakhali. It was reported that Union Committees did some useful functions within the narrow limits of their powers and resources.<sup>29</sup> Following the partition of Bengal in 1905, some statistics were available which revealed the extent of failure of the local bodies. At the time of partition of Bengal in 1905, the District Boards had not been successful. Out of 42 District Boards in the whole of Bengal, 30 were in East Bengal; out of 104 Local Boards, 27 were in East Bengal, and there were 54 Union Committees in the whole of Bengal; but only 9 were in Eastern part of the province. The growth and development of the Union Committees in Eastern part was very slow and generally failed to achieve the stated objectives.<sup>30</sup>

Of the 9 Union Committees, 8 were in Chittagong and 1 was in Sahahazadpur in the district of Pabna. On these bodies Mohammadans were fairly well represented. The total income of the 9 Union Committees was Rs. 4,260 and expenditure was Rs. 3,475.<sup>31</sup> According to the Levinge Committee Report, in 1904 there were a total number of 58 Union Committees in Bengal, Bihar and Orrissa. The area varied from a quarter to fifty square miles and population varied from 4,004 to 85,555. Their

<sup>28</sup>Bengal District Administration Committee Report 1913-14 *op. cit.*, Para. 100.

<sup>29</sup>Report on the Administration of Bengal (1900-1901) (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariat Book Dept., 1902), P. 60.

<sup>30</sup>Tepper, *Changing Pattern*, *op. cit.*, P. 56

<sup>31</sup>Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1905-1906. (Shilong; Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat Press, 1907), P. 30.

total expenditure in 1903 came to Rs. 18000,00, most of which had been sanctioned by the District Board. Since their creation they had managed to raise only Rs. 339 by the contribution of the local people.<sup>32</sup> By passing the Act of 1908, wider powers were entrusted to the Union Committees in matters of water supply, drainage and conservancy and they were also empowered to levy taxes on owner or occupiers of property within the union in order to meet any deficiency in the cost for carrying out such works. But very little advantages, however, had been taken of these enlarged powers and of the Union Committees in existence in 1913, a few did any useful work. The Government Resolution on the working of the District and Local Board in Bengal in 1912-1913 condemned them with faint praise. The total expenditures during the year amounted to only Rs. 35,485 of which District Board contributed Rs. 31,412 and only Rs. 3,685 were realised by local taxation. Of the 61 Unions, 50 never realized anything at all. The closing balance of all the Unions funds taken together at the end of the year was over Rs. 14,000.<sup>33</sup> Bengal District Administration Committee (1912-1913) Report showed that the largest amount spent by one union the Feni Union Committee in Noakhali was Rs. 2875. Eight other committees spent over Rs. 1000 but three failed to spend anything. On the whole the working of the Union Committees was better than in the previous year. In some places informal committees were formed experimentally and in many places it worked successfully. During these years there were no Union Committees in Rajshahi District but informal committees under the supervision of the local board were experimentally formed in Rangpur. The experiment proved most effective and proposals were submitted to form Union Committee in Rangpur and Bogra.<sup>34</sup> The progress with the formation of the Union Committees were most remarkable in the district of Dhaka, Faridpur and Rangpur.<sup>35</sup>

The number of the Union Committees actually at work, at the end of the year 1916-1917 increased subsequently from 90 to 156 of which 73 were in West and 83 were in East Bengal. The increase in the number took place entirely in East Bengal and North Bengal. In addition to the establishment of 42 unions in Dhaka, which had been sanctioned in March 1916, 2 Unions were constituted at Tippera, 7 in Faridpur and 15 in Rangpur. In Khulna, the formation of the 24 unions were sanctioned and 4 unions of old pattern

<sup>32</sup>Bengal District Administration Committee Report (1912-13). *op. cit.*, Para. 100.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, Para. 100.

<sup>34</sup>Report on the Administration of Bengal (1913-1914) (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariat Book Depot., 1915), Para. 236.

<sup>35</sup>Report on the Administration of Bengal (1915-1916). (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariat Book Depot., 1917), Para. 44.

were remodelled. Satisfactory progress were made by the Union Committees than in the past. During that time the majority of the Unions which were established at Dhaka made a very good start. But there were exceptions to the generally favourable account of working of the Union Committees in certain places, The Union Committees in Khulna District created some problems. In some Committees, the nominated members objected to take seats with the elected members on the ground that latter were persons of higher social status who traditionally commanded respect from others.<sup>36</sup>

Though the Union Committees faced many unfavourable circumstances, yet its growth and development became rapid in Bengal. By the beginning of 1917 the number of the Union Committees rose to 156 and by the end of that year it rose to 198. By the time of introduction of the Village Self-government Act of 1919, there were 383 Union Committees and by 1921 the number increased sharply to 2000.<sup>37</sup> By various means the District Board could control the Union Board. The Act of 1885 made the Union Committee as a subordinate body to the District Board.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the most serious criticism of the Act of 1885 was that the Union Committees were under the direct control of the government officials. The system of election was very restricted and it did not in spite the general people. Only a few people took part in it. The Union Committees were not supplied with adequate funds to carry out their general programmes for rural development. It was just like a fifth wheel to a coach.<sup>39</sup> The Union Committee was just like an unnecessary institution and the law relating to Union Committees remained a dead letter.<sup>40</sup>

During this period government took many steps to solve the problems of the Union Committees to achieve the objectives of rural self-government. First step was taken in 1907. The Government of Great Britain appointed a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of C.E. Hobhouse, M. P., Under Secretary for the Government of India. The Commission began its enquiry on 18 November, 1907 and presented its report in 1909. The Commission laid stress on the revival of the Village Panchayat. It recommended the establishment of the Panchayat for villages. The Commission thought that the village ought to be the foundation of the local self-government. The Village Panchayat should perform the functions of

<sup>36</sup>*Report of the Administration of Bengal, 1916-1917* (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918). Pp. 47-48.

<sup>37</sup>See N.C. Roy, *op. cit.*, P. 143; Elliot Tepper, *op. cit.*, P. 85.

<sup>38</sup>*The Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885*, Sec. 104.

<sup>39</sup>*Rowland Committee Report, op. cit.*, Para. 395.

<sup>40</sup>*Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1894-95* (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariat Press, 1895), Pp. 20-21.

municipal nature. The Commission recommended an extension of the village committees in areas where they had not been practiced. The Commission proposed a three-tier system of local government, at the lowest level Village Panchayat, and the Panchayats were to be chaired by the village headmen. The Commission was not sympathetic to the Union Committee. According to them the Union of villages was an artificial institution<sup>41</sup> which became useless and ought to be abolished. The Police Commission (1902-1903) also said that the village should be the unit of administration. Improved administration lies in teaching the village communities to take an active interest in their own affairs.<sup>42</sup>

Another step was taken by the Government of Bengal in 1913. In that year the Government appointed a Committee, known as the Levinge Committee. The enquiry was known as the Bengal District Administration Committee, 1913-1914. The report was named after Mr. Levinge, the Chairman of the Committee. The Committee recommended that the Thanas should be grouped into circles and that there should be a Circle Officer for each circle who should supervise the work of the Village Committees and should act as the link between the village bodies and the government. According to the opinion of the Committee the Union Committees had fail.

The committee proposed that the Chowkidari Panchayat and the Union Committee should be united into one body.<sup>43</sup>

On the basis of their recommendations on April 24, 1918 Sir Surendra Prasana Sinha, a member of the Bengal Legislature, introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council to extend the village self-government system in the province. The salient feature of the Bill was the amalgamation of the two bodies, i. e. the Village Panchayat of 1870 and the Union Committee of 1885 into one body to be known as the Union Board. A number of Unions would be grouped into a Circle, each Circle having Circle Board. It was to be the chief function of the Circle Board to supervise the works of the Union Board under the jurisdiction of the District Board. The Bill which was introduced by Sinha, referred to a Select Committee. After some minor modification on January 21, 1919, Sir Henry Wheeler presented the report of the Select Committee in the form of a Bill to the Legislative Council. At the time of discussion of the Bill A.K. Fazlul Huq pointed out that Union Boards should be controlled by the District Boards, instead of District Magistrate to avoid the bureaucratic control over

<sup>41</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission upon Decentralization in India, 1907-09.* (London; 34-40 Bacon Street E. 1909), Vol. I, Para. 694.

<sup>42</sup> *Report on the Indian Police Commission (Fraser Commission) 1902-03* (Simla ; Government Central Printing Office, 1904), Para. 44.

<sup>43</sup> *Bengal District Administration Committee Report 1913-14 op. cit.*, Para 105.

the Union Boards. Another member seriously objected to the nomination of the  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the members by Divisional Commissioner. They proposed for the election of all the members by the rate payers. In spite of the objections and without any modification the Bill became Village Self-Government Act, Act V of 1919, in the same year.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Bengal Village Self-Government Act, Act V of 1919**

The Bill came into law in 1919 under the title of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, Act V of 1919. The Act was extended to all over the province except in the districts of Malda and Chittagong Hill Tracts.<sup>45</sup> The Act established a two-tier system of local government instead of earlier three-tier system. The Union Board and the District Board were the basic units of the local government under the Act of 1919. According to the provision of the Act, the Union Board came into existence as the self-governing unit for the rural areas. An average Union Board consisted of 10 villages with an area of 10 to 15 square miles and a population of about 10,000. The Act provided that a Union Board should be consisted of not less than 6 and not more than 9 members.<sup>46</sup> Most of the Union Boards had 9 members till the introduction of the Basic Democracies Orders in 1959.

Of the total number of the members, one third were appointed by the District Board and two thirds were elected by the voters of the Union. Every male person of 21 years of age and having a place of residence within the Union, who during the year immediately preceding the election had paid a sum of not less than one rupee as cess, was entitled to cast his vote at an election of the members of the Union Board.<sup>47</sup>

A Union Board was presided over by a President who was elected by the members of the Union Board. There was provision that if the members of the Union Board would fail to elect the President within the prescribed period, the District Board had the power to appoint any of the members to be a President. The term of office of the member and the President of the Union Board was three years, instead of two years as it was provided under the Act of 1885.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup>N.C. Roy, *op. cit.*, P. 144-45.

<sup>45</sup>*Administration of Bengal Under the Earl of Ronaldshay* (1917-1922). (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariat Press 1922) P. 69

<sup>46</sup>*The Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919* (Corrected upto December, 1936) (Alipore; Bengal Government Press, 1937) Section 6(1).

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.* Sec. 6(3) and Sec. 7.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, Sec. 11 and 14.

As a transferred subject, Local Self-Government was entirely the department of minister, responsible to the provincial legislature. Sir Surendranath Banarjee became the first Minister for Local Self-Government.<sup>49</sup>

Before 1919 the maintenance of peace and security was the chief function of the Village Panchayat and not of the Union Committee. The Act of 1919 empowered the Union Boards to maintain peace and security in villages with the help of the chowkidars. The Union Board not only maintained peace and security in the villages, but it also performed many functions of municipal nature. After the passage of the Act, the Union Boards became the most effective self-governing units in the rural areas and the people showed great enthusiasm towards this organizations. For these reasons the number of the Union Boards increased rapidly. In 1920-21, 295 new Union Boards were formed and the total rose to nearly 900, some of the most vigorous of them were in Dhaka.<sup>50</sup> By 1927,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the province had been covered by new Boards. The area jumped to  $\frac{2}{3}$  by 1930. In 1927, 2874 Union Boards had been established out of possible 6474.<sup>51</sup> The growth and development of the Union Boards from 1927-1933 are shown in the following table:—

|         |       |                     |
|---------|-------|---------------------|
| 1927—28 | ....  | 3,005               |
| 1928—29 | ..... | 4,089               |
| 1929—30 | ....  | 4,308               |
| 1930—31 | ....  | 4,522               |
| 1932—33 | ..... | 4,701 <sup>52</sup> |

The number of the Union Boards gradually increased because of the active participation of the people.

#### Position of the Union Board from 1935 to 1959

The Bengal Village Self-Government (Amendment Bill, 1935) owed its origin at a conference of Presidents of the Union Boards held at the Town Hall in Calcutta in December, 1931. It aimed at removing the practical difficulties experienced in the working of the Act. The Amendment Bill was passed by the Legislative Council on February 20, 1935.<sup>53</sup> According to

<sup>49</sup>Hugh Tinker, *op. cit.*, P. 129.

<sup>50</sup>*Report on the Administration of Bengal 1920-1921* (Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot., 1922) Para 240, P. 52.

<sup>51</sup>*Simon Commission Report The Indian Statutory Commission*, 1930. (Calcutta; Bengal Secretariat Book Depot., 1930) Para. 347, P. 306.

<sup>52</sup>N.C. Roy; *op. cit.*, P. 194.

<sup>53</sup>*Indian Annual Register* (January-June) 1935 (Calcutta ; Annual Register Office, 1935), Vol. I, P. 177.

the Amendment Act of 1935 every Union was divided into Wards and two or three villages made up a Ward. At the first time the Act introduced a very restricted system of election at the Union Board level. The man who had completed the middle english or middle vernacular education, or who had passed the junior madrasa education was entitled to vote. According to the provisions of the Act of 1919, the man who paid at least one rupee as cess or union rate was admitted to vote but the Amendment Act of 1935 increased the franchise by reducing the union rates or cess. Those who paid only eight annas as cess and six annas as rate were entitled to vote.<sup>54</sup> The term of office of the Union Board was extended from three to four years. The President as well as the Vice-Presidents were elected by members of the Boards from among its members. The District Magistrate deputed the Circle Officer to convene a meeting of the Board to elect the President and the Vice-President. Such a meeting became valid only if 5 out of 9 members were present. If the members of the Board would fail to elect the President within a month, the District Board would appoint the President. Whether a Vice-President was necessary or not, was decided by the Board. In practice, all the Boards decided in favour of having a Vice-Presidents.<sup>55</sup>

The Amendment Act marked an improvement in the history of the development of the Union administration in Bengal. After the amendment to the Act of 1919; the number of the Union Boards rapidly increased. In 1937, there were 5046, and in 1940 there were 5126 Union Boards in Bengal. All areas of the eastern part of the rural Bengal had the Union Boards before the World War II.<sup>56</sup> At the close of the World War II Government felt the need for carrying out the development functions through the Union Boards. But the Government did not grant sufficient funds to the Union Boards nor empowered them to levy taxes upon the rural people. Only the chowkidari tax was levied by the Union Board.<sup>57</sup>

In December 1944, the Government of Bengal appointed a committee to asses the works already done in the field of local administration in the province. Sir Archibald Rowland was the Chairman of the Committee. The Committee was entrusted with the task of devising the means whereby the self-government units could administer themselves in a more efficient way than before.

<sup>54</sup>N.C. Roy; *op. cit.*, P. 154.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, P. 157.

<sup>56</sup>Tepper Elliot, *op. cit.*, P. 93.

<sup>57</sup>M. Anisuzzaman, *The Circle Officer, A Study of his role* (Dhaka; NIPA, 1963), P. 81.

The Committee proposed to appoint a Circle Officer for each Thana to supervise the works of the Union Boards.<sup>58</sup> The Committee also proposed for a full time official clerk for every Union Board to keep the official records.<sup>59</sup> The Committee suggested that there should be no nomination in the Union Board and all the members should be elected by the people by a simple form of secret ballot.<sup>60</sup> The Rowland Committee Report (1944-45) was a landmark in the development of rural self-government in Bengal. But the striking defect of the system was that it did not propose for the enfranchisement of the women.<sup>61</sup>

Open voting system was introduced. The local zamindars and the landlords held sway in these elections and the common people had little say in these matters. Neither the Chairman nor the Vice-Chairman of the Board were the real representative of the general people and they cared a little for them. One third of the members of the Union Boards were nominated by the District Magistrate. He nominated 2 Hindus where the majority elected members were Muslims, and 2 Muslims where the majority of the elected members were Hindus, to maintain the balance between the two rival communities in Bengal. But in practice the persons who talked more and satisfied the Circle Officer got the nomination and as a result only the cunning fellows could capture the posts.<sup>62</sup>

After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, the constitution of the Union Board remained the same till 1956. Mr. S.D. Khan, an officer of the former Secretariat was commissioned to examine the local government system in former East Pakistan. He submitted a report in 1956. He suggested for a three-tier system of local government consisting of Union Board, District Board and Municipal Committee or Town Committee. During this period there were 3583 Union Boards in former East Pakistan. According to the divisional total, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong had 1363, 1638 and 582 Union Boards respectively.<sup>63</sup>

Laws regarding local government were amended in East Pakistan in 1956 to make it more democratic than before. According to the Amendment Act, election of the Union Boards took place on the basis of adult franchise. Both male and female were equally enfranchised. Rule 3 of the Amendment Act of 1956 laid down that the Sub-divisional Magistrate should

<sup>58</sup>Rowland Committee Report, *op. cit.*, Para. 398.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, Para. 402.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, Para. 401.

<sup>61</sup>Muzaffar Ahmed Choudhury, *Rural Government in East Pakistan* (Dhaka ; Puthigar Ltd., 1969), P. 9.

<sup>62</sup>N.C. Roy; *op. cit.*, P. 149.

<sup>63</sup>List of the Union Boards in East Bengal ( Dhaka; East Bengal Government Press, 1955).

divide each Union into three election wards with equal number of seats for election purposes of the Union Boards.<sup>64</sup> All the 9 members, the President and the Vice-President were elected by the general people on the basis of adult franchise. The Amendment Act marked an improvement in the Union Board as a self-governing unit in the rural areas. For the first time it enfranchised the womenfolk. But one serious defect of this system was that the election expenses were borne by the Union Board from the Union fund. In case of a newly created Union Board, District Magistrate provided the election expenses on condition that it should be refunded by the Board within six months after the election.<sup>65</sup> According to the provisions of the Amendment Act of 1956, election of the Union Boards took place in 1957 all over East Pakistan on the basis of adult franchise.

### **Union Council Under Basic Democracies Orders, 1959**

Organization of the Union Boards changed radically under the system of Basic Democracies, introduced by Ayub Khan, the then President of Pakistan, by a Presidential Order (President's Order No. 18 of 1959) on 27 October 1959. According to the Basic Democracies Order a four-tier system of local government was introduced, consisting of Divisional Council, Thana Council and Union Council. At the apex there was the Divisional Council and at the bottom was the Union Council. The Union Board was renamed as the Union Council under the new Order.<sup>66</sup> Union Council was the basic unit of local Government. The intention of the Government was to introduce a new type of democracy in the country. To achieve the ends they started an experiment from the basic level i.e. from the Union Council. Among other units of local government, they laid more emphasis on the Union Council. In a public meeting at Lyallpur on 12 October, 1959, President Ayub Khan declared that the Basic Democracy would not be foisted upon the people from above, instead it would work from below gradually going to the top. In the same meeting he also stressed that Union Council would serve as the mainstay of the new system. On November 18, 1959 in a banquet at Ankara President declared that they had introduced a scheme of Basic Democracies starting from the village level and "rising upward like a pyramid both in form and in spirit".<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup>The *Dhaka Gazette*, dated 14 January 1956 (Superintendent, Government Printing, East Bengal, Dhaka, 1956).

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup>*A Hand Book of Basic Democracies (corrected upto 1964)*, (Dhaka; East Pakistan Government Press, 1964) Part I, P. 9 Article 11.

<sup>67</sup>Mohammad Ayub Khan, "Building of a Free Nation" in *Basic Democracies; Speeches and Statements*, (Islamabad; n. d. Vol. I. Pp. 9-13

Under the system of Basic Democracies each provinces was divided into 40,000 electoral units. The average population of each electoral unit had been 1200 in East Pakistan. Second amendment to the Constitution of 1962 increased the number from 40,000 to 60,000 and the average population of each electoral unit was stated to be 1070 in East Pakistan. Anybody attaining the age of 25 years had the right to contest in the Basic Democracies election to be a member of the Electoral College. The electors of all electoral units constituted the Electoral College and were known as the members of the Electoral College in Pakistan.<sup>68</sup> It was the first responsibility of the members of the Electoral College to elect the President, members of the National and the Provincial Assemblies. They also worked as members of the Union Councils. A Union Council consisted of 10 to 15 members. For the first time in Pakistan there was provision for the nomination of one third of the total member in every Union Council. President Ayub justified the system of nomination by giving many favourable arguments.<sup>69</sup> But in practice they tried to create a favourite class by introducing the system of nomination for the Union Council. The appointed members could be removed by the Government officials who appointed them while the elected members would be removed by the next higher Council.<sup>70</sup>

Under various criticisms the provision for the nomination of members to the Union Council was abrogated and all seats became elective in 1962. Every citizen who attained the age of 21 and who was not a man of unsound mind and was resident of the electoral unit had the right to vote.<sup>71</sup> The Chairman of a Union Council was not elected by the voters of the Union. He was elected by the members of the Union Council from among themselves and the Chairman so elected became the ex-officio member of the Thana Council.<sup>72</sup> The Chairman of the Union Council was paid an honorarium of Rs. 600 per year from the funds of the Union Council in four equal quarterly instalments of Rs. 150.00.<sup>73</sup> For the maintenance of the official business every Union Council had a Secretary. He was appointed by the

<sup>68</sup>*The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1962* Article 158 (ii).

<sup>69</sup>Mohammad Ayub Khan, *op. cit.*, P. 9.

<sup>70</sup>Harold F. Aldefeer ; *Local Government in Developing Countries*. ( New York McGraw Hill Book Com. 1964 ) P. 76.

<sup>71</sup>Section 6(5) of the Electoral College Act 1964.

<sup>72</sup>*Basic Democracies Order 1959* ( Modified upto 1966 ) Dhaka, East Pakistan Government Press, 1966 ) Art. 5.

<sup>73</sup>*The East Pakistan ( Payment of Honorarium to the Chairman of the Union Council ) Rule 1960, Rule (6).*

Sub-divisional Officer (S.D.O.)<sup>74</sup> In East Pakistan, since 1963, there was a Vice-Chairman in every Union Council.

During the operation of the Basic Democracies the Union Councils worked successfully as self-governing units in rural East Pakistan. It was supplied with adequate financial help to carry out the developmental works in the rural areas. Actually, the union organization at the village level owed its origin after the promulgation of the Basic Democracies Order in 1959. Before the Basic Democracies Order in 1959, there were 3583 Union Boards in the District of Chittagong Hill Tracts.<sup>75</sup> During the Basic Democracies regime there were Union Councils in every District in East Pakistan. Even the District of Chittagong Hill Tracts had 45 Union Councils. According to the census report of 1961 the highest number of Union Councils was within the Laksham Thana of Comilla District and the lowest number was each in Lamalangunder and Nakhayangchari Thanas of Chittagong Hill Tracts. The total number of the Union Councils in East Pakistan were 4055. According to divisional total Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna and Chittagong had 10, 11, 1163, 803 1073 Union Council respectively.<sup>76</sup>

Although the Government often talked about development and philanthropy at the village level their professions did not always come true. There was therefore, a gap between theory and practice. It was not intended by the framers of the Basic Democracies system either to establish the Union Councils as the local self-governing units or to organize them as the sole agencies of rural development. The fact created a favourite class loyal to the dictatorial rule. "One major rationale behind the Basic Democracies was to help create legitimacy for the Ayub regime by establishing a new cadre of rural political leadership who will recruit support for the regime".<sup>77</sup> Though the members of the Union Councils were primarily elected as the members of Electoral College, they reverted to the position of members of the Union Council after fulfilling their political duty of electing the President and the members of the National and the Provincial Assemblies. Political influence was exerted from above upon the members and the Chairman of the Union Councils. It was rigidly controlled by the bureaucracy. On the other hand the government officials had the

<sup>74</sup>The East Pakistan Union Council (Appointment and Duties of the Secretaries) Rule, 1960, Rule (3).

<sup>75</sup>Census of Pakistan 1951 (D. C. R.) (Dhaka, East Bengal Government Press, 1951).

<sup>76</sup>Census of Pakistan 1961 (East Pakistan) (Karachi; Manager of Publication, 1964), Vol. II, Part. I, P. 22.

<sup>77</sup>Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York Columbia University Press, 1972), P. 119.

power to suspend any action of the Union Council and even had the power to disband the Council itself.<sup>78</sup> Basic Democracy was neither basic nor democratic "London Crown called basic democracy, a basic fraud" 'Besik' or Bogas democracy.<sup>79</sup> Under the regime, Union Councils totally failed to act as a rural self-government. Only some influential persons of the locality handled the Union administration. The general people had little opportunity to take part in it under such atmosphere.<sup>80</sup>

### Union Parishad Under Bangladesh

After the emergence of Bangladesh the Pakistan system of local governments was dissolved by a Presidential Order ( Order No. 7 ) in 1972.<sup>81</sup> With the dissolution of the local government system which was in operation during the Pakistan period, the administration of the Union Councils was also dissolved. Under the new declaration, Union Council again renamed as the Union Panchayat. The functions of the Union Panchayat were carried out by a Chairman and other Members, appointed by the S.D.O.<sup>82</sup> To assist the Chairman and Members of the Union Panchayats, Union Agricultural Assistant the Tahsilder acted as the Administrator of the Union Panchayat. (P.O. No. 110, 1972).<sup>83</sup>

Article 59 of the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh provided for election of the local governments. To give effect to this Article the Government declared the rules and regulations for the election of the local government in 1973. According to the new declaration the Union Panchayat renamed as the Union Parishad. The Union Parishads consisted of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and 9 Members. The term of office of the Union Parishad was 5 years from the date of first meeting.<sup>84</sup> For the purpose of election, Unions were divided into 3 Wards on the basis of the equal number of the population. There was provision for

<sup>78</sup>Alderfer, *op. cit.*, P. 76.

<sup>79</sup>Aziz Beg (ed.) *Grass Roots Government* (Rawalpindi ; Pakistan Patriotic Publications, 1962), P. 22.

<sup>80</sup>Humayan Kabir, "Rural Development and Political Viability : Lessons From a Fallen Regime", *Local Government Quarterly* ( Dhaka ; Local Government Institute, 1978 ), Vol. 7, P. 57.

<sup>81</sup>*Bangladesh Local Council and Municipal Committee ( Dissolution and Amendment ) Order*, 1972. January 20, 1972, Art. 3 (1)A ( Dhaka ; Bangladesh Government Press. ).

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, Art. 3(1) C, 4(1) AB and 4(2).

<sup>83</sup>*Bangladesh Local Council and Municipal Committee ( Dissolution and Amendment ) ( Second Amendment ) Order*, 1972 ( Dhaka ; Bangladesh Government Press, September 19, 1972 ), Art 4(1).

<sup>84</sup>*Bangladesh Local Government ( Union Parishad and Paurashava ) Order*, 1973 ( Dhaka ; Bangladesh Government Press, March 22, 1973 ), Art. 4(1), 5(1) and 5(2).

three members to be elected from each Wards.<sup>85</sup> The Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Members of the Union Parishad were elected simultaneously.<sup>86</sup> They were elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise. The election of the Union Parishads in 1973 was held according to the Union Parishad and Paurashava (Election) Rules of 1973.

The first election of the Union Parishads was held in December 19 instead of 17 and continued upto 30 instead of 29 of that month in 1973. All the Chairmen, the Vice-Chairmen, and the Members of 4351 Union Parishads were elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise.<sup>87</sup> The Prime Minister Shaikh Mujibur Rahman had called upon the people to elect honest, dedicated, patriotic and competent candidate in the forthcoming election of the Union Parishads.<sup>88</sup>

A total number of 1,57,588 candidates contested. The number of the contestants for the 4220 post of the Chairmen were 18,588, while the number of candidates for the post of 4215 Vice-Chairmen were 17,860. Nearly 1,21,070 persons contested for 38,326 posts of Members. Among the total number of the seats, 129 candidates for the post of Chairman, 134 candidates for the post of Vice-Chairmen and 815 candidates for the post of Members had been declared elected uncontested by the Bangladesh Election Commission. The Shirajganj Sub-division under Pabna district tops the list in returning the maximum numbers of unopposed candidates. In Shirajganj 14 candidates for the office of the Charimanship, 13 for Vice-Chairmanship and 105 candidates for the post of the Members has been elected unopposed.<sup>89</sup> At the opening day, the 19 December, election of 583 Union Parishads took place in four Divisions of which 136 were in Rajshahi, 97 in Khulna, 130 in Dhaka and 165 in Chittagong.<sup>90</sup> A total of 14 thousand polling centres were set up, elections were postponed in 622 centres due to the disturbances in different parts of the country.<sup>91</sup>

Many people including some candidates were killed and about a hundred other injured in 12 day election programme. Analysing the trend of disturbances, the Election Commission source said that in more than 80 percent cases disturbance were resorted to by the supporters of losing

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, Art, 6(1).

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.* Art. 10(2), (3).

<sup>87</sup>*The Dainik Bangla*, December 11, 1973.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, December 13, 1973.

<sup>89</sup>*The People*, December 19, 1973.

<sup>90</sup>*The Dainik Bangla*, December 19, 1973.

<sup>91</sup>*The Dainik Bangla*, January 8, 1974.

candidates. In most of the cases disturbances started at the time of counting the votes, at the end election was not free and fair.<sup>92</sup>

In 1976, the second election of the Union Parishads in Bangladesh was held in accordance with the "Local Government Ordinance of 1976". Election rules and Ward divisions were the same as it were in 1973. Under the new system the post of Vice-Chairmen for Union Parishads were abolished. The Union Parishads now consisted of a Chairman, 9 elected Members and two women members. Women members are nominated by the S.D.O. from amongst the women of the Union.<sup>93</sup> The term of office of the Union Parishad is 5 years as it was in 1973.<sup>94</sup> By reserving two seats the Ordinance of 1976 has opened the door for womenfolk to enter into local administration. In 1979 the Government introduced the system of nominating two peasant members in the Union Parishad. The Peasant members are nominated by the S.D.O. from amongst the peasants of the Union.<sup>95</sup> As honorarium the chairman gets Taka 3,600.00 and the members Taka 1,200.00 per annum.<sup>96</sup>

The second election of the Union Parishad under the Local Government Ordinance of 1976 was held from January 13 to 31, 1977. In 4352 Union Parishads 20898 candidates including 19 female contested for 4352 seats of the chairmen, of them 28 candidates including one female candidate were elected unopposed. The female candidate was elected in Katghar Union Parishad of Hatia police station in the District of Noakhali. Another female candidate was elected in Khoksha Union Parishad of Kushtia District. This brings the number of the female chairmen to two out of 4352. A total of 1,192,60 candidates including 92 women contested for 39,168 seats for the members, out of the total number of the seats for the members only 213 candidates were elected unopposed. No female candidate was elected unopposed, they got only 7 seats by election.<sup>97</sup>

Except for the minor incidents, polling was held in a peaceful atmosphere in all the Union Parishads. Major General Ziaur Rahman, the Chief

<sup>92</sup>The People, December 31, 1973.

<sup>93</sup>The Local Government Ordinance 1976. ( Dhaka ; Bangladesh Government Press, 1976 ), Art. 5(3).

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., Art. 8.

<sup>95</sup>Ministry of L.G.R.D. and Cooperatives/Memo No. SVI/IE-1/79/49/(64), Dated, Dhaka the April 14, 1979.

<sup>96</sup>The Union Parishad ( Payment of Honorarium to Chairmen and Members ) Rule, 1977. ( Dhaka, Bangladesh Government Press—1977 ) Rule 2(1), 2(11).

<sup>97</sup>Giasuddin Mollah ; "New Hopes for Union Parishad—Case of Bangladesh" *Administrative Science Review*. ( Dhaka, NIPA, 1978 ), Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 46 ; *The Dainik Bangla*, January 13, 1977 ; *The Bangladesh Times*, January 13, 1977.

of Army Staff and the Chief Martial Law Administrator visited several polling stations. He advised the people to elect honest, uncorruptible dedicated and patriotic people in the polls.<sup>98</sup> According to the Central Election Control Room in Dhaka, election to 4139 Union Parishads out of the total number of 4352<sup>99</sup> were held between January 13 to 31, 1977 and the remaining 213 were held later on.<sup>100</sup>

The people all over the country expressed a great enthusiasm and came in large numbers to elect their representatives. Even the percentage of the women votes at the polling station was highly satisfactory. Out of the total number of 3,59,55,696 voters (excluding the voters under the 78 Municipalities) 80 percent cast their votes.<sup>101</sup>

For conducting the election of the Union Parishads the Government spent about Taka 3 crore. Average expenditure per voter was Taka 1.00 and per Union Parishad was Taka 85,00.00 thousand.<sup>102</sup>

In comparison with the election of 1973, the election of the Union Parishad of 1977 was peaceful and a large number of the male and female voters attended the polling centres to elect their representatives. It was no doubt an interesting election too. In many places father and the son, brother and uncle and the nephew contested each other and some people were elected as Chairmen from the jail.<sup>103</sup> In many places of the country, especially in the District of Mymensingh, Tangail and some of the northern Districts, old political leaders contested at the election of the Union Parishads.<sup>104</sup>

The term of the Union Parishads has expired by February 1982. According to the provision of the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 the Parishads will be functioning till of the next election. But for temporary arrangement the Martial Law Government has taken the decision to form a 5 member Union Committee in every Union Parishads. The members of the Committee will be selected from amongst the honourable and honest

<sup>98</sup>The *Bangladesh Times*, January 14, 1977.

<sup>99</sup>The *Bangladesh Observer*, February 2, 1977.

<sup>100</sup>The *Dainik Bangla*, February 11, 1977.

<sup>101</sup>The *Ittefaq*, January 11, 1977.

<sup>102</sup>The *Dainik Bangla*, January 9, 21 and 24, 1977.

<sup>103</sup>The *Bangladesh Times*, January 11, 1977.

<sup>104</sup>There were 4352 Union Parishads, but at the present time there are 4347 Union Parishads, because 4 Union Parishads of Sandip are dropped in the river and 1 Union Parishad are added to the Chittagong Municipality : Source : *The Sangbad*, January 27, 1982.

people of the Union. After the formation of the Union Committees present Union Parishads will be dissolved.<sup>105</sup> But at the initial stage the idea of forming the Union Committee was dropped and the existing Union Parishads were empowered to carry on the duties as usually until further election. This is in short the history of the Union Parishad in our country up to May, 1983.

### Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that though the idea of rural self-government may be traced far back into history, yet its growth and development in Bangladesh may be found in the Union Parishad of Bangladesh rural self-government system. Among the units of rural self-government, the Union Parishad is only the representative institution, because its authorities are elected by the local people. By passing the Chowkidari Panchayat Act in 1870, the foundation stone of the present Union Parishad was laid. The Act of 1870 did not create much enthusiasm among the people in managing their own affairs. The members of the Panchayat were nominated and in fact they acted not as representative of the local people but as the agent of the central government. They were neither empowered to impose taxes upon the local people nor financed by the government. For the regular and punctual payment of the chowkidars, they were only entrusted with a single duty of imposing and collecting the chowkidari tax upon the village people.

To remove the drawbacks of Chowkidari Panchayat Act of 1870 and to make the local self-governing institution as a popular and political training ground of the local people—Bengal Local Self-Government Act came into existence in our country in 1885. The Act created a three-tier system (i.e. District Board, Local Board and Union Committee) of local government, of which at the village level the Union Committee was formed. On the basis of the Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882 the Act of 1885 came into being and he is in fact the real founder of local self-government in our country. At the time of adopting the resolution he said, "I am planting a tree that will give food and shade for generation of men". But it was sad that the Union Committee was not adequately financed by the government and as a result of which it failed to achieve the objective. The Levinge Committee of 1913-14 termed it as an unnecessary institution or just like a fifth wheel to a coach. In respect of local affairs everything were managed by the District Board and the Local Board. In majority cases the members and chairmen of the committees were nominated.

The Village Self-Government Act of 1919 created a two-tier (District Board and the Union Board) instead of the earlier three-tier system and

<sup>105</sup>The Ittefaq, May 26, 1982.

it continued upto the introduction of the Basic Democracies Order in 1959 by Ayub government of former Pakistan. Including the Union Council at the bottom a four-tier system of local government was created. Just like the Union Board, the Chairmen of the Union Councils were elected by the members of the Councils from among themselves. After the emergence of Bangladesh in 1972 the Union Council was renamed as the Union Panchayat and again in 1973 the Union Panchayat was renamed as the Union Parishad. Excepting two women and two peasant representatives, all the members and chairmen of the Parishads are directly elected by the local people on the basis of adult franchise.

During the history of 112 years (1871-1983) of the local self-government term, number of elected and nominated members, provision for chairman and vice-chairman and other numerous structural changes have taken place over the Union administration along with the change of the governments with noble objectives. No doubt, it can be said that the Union Parishad of our time is more democratically organized and highly patronized by the central government than the previous system, but owing to the dishonestness and misappropriation of the public property by the elected representatives on the one hand and the lack of sincerity of the government officials on the other hand, the noble purpose for which it has been created are not fully achieved. Including the honest representatives, sincere government officials, proper coordination etc. a radical structural reorganization and reorientation is needed to fulfil the purpose for which it was created.

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# Rural Elites in Bangladesh : A Case Study of the Positional and Reputational Elites in Puthia Union

A.H.M. Zehadul Karim

## I. Introduction

The study of rural elites in Bangladesh is academically fascinating and pragmatically significant. Recent scholarly reviews of South-Asian elite leadership<sup>1</sup> have focussed on the decisive role played by them in the process of modernization and rural development ( see Narain *et al.*, 1976 ; Rahman, 1980 ; Sirsikar, 1978 ; Karim 1983 ) and the role played by them in mediating rural and political events to maintain stability at the intra-village and inter-village levels ( see Karim, 1983 ). Leadership and decision-making in Bangladesh ( see Bertocci, 1980 ), as well as in Indian villages ( see Carter, 1974 ), lie traditionally in the hands of the village elites. It is important, therefore, to trace the socio-economic traits which help Bangladesh rural elites to attain their leadership. With this in mind, this paper will principally focus on (i) the positional and reputational patterns of the rural leadership, and (ii) their recruitment, and finally, (iii) their socio-economic traits.

## II. Rural Elites : The Concept and Definition

Dube used the term "rural elite" to mean "mostly people coming from higher status groups and high income, some education, and urban contacts, and who play an effective role in the village politics as decision-makers" (1951: 57). Sharma (1979) refers to rural elites as the individuals who dominate the village scene as leaders, spokesmen, representatives of the village, and who make important decisions in regard to village problems.

There are studies ( see Darshankar 1979 ; Narain *et al.* 1976 ; Sharma 1979 ; Siraikar 1978 ) that deal primarily with rural elites occupying formal positions in various institutions and organizations of the

<sup>1</sup>Elite and leader have been used interchangeably with synonymous meaning in this paper.

villages. Following Jennings (1964), Schulze and Blumberg (1957), have adopted the "positional approach" in identifying elites in their respective studies. These studies do not include the "reputational elites" who still control some reservoir of power, albeit declining power (see Rao 1968). Karim (1983) and Rahman (1980) in their studies of rural elites in Bangladesh identify the elites as the key-persons in villages with formal and informal positions who dominate the village through their active participation in the affairs of village life. In a study of emerging elites of Ceylon, Marshall Singer broadly includes among the rural elites "Buddhist priests, traditionally influential families, and ayurvedic physicians..." (1964 : 136-137). Singer adds "In reality, however, depending on the peculiar circumstances of each village, a great many other individuals or groups may be members of rural elite" (p. 137). Thus, it can be observed that due to the diverse situations, the possibilities for recruitment of leaders are extremely varied.

The concept of rural elite in Bangladesh refers to leadership in *grams* (villages). I have already indicated that the majority of the population (90.9%, according to SYB 1979, Government of Bangladesh) of this country live in rural areas either in discrete or isolated settlements in peasant villages. And Bangladesh villages have been headed traditionally by formal and informal elites (see Karim 1983 ; Rahman 1980).

### III. Method of the Study and Identification of Elites

This study of rural elites has been conducted in Puthia Union of Rajshahi district (North Bengal) in Bangladesh. Puthia Union Parishad is comprised of 13 villages (*grams*) or *mouzas*<sup>2</sup> viz, Puthia, Baroipara, Kandra, Palopara, Tarapur, Krishnapur, Gopalhati, Daipara, Dhonoajoypara, Gondogabali, Kathalbaria, Ramjibanpur and Paergacha. The total area of the Union is 7236.35 acres, or a little more than 11 square miles. The total population is 15,318 in 2406 households (Census 1974). The sex ratio is 1.05 : 1.00. The percentage of literacy is 15.60 which is far below the average literacy rate for Bangladesh (20.2 percent).

This project has been carried out with the author's participation in the field for a period of ten months (1980-81). The study has adopted both "positional" and "reputational" approaches to identify the elites and a "social background model" (see Edinger and Searing 1967) to deal with such variables as sex and religion, age, education, occupation, landholdings and income.

<sup>2</sup>The villages in British India in the administrative sense have been called *mouzas*, which is the lowest revenue area for which land settlement records were prepared (see Census of India, 1951, Vol. 1, Part IA : 42).

### A. Positional Elites

By adopting the "positional approach" (see Jennings 1964 ; Schulze and Blumberg 1957), the positional elites of Puthia (N=96) were identified as those who hold formal and legal offices in *Union Parishad* (the lowest unit of rural administration in Bangladesh), cooperatives and educational institutions. According to the Local Government Ordinance of 1976 (see Government of Bangladesh 1976), the chairman and nine members of the Union Parishad are elected for a period of five years. The Ordinance also made provision for two women members to be nominated by the chairman under the advice of the district administration of Rajshahi. These members and the chairman, 12 in number, are the union parishad leaders.

The executive committee members for one UMPCS (Union Multipurpose Cooperative Society) ; 7 KSS or *Krishi Samabaya Samity* (Farmer's cooperatives) and 4 sugarcane cooperatives have been identified as cooperative leaders. By removing the overlapping memberships in these cooperatives, the total number of such elites in Puthia comes to 67.

The elites who are the members of the governing body (GB) of the two high schools and a college located in Puthia are designated as "institutional elites." In Puthia, some professional persons such as medical practitioners, retired service-holders and the donors who contribute some funds for the maintenance of such institutions generally hold such positions. Removing the overlapping memberships in other organizations such as union parishad (UP), cooperatives, 17 institutional elites were identified in Puthia.

### B. Reputational Elites

The "reputational approach" (see Bonjean and Olson 1964 ; Hunter 1953) identifies those persons as elites who have reputations as being powerful and influential in the community. The reputational elites in Puthia include the *Pradhan Paramaniks* (factional chiefs) of the village *samaj* (an informal village social organization based on lineage and neighborhood) who "organize and lead the villages in cooperative efforts at the village and supra-village levels" (Zaman 1982 : 7). There are 33 *pradhan paramaniks* in the 13 villages of Puthia.

In addition, to identify the reputational elites in a more generalized way, all the positional elites and *pradhan paramaniks* (who were identified earlier) were asked to nominate the influential and respected persons of each village. A list of such leaders was prepared on the basis of the total listings received by each one of them. From that list, a cutoff point of 20 was decided upon. Those named 20 or more times were termed

as informal village leaders. They numbered 53. The *pradhan paramaniks* (N=33) and the informal village leaders (N=53) together constitute the reputational elites (N=86).

Thus, by combining the positional (N=96) and reputational (N=86) elites, 182 elites were obtained in Puthia. The overlapping memberships of positional and reputational elites have been removed by avoiding any duplication of names.

#### IV. Socio-Economic Background of the Elites

In this section, I shall analyze data on the socio-economic traits of the elites in Puthia Union. The term "socio-economic : as used here includes the variables of sex, religion, age, education, occupation, land-holdings, and income.

##### Sex and Religion

In Puthia, the elites are heavily weighted with males. Although women constitute 48.85 percent (Village Census, 1974 : 119) of the total population of the union, they are under-represented in the elite structure of Puthia, forming only 1.10 percent of the total elite. Among 182 positional and reputational elites identified in Puthia, only two are women (members of the union parishad). These two members, however, are not elected nor are they willingly involved in the elite structure. They are chosen by the chairman and are then approved by the Rajshahi district administrative authority. To facilitate and encourage women's participation, the government made the provision (The Local Government Ordinance, 1976) for such members in all the union parishads of Bangladesh. In the study area, Noor Jahan and Arati Rani Sanyal were selected to such positions. One is a relative of the chairman, and the other is a primary school teacher. Recruitment to such positions is influenced by the decisions of the chairman ; they are people of his own kin group or from his own factional group.

In Bangladesh, women are expected to work inside their homes. They are discouraged from appearing in public.<sup>3</sup> Social interaction on the part of a woman with an unrelated man is generally discouraged. Arens and van Beurden (1977 : 53) observed, "In many respects women have to adjust themselves to a society that is mainly built on the ideas and wishes of men, and most of their behavior is prescribed by tradition instigated by men." In Bangladesh, it is believed that women are not capable of handling the responsibilities of the community and for that reason, they are not visible in elitist positions.

<sup>3</sup>In urban areas, some women are entering occupations like teaching, office work, and banking services but in rural areas they still remain inside the home engaging in household work.

The sectarian distribution of elites in Puthia indicates that out of 182 elites, 166 (91.22 percent) are Muslims and the remaining 16 (8.79 percent) are Hindus. The small representation of the Hindus in the elite structure may be explained partially because of their migration to India after partition in 1947. Moreover, a high proportion of wealthy Hindus again migrated in 1964 and 1971, leaving the poor behind. Statistics of Puthia indicate that previously influential Hindu elites dominated the leadership structure of Puthia. The *Bhudameshwer Temple* (shrine of the tutelary family deity) and *Siva Sagor* (a holy tank of the Hindus) were erected by Rani Bhabani (an influential Hindu Zaminder) in 1893. Rani Hemanta Kumari reexcavated the *Govinda Sagor* (another holy tank) in 1913. The present settlement office of Puthia is located in the buildings which were once the *Rajbari* (the palace of the feudal lords) of the Hindu Zaminders (see L.S.S. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers, Rajshahi, 1916: 176-177). During the Pakistan period (1947-71) blatant discrimination was a factor, denying qualified Hindus easy access to elite positions. Khan (1979: 472) also noted a similar observation in his study of the District Town Elites in Bangladesh. Some improvement in Hindu access to elitist positions has occurred since 1971.

#### Age

Age is an important variable in any study of the socio-economic characteristics of a population. The age data for the elites in Puthia Union have been classified into three major groups: "young" (up to 35 years of age); "middle" (36 to 50 years); and "old" (51 years and above).

It is evident from Table 1 that a preponderant majority of the elites, i.e. 94 (51.65%) in Puthia, cluster themselves in the 'middle' age group, while 47 (25.82%) are 'old' and the remaining 43 (22.53%) are 'young'. The middle aged persons are found in a majority as *union parishad* leaders, institutional elites, *pradhan paramaniks* and also as informal village leaders. Rashiduzzaman (1968: 30) in his study of the leadership in local councils (i.e. *union parishad*, *thana parishad*) observed the dominance of the middle-aged leaders. Khan (1979: 470) and Rahman (1980: 51) have also found the clustering of elites in the middle aged groups.

In the past, mature persons symbolized equanimity of mind and it was expected that mature persons dominate elite groups as it was believed that they gained experience with the advancement of age. Yet in development schemes, this idea was opposed. "If any organization is dominated by elderly people, it is doubtful if they can meet aspirations of an emergent society" (Rashiduzzaman 1968: 13). And in Puthia, like all parts of Bangladesh (see Rahman 1980; Khan 1979; Atiur Rahman 1981), the aged leaders are losing their elite position due to their apparent inability to involve themselves in modern activities. Instead, they

remain village leaders. Among reputational elites (86), 36.05% are the old people and the remaining 56.98% and 6.97% are the 'middle' and the 'young' persons, respectively. Among the 96 positional elites, only 16

**Table 1**  
**Age Composition of the Elites**

| Elites                              | Young<br>(up to 35) | Middle<br>(36 to 50) | Old<br>(51 years and above) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Positional</b>                   |                     |                      |                             |
| U.P. Members and<br>Chairman (N=12) | 2 (16.86%)          | 9 (75%)              | 1 (7.14%)                   |
| Cooperative<br>Leaders (N=67)       | 30 (44.78%)         | 27 (40.29%)          | 10 (14.93%)                 |
| Institutional<br>Elites (N=17)      | 3 (17.65%)          | 9 (52.94%)           | 5 (29.41%)                  |
| <b>Reputational</b>                 |                     |                      |                             |
| Pradhan Paramaniks<br>(N=33)        | 2 (6.06%)           | 20 (60.61%)          | 11 (33.33%)                 |
| Informal Village<br>Leaders (N=53)  | 4 (7.55%)           | 29 (54.71%)          | 20 (37.74%)                 |
| Total N=182                         | 41 (22.53%)         | 94 (51.65%)          | 47 (25.82%)                 |

(16.67%) are old people. Younger leadership (up to 35 years of age) in this study amounts to 22.53% of the total elite. Although the percentage is low, it is not without significance. The young elites are dominant in cooperatives (I have observed that some of the local school and college attending students are participating in I.R.D.P. cooperative programs, U.M.P.C.S. and Sugarcane Cooperatives). The idea of the cooperative movement is dissiminated to the villagers through young leaders. The young leadership is also prevalent in union parishad (16.86%).

#### Education

Like sex, religion and age, education also plays an important role in achieving elite status. Education facilitates the development of progressive ideas. It helps persons to develop the qualities by which they can achieve a better understanding and judgement of their own society

In order to obtain a meaningful analysis of the educational background of the elites of Puthia Union, the data have been classified into five broad categories ranging from "illiterate" to the "graduation" level (see Table 2). Among 182 elites in Puthia, 126 (69.23%) are literate and

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Elites by Level of Education**

| Elites                                | illiterate | Read up to<br>Primary | Below SSC  | Passed SSC | Graduated |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Positional</b>                     |            |                       |            |            |           |
| UP Members<br>& Chairman<br>(N=12)    |            | 5(41.67%)             | 5(41.67%)  | 1 (8.33%)  | 1(8.33%)  |
| Cooperative<br>Leaders<br>(N=67)      | 13(19.40%) | 16(23.88%)            | 22(32.84%) | 15(22.39%) | 1(1.49%)  |
| <b>Institutional</b>                  |            |                       |            |            |           |
| Elites (N=17)                         | 2(11.77%)  | 1(5.88%)              | 4(23.53%)  | 9(52.94%)  | 1(5.88%)  |
| <b>Reputational</b>                   |            |                       |            |            |           |
| Pradhan Para-<br>maniks(N=33)         | 18(54.55%) | 8(24.24%)             | 4(12.12%)  | 3(9.09)    | —         |
| Informal Village<br>Leaders<br>(N=53) | 23(43.40%) | 16(30.19%)            | 7(13.21%)  | 6(11.32)   | 1(1.88)   |
| Total=182                             | 56(30.77%) | 46(25.27%)            | 42(23.08%) | 34(18.68%) | 4(2.20%)  |

the remaining 56 (30.77%) are illiterate. The interesting observation which is deducible from Table 2 is a considerable reduction of illiterate members in the elitist position in comparison with the general illiteracy of the rural people as a whole. It should be mentioned here that the rate of illiteracy in Bangladesh is 77.80% (Census 1974) and in Puthia it is 84.29% (Village Census 1974).

Analysis of data from Table 2 indicates that 56 (30.77%) of the total elites are illiterate. The elites who 'read up to primary' followed a close second at 46 (25.27%) to that of the illiterate category. Forty-two of the elites (23.08%) have had schooling below S.S.C. (Secondary School Certificate) level, while 34 (18.68%) passed either SSC or HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) examinations. There is no elite in the

union parishad who is illiterate. Among the 96 positional elites 81 (84.37%) are literate while out of 86 reputational elites only 45 (52.32%) are literate. It indicates that the emerging positional elites are more educated than the reputational elites who are the traditional village leaders.

### Occupation

A man's occupation is important in determining his social position. In Table 3 occupations of the elites have been classified into six broad categories: agriculture, business, service, student, school teacher, and others.

It is evident from Table 3 that a preponderant majority of elites i.e. 125 (68.68%) in Puthia are agriculturists. The agriculturists are dominant in the elite structure of Union Parishad, Cooperatives, institutions, *pradhans*, and also as informal village leaders. Rashiduzzaman (1968: 38) observed that "the percentage of farmers elected to the union parishad in 1957, 1960 and 1964 have been 77.32, 82.46 and 77.78, respectively. Rahman (1980: 53) found 80.50% of the elites are engaged in agriculture. However, in regards to other occupations of the elites in Puthia, it is apparent from Table 3 that 13 (7.14%) of the elites in Puthia are businessmen and 6 (3.3%) are service-holders. The occupation of 7 (3.85%) is teaching either in high schools or in primary schools of the locality. The students are not visible in four other categories. They are only visible in the cooperatives. Twenty-two students (12.89%) of Puthia have emerged as elites who are showing interest in the co-operatives of the villages. There are, however, another 9 (4.94%) elites in Puthia who have heterogeneous occupations like practicing medicine in the villages, a priest and retired service-holders.

### Landholdings

Landownership is an important factor in establishing dominance in Bangladesh society. It is the most visible form of wealth, and the status and position of a person is significantly related to land. Stepanek (1979: 109) also observed that land is security and power in a poor economy like Bangladesh. In accordance with the ownership of landholdings, the elites of Puthia have been classified into landless (possess no land), small (up to 2.50 acres), middle (2.51 acres to 7.50) and big (over 7.51 acres).

It is shown in Table 4 that 18 (9.88%) of the elites in Puthia are landless; 26 (14.29%) are small landowners; 58 (31.87%) are middle, and the remaining 80 (43.95%) are big landowners. The 18 (9.88%) landless elites in Puthia show their interest only in cooperatives. These landless elites are the students who do not possess any land since they are members of their parent's family. However, they are not poor like all other

**Table 3**  
**Distribution of Elites According to Their Principal Work**

| Elites                              | Agriculture  | Business   | Service   | Student    | Teacher    | Others     |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Positional</b>                   |              |            |           |            |            |            |
| U.P. Members and<br>Chairman (N=12) | 9 (75%)      | 2 (16.67%) | —         | —          | 1 (8.33%)  | —          |
| Cooperative<br>Leaders (N=67)       | 34 (50.75%)  | 4 (5.97%)  | 4 (5.97%) | 22 (32.84) | —          | 3 (4.47%)  |
| Institutional<br>Elites (N=17)      | 6 (35.29)    | 2 (11.76%) | —         | —          | 3 (17.65%) | 6 (35.29%) |
| <b>Reputational</b>                 |              |            |           |            |            |            |
| Pradhan Paramarik<br>(N=33)         | 30 (90.91%)  | 2 (6.06%)  | —         | —          | 1 (3.03%)  | —          |
| Informal Village<br>Leaders (N=53)  | 46 (86.79%)  | 3 (5.67%)  | 2 (3.77%) | —          | 2 (3.77%)  | —          |
| Total=182                           | 125 (68.68%) | 13 (7.47%) | 6 (3.30%) | 22 (12.89) | 7 (3.85%)  | 9 (4.94%)  |

landless peasants of Bangladesh. It is apparent that the majority of the elites in Puthia are rich (see Table 4). It may be mentioned here that the distribution of land in Bangladesh is unequal. The ownership of cultivable lands is concentrated in the hands of a few while the great majority of the people either own little or no land at all (40.56% are landless, according to SYB 1979). The big landowners exercise power over

Table 4

**Distribution of Elites according to their Ownership  
Status and the Size of Landholdings**

|                                    | Ownership Status & Size of Holdings |                                |                                |                           |                       |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                    | Landless<br>(possess<br>no land)    | Small (up<br>to 2.50<br>acres) | Middle<br>(2.51-7.50)<br>acres | Big<br>7.51-12.5<br>acres | over<br>12.5<br>acres |
| <b>Positional</b>                  |                                     |                                |                                |                           |                       |
| U.P. members &<br>Chairman (N=12)  | —                                   | —                              | 2 (16.67%)                     | 2 (16.67%)                | 8 (66.66%)            |
| Cooperative<br>Leaders<br>(N=67)   | 18 (26.87%)                         | 10 (14.93%)                    | 23 (34.33%)                    | 6 (8.95%)                 | 10 (14.92%)           |
| Institutional<br>Elites (N=17)     | —                                   | —                              | 3 (17.65%)                     | 4 (23.53%)                | 10 (58.84%)           |
| <b>Reputational</b>                |                                     |                                |                                |                           |                       |
| Pradhan Paramanik<br>(N=33)        | —                                   | 7 (21.21%)                     | 13 (39.39%)                    | 4 (12.12%)                | 9 (27.28%)            |
| Informal Village<br>Leaders (N=53) | —                                   | 9 (16.98%)                     | 17 (32.08%)                    | 7 (13.21%)                | 20 (37.73%)           |
| Total (182)                        | 18 (9.88%)                          | 26 (14.29%)                    | 58 (31.87%)                    | 23 (12.63%)               | 57 (31.33%)           |

small and landless farmers (see Hartman and Boyce 1981; Rahman 1981). Nicholas (1968) shows that a person who owns even 2.50 acres of land exercises considerable power in a Bengali (West Bengal) village. Rahman in his study of the union councillors of Bangladesh also observed the dominance of big farmers in the leadership structure of the union. He states, "...the big farmers and the *Jotedars* (big landed aristocrats) dominate the union parishad. About 60% of the U.P. leaders happen to

own more than 7.50 acres of land (Rahman 1981 : 27). In another study, Manjur-ul-Alam (1976 : 6) finds that 58% of U.P. leaders owned between 5.01-10 acres of land in Bangladesh. But it is reflected from the data that the rich farmers dominate the union parishad and other categories of leadership (cooperative leaders, institutions, pradhans and informal village leadership) as well.

### Income

It is very difficult to assess the rural elite's actual income. They conceal their income for fear of taxes and levy imposed by the government. However, I established a rapport with the respondents and was tactful in collecting more or less accurate data on their income.

The elites of Puthia Union do not belong to a homogeneous income group. I have divided the elites into four major groups such as No Income, Lower (up to 5000 taka), Middle (5001-10,000) and Upper (10,001 and above).

It is apparent from Table 5 that 18 (9.89%) of the elites who are students do not have any income. Among the remaining elites, 23 (12.64%)

**Table 5**  
**The Yearly Income Distribution of the Elites**

|                                    |            | Income                      |                         |                               |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Elites                             | No Income  | Lower<br>(Up to<br>Tk.5000) | Middle<br>(5001-10,000) | Upper<br>(10,001 and<br>over) |
| <b>Positional</b>                  |            |                             |                         |                               |
| UP Members &<br>Chairman ( N=12)   | —          | —                           | 2 (16, 67%)             | 10 (83.33%)                   |
| Cooperative<br>Leaders (N=67)      | 18 (26.87) | 10 (14.93)                  | 12 (17.90)              | 27 (40.30)                    |
| Institutional<br>Elites (N=17)     | —          | —                           | 2 (11.76%)              | 15 (88.24%)                   |
| <b>Reputational</b>                |            |                             |                         |                               |
| Pradhan Paramanik<br>(N= 33)       | —          | 6 (18.18%)                  | 7 (21, 21%)             | 20 (60.61%)                   |
| Informal Village<br>Leaders (N=53) | —          | 7 (13.21%)                  | 8 (15.09%)              | 38 (71.70%)                   |
| Total (N=182)                      | 18 (9.89%) | 23 (12.64%)                 | 31 (17.03%)             | 110 (60.44%)                  |

have a lower income and earn up to Taka 5000. Thirty-one (17.03%) of the elites have been placed in the middle income category and their income ranges from 5001 to 10,000 Tk. It is evident from Table 5 that the preponderant majority of the elites, i.e. 110 (60.44%) have an income of more than Taka 10,000, and thus they have been grouped as upper income elites. It is interesting that even the earnings of the middle income elites is much higher than the per capita income of Bangladesh. (Per capita income of Bangladesh is approximately Taka 2000 yearly). This is not surprising, of course, because elites by definition have greater access to the economic resources than the non elites.

## V. Conclusions and Summary

In this paper I have tried to present a study of the positional and reputational elites of rural Bangladesh. Using the positional and reputational approaches, I have identified two types (i.e., positional and reputational) and five categories (i.e., UP members and chairman, cooperative leaders, institutional elites, *pradhan paramaniks* and informal village leaders) of elites in Puthia Union. The social background model has been applied to compare the background data to trace the socio-economic base of the positional and reputational elites.

The socio-economic data reveal that in terms of the age category, young (up to 35 years of age), middle (36 to 50 years) and old (51 years and above) persons are all present in the elite structure of Puthia Union. However, the middle-aged leaders are in the majority (51.65 percent) among these categories. Although some of the old persons (17.03 percent) are reputational elites, they have little representation in the positional elite structure of Puthia Union. In terms of educational background, an interesting observation which presents itself is that there is a considerable reduction of illiterate members in elitist positions as compared to the general illiteracy of the rural people as a whole. The percentage of literacy is higher for the positional elites (84.37 percent) as compared to the reputational elites (52.33 percent). The advanced age of some reputational elites has made it difficult to achieve more in the way of education.

Agriculturists are dominant both as positional and reputational elites. Among the diversified occupations, twenty-two students (12.83 percent) of Puthia have emerged as elites who are showing interest in the co-operatives of the villages. The rich farmers (7.51+ acres of land) dominate the Union Parishad, cooperative societies, institutions, as *pradhan paramaniks* and in informal village leadership as well. A great majority of the elites, i.e., 110 (60.44 percent) have an income of more than taka 10, m per annum and thus have been classified as upper income elites.

A comparatively higher number of positional elites (64.44 percent) belong to the upper income category than do reputational elites (54.17 percent). It is observed, however, that even the earnings of the middle income rural elite is much higher than the per capita income of Bangladesh. This may be because the elites, by definition, have greater access to the economic resources than the non-elites.

The findings, in a generalized way, would seem to indicate that in terms of socio-economic variables, both positional and reputational elites constitute a more or less "homogenous category." However, in terms of exposure to education and income, the positional elites have more advantages than the reputational elites.

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# Political Aspect of Rural Marriage : The Case of a Bangladesh Village\*

Mohammed Shairul Mashreque

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to analyse the dimension of rural marriage in the context of the existing pattern of power relations. The study refers to a few cases of political marriages of a Bangladesh village as examples to support the analysis. The study village is given a pseudo name Ratanpur. The village is located in Sujanagar Thana, in the district of Pabna in Northern Bangladesh. Despite its closeness to the market centre and modern institutions the village entertains traditional structure ; its people nurture traditional peasant values. It has little economic infrastructure.

Predominantly a muslim village Ratanpur is big in respect of population and territory. It is dotted with homesteads which comprise multiple of households and exist as kinship groups. The village contains four *paras* (neighbourhoods), each enjoying separate political status and forming a separate *samaj* ( a social grouping). It is situated near the union and a few members of the union parishad<sup>1</sup> dwell in the village.

The selection of the village can be considered justified as it would present a profile of interaction among the people under the existing social structure that is more or less common in other villages in Bangladesh. The village comprises a reasonable number of households that present socio-economic features which would be found in the district and region at large, with some variations of course.

The study on the political aspect of rural marriage is made depending on the empirical understanding of the existing network of political interaction. Marriage establishes relationships "between the spouses them-

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<sup>1</sup>A union parishad is the lowest tier of local government operating at the grass root level and consisting of a number of villages.

selves ; between the social groups from which the spouses come ; and between these people and the children born of marriage" (Mitchell 1963 : 29). Marriage, thus, by establishing affinal relationships among these people, apportions power and status to them and is patterned through the type of society and regulated by culturally defined sets of rules and customs.

It is pertinent to note that marriage in the patriarchal society is associated with the passing out of girls from their natal residence. As it is patrilocal the shift of residence and locality is usually undertaken by the bride and she becomes identified with the family of her husband. In the society where patrilineal descent principle regulates the possession of property, marriage definitely affects the status of the bride's family. Here the consideration of property, numerical strength and the concomitant power and influence are among the determinants of matrimonial alliances.

A few authoritative studies are at hand to help analyse the various dimensions of marriage. We may refer to the studies made by Kapadia (1966), Karve (1968), Mayer (1960), Zaidi (1970), Ellickson (1972), Islam (1974), Qadir (1981), and Hossain (1981) which analyse marriage in relation to occupation, caste, economic possession and social status. But these studies have not thoroughly touched upon political marriages cases, of which I have found many in Ratanpur.

### Key Concepts Defined

*Political marriage* : It includes those marriages which are politically significant. The concept is used here to refer to those marriages of the village that are associated with the purpose of strengthening village power base.

*Power* : The term is indicative of the existing structural relationship mirrored by interaction of persons or groups of persons differentiated by socio-economic positions. The concept of power defined as 'control over men and command over resources' (Bailey 1960:10) may be useful for understanding the nature of domination at the microlevel.

*Matrimonial alliance* : Literally it means union of persons, families by marriage. The concept is used here to indicate the process of entering into of an alliance through the ties of marriage. The alliance between kin groups is politically significant as will be clear in the present analysis.

*Samaj* : A social grouping bounded upon reciprocal relationship, common identity and strong neighbourhood generated by the proximity of residence.

**Lineage:** The villagers use the term *gushti* to refer to their lineages. So the concept is used to indicate a group of kin tracing their relationship to near or distant ancestors. The identification of a lineage emanates from having a common ancestor. A daughter belonging to the *gushti* of her father is included in that of her husband upon marriage. Therefore after marriage she is identified with another *gushti* but does not shun her fellowship in the *gushti* of her paternal home. Lineage may sometimes develop into a wider network of kinship relations transcending the village boundary to include within its bounds those living elsewhere.

**Political alliance:** This concept is used to refer to an alliance among political groups. A host of kin groups may be united into a political alliance integrating their economic and political interests through the formation of marital alliance. In this sense marriage plays a conspicuous role in the shaping of the structure of political alliance.

**Methodology:** The village was surveyed intensively and the case study method supplemented other methods of experiment for a better reliability and validity of data. Hence the project was a complete enumeration of the field. House to house survey was made to become acquainted with the respondents and the overall society. Within the framework of the peasant society the stratification of the village into various socio-economic groups is clear-cut. Hence different segments of the population were reckoned with in the census survey.

The mainstay of the methodology was participant observation. This method was followed by observing the villagers at works. This was for securing a better insight into the situation. The method of participant observation was supplemented by questionnaire method. The questionnaire was prepared after making a preliminary village census. The data collected on interesting events of village life were discussed with the key informant. As a result some mistakes and misinformation were avoided. The collected information were written down in a diary and note book. Geneologies of the dominant kin groups and their affinal connections were taken to cross-check relations of kinsmen.

### Political Implication of Marriage

The notion that "most village marriages have motives", is entertained by the villagers. The talks with the villagers and with the key informants as regards rural marriages have put me in a position where I can measure the applicability of such a notion. In the community where internal cliques and factional politics characterise the power relationship marriage arrangement is certainly full of political motives.

The consideration of numerical support compels the village leaders to go for strategic alliances. So in the cases of strategic alliances the

selection of mates is regulated by the political interest of the parties involved in the marital commitment. In this section the two aspects of political marriage, first, marriage within the circle of kin, and second, inter *gushti* marriage, will suffice to elaborate and explain the political implication of marriage.

### 1. Marriage Within the Circle of Kin

In the village there is a tendency to seek marital alliance outside the circle of kin. Nevertheless there are some cases of intra-*gushti* marriage. In Ratanpur parallel cousin marriage is very frequent. Within the same *gushti* marriage is possible. But one cannot marry any member of his or her conjugal natal household. There may be two kinds of parallel cousin marriages, patrilateral parallel cousin marriage and matrilateral parallel cousin marriage. In the patriarachal village the high frequency of patrilateral parallel cousin marriage is obvious. The wealthier section as well the status holders of the village practise this type of marriage to further their political interests. This marriage pattern effects compromise and good fraternal relations between the interacting households, thus maintaining cohesion in the *gushti*. The political implication of this marriage may be reflected in the following case studies.

*Case-1.* There was a marriage transaction within the *gushti* of a dominant Shaikh *bari*. This *gushti*, though influential, was not economically very enterprising. Madari Shaikh, a defacto *pradhan*<sup>2</sup> of Uttarpara had three brothers. He entered into marriage alliance with his younger brother by marrying his daughter to his brother's son. In this way he could stop the flight of the strategic resource and safeguarded the interest of the *gushti*. Such a marriage made his hand much stronger and fostered cohesion in the *gushti*.

*Case-2.* This is another case of parallel cousin marriage aiming at the liquidation of the internal misunderstanding between the two households. Karim Paramanik arranged this political marriage. Once Karim Paramanik had dispute with Hasan Paramanik over a small amount of land. Karim Paramanik who had strong rivals in the village arranged this parallel cousin marriage to put an end to this dispute. Such a marriage union was possible because of Karim Paramanik's political intention to avoid impending disintegration in the *gushti*—a gesture highly appreciated by his *gushti* members.

*Case-3.* This is another important case that deserves attention. This is a case of parallel cousin marriage between Bashir Sarkar's son and

<sup>2A</sup> *Paradhan* enjoys the highest political position in the study village. A defacto *pradhan* enjoys a political status which is not acknowledged by the villagers ; yet his influence in the informal body politic is high.

Tasher Sarkar's daughter. Bashir Sarkar has two sons and one daughter. His sons, he thinks, are not strong enough to fight out any difficulties in the event of land conflict with his rival. He said, "If I die bequeathing the landed property to my two sons, I am afraid they cannot keep it." His apprehension arises from the story of a land dispute in which he lost much of his land falling easy prey to vicious village politics. Now he possesses only ten *bighas* (1 bigha = .33 acre) of fertile land along the *bil* (swamp). The lines of demarcation are not clear. To protect his property he reinforced his relation with Tasher Sarker through this parallel cousin marriage. Tasher Sarker is an able man, maintaining good relation with the village *pradhans*. This marriage, thus, was contracted with a view to solidifying the relationship in the *gushti*—an expression of unity of a small group to survive in the body politic.

Thus, within the circle of kin there are certain relatives among whom marriage is preferential in special circumstances. The significance of this pattern of marriage may be as follows :

Table I  
Types of Marriage between Kin

| Sl No. | Husband's relation to wife                  | Number | Percentage |
|--------|---|--------|------------|
| 1.     | Father's brother's daughter                 | 16     | 39.0       |
| 2.     | Father's sister's daughter                  | 6      | 14.6       |
| 3.     | Father's father's brother's son's daughter  | 3      | 7.3        |
| 4.     | Mother's father's brother's son's daughter  | 2      | 4.9        |
| 5.     | Brother's wife's mother's sister's daughter | 2      | 4.9        |
| 6.     | Sister's husband's brother's daughter       | 5      | 12.2       |
| 7.     | Sister's husband's sister's daughter        | 3      | 7.3        |
| 8.     | Brother's wife's mother's sister's daughter | 2      | 4.9        |
| 9.     | Brother's wife's sibling's daughter         | 2      | 4.9        |
| Total  |   | 41     | 100        |

Source : Field work

First, households linked through kinship relations are of similar standing in respect of social and cultural background. Marriage among cousins is felt to be desirable. "Muslims encourage marriage between cousins because they believe that similar background guarantees stability of the marriage and the family." (Zaidi 1970 : 49).

Second, such a marriage among the agnates contributes largely to the reinforcement of kinship relation.

And last, it serves to strengthen the cohesion and solidarity of the agnatic kin by keeping the property within the *gushti*. "According to the Muslim law of inheritance, a son is entitled to two-thirds share of his father's property ; a daughter, to one-third share. Thus girls marrying outside the family would take away their share of the property to their husband's family (Zaidi 1970:49). Aminul Islam has beautifully depicted the significance of landed property in the *gushti* relationship in the following way (1974:67-68).

The corporateness of the *gushtican* also be observed in the attitude the household heads display towards their landed property, especially cultivated land. Since cultivated land is difficult to obtain, easy to misplay, and is the source of much conflict, the household heads of the *gushthi* agree that land should not go out of the *gushthi*. This tendency to keep property in the *gushthi*, even in the absence of collective property ownership by the group, reflects the corporateness of the *gushthi*.

Thus the analysis of marriages among the agnates with the examples from the village represents a pattern of influential *gushtis* seeking greater unity and consolidating the interests of the individual households.

Table I shows high frequency of patrilineal parallel cousin marriage (1. father's brother's daughter). Cross coupling marriage (2 father's sister's daughter) constitutes 14.6%. It is interesting to note that most marriages of the first four types are within the village. Marriage of the last six types are 39%. All these marriages within the collaterals and affines involved the village with outside villages, for the paternal homes of the wives are located outside the village.

### Inter-*gushti* Marriage

Regarding the inter-*gushti* marriage political consideration is extremely important. This type of marriage has the effect of spreading affinal ties in different sections of the village. So marriage links to different *gushtis* strengthen cross-cutting relationships, and widen the circle of relatives. The tendency of the weak *gushti* is to try to enter into a marital

alliance with the strong *gushti*. The motive behind this marriage is to obtain support and protection from the influential affine. The strong *gushti* is motivated by the consideration of numerical importance. The following case mirrors the political significance of affinal relationship between two *gushtis*.

*Case-4.* Korban Ali Shaikh comes from a weak *gushti*. This *gushti* settled in this village recently. Economic solvency of Korban Ali enabled him to enter into the marriage alliance with the *gushti* of Akbar Shaikh of Purbapara. These two *gushti* were close to each other, but falling in two separate *paras*. As village politics is a politics of factions, the purpose of this marriage was to create a strong ally. As for Korban Ali, he wanted the support of a strong *bari* to cope with the village political processes. So he entered into a marriage alliance with Akbar Shaikh to increase his present political status. Akbar Shaikh, a hereditary *pradhan*, wished to have a support of Korban Ali to exert his influence in the Purbapara.

The political significance of marriage lies in its effect in creating new kinds of loyalty. The village leaders desire further extension of their influence. The spread effect of affines expands the 'zone of influence' by creating a host of indirect relations. In this sense affinal links influence the groupings and alignments inside the village. This pattern will be reflected in the following case of political marriage.

*Case-5.* Rahim Mirza, a hereditary *pradhan*, is very dominant in the power politics of Uttarpara. After he was elected as member of the union parishad in the election of 1973 he established affinal relationship with Habibur Rahman, a leader of a weak *gushti*. During the new union parishad election of 1976 Rahim Mirza did not step down from the contest. The reason was to keep the present leadership position in his *gushti*. The atmosphere of the election opened up wide scope for factional politics and for 'politicking' among the contending groups. The village was divided into many splinter groups. The rivals of Rahim Mirza articulated the candidacy of the men they nominated. Amidst this situation Rahim sought the help of his affine Habibur Rahman Mondal. Habibur Rahman, who had an affinal link with Akbar Sikdar, requested him on behalf of Mirza to mould his *gushti* opinion in favour of Mirza, and he received favourable response. In this way Rahim could create a political field in Sikdar's circle through his affine Habibur Rahman. Again there was an amity between Akbar Sikdar and Aminuddin. Using his influence Rahim made a great show of political skill and dexterity by arranging a political marriage between Sikdar's son and Aminuddin's daughter that occurred sometime before the election of 1976. On behalf of Habibur's affine, Akbar requested Aminuddin to mobilise his *gushti*

votes and received a promise of his ceaseless co-operation. Again Aminuddin had an affinal link with Nimai Paramanik. By virtue of such affinity Aminuddin Sarkar could easily approach him and through him conjured up a significant portion of his *gushti* votes.

The above case clearly shows the political significance of martial alliance. The extension of kinship through marriage did influence a significant portion of the rural electorate. Such an alliance went a long way in successfully counteracting the factional tendencies of the strong opponent inside the village. Mirza's affinal link with Habibur Rahman was the stepping stone of forming a strong support base containing five lineage segments. Mirza owed the support of Akbar to Habibur Rahman, for Akbar was affinally related to Habibur Rahman. Following his kinship link with Habibur Rahman Mirza's relation with Akbar may be referred to as 'indirect one'. For example, if A is affine to B, and B is affine to C, then A is indirectly related to C. In this way the marriage generates indirect relations that ultimately cohere into a political group through the successful engineering and manoeuvring of the affines. This pattern can be represented diagrammatically (see Figure 1). This type of

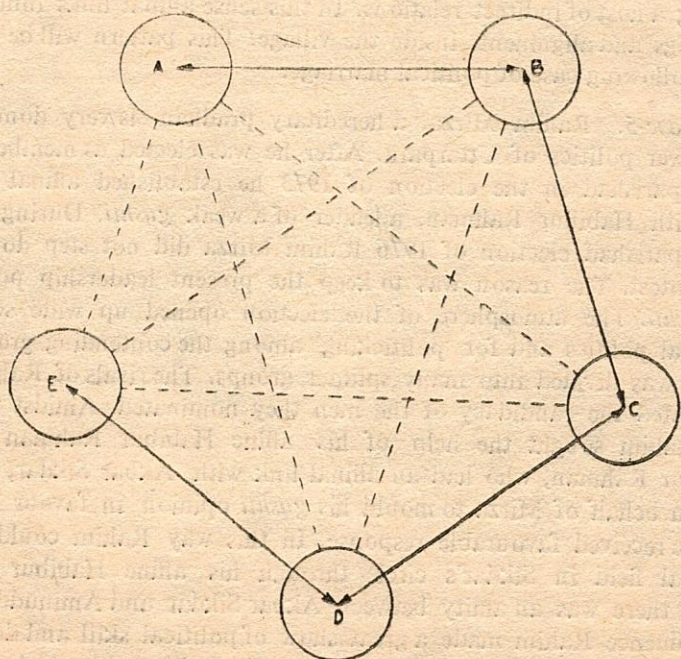


Fig. 1: A model of Political Alliance based on Affinal Relations among Five *Gushtis*

marital alliance has a strong repercussion on the formation of the faction of Mirza.

In Figure 1, the five circles centred at the five corners of the regular pentagon represent five different *gushtis* forming a strong support base through the chain mechanism of affinal relationship. The double arrowed solid lines indicate direct affinal links between any two *gushtis*. The dotted lines form an indirect kinship network. A represents Mirza *gushti*, B Habibur Rahman's *gushti*, C Sikdar *gushti*, D Sarkar *gushti*, and E paramanik *gushti*.

In Ratanpur leadership depends on numerical strength. But the question that remains is how to make that strength? The *gushtis* that are numerically weak in relation to dominant *gushtis* endeavour to structure their groupings which also include a good number of affines. In doing so they do not feel reluctant to go into marital alliance with the *gushtis* of low economic status. This political motive may be expressed by the following case study.

Case-6. One Majumdar *gushti* headed by Rashid Majumdar used his present influence and allied with three small *gushtis* through exchange of marriageable sons and daughters. These three small *gushtis* were Khan (Makid) *bari*, Shaikh (Dhiraj) *bari*, and Paramanik (Golap) *bari*. The interacting households of Majumdar *bari* exchanged their children with one medium rank farmer of Khan *bari*, one small farmer of Shaikh *bari* and one landless farmer from Paramanik *bari*. These marriages were arranged by Rashid Majumdar. They went along way in creating a 'block of small groups'.

Therefore the tendency to enlarge the group is found in the pattern of marriage between dominant and subordinate *gushtis*. As a result the interests of the 'vulnerable sections are assimilated and the internal structure of leadership is shaped.

Figure 2 represents this pattern. In the figure the circle at the centre represents Rashid Majumdar's *gushti* having seven households, the triangle represents Khan *bari* consisting of three households, and the square represents Golap Paramanik *bari* containing four households and the hexagon represents Dhiraj Shaikh's *bari* having six households.

The arrows show affinal links of Majumdar *bari* to the three other *baris* subservient to it. These affinal links expand the influence of Majumdar *bari* and thereby form a circle of larger circumference.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>This research is based on limited number of case studies. Therefore it is limited in its application as a general principle. There might be some cases where different combinations or unfavourable relations may be detected.

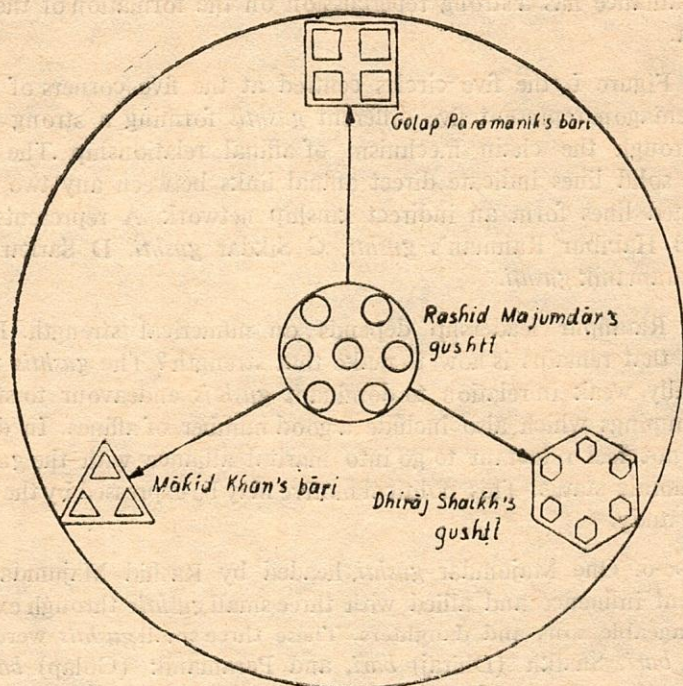


Fig. 2 : Political Alliance based on Affinal Relations among Four Gushtis

### Conclusion

Therefore it is clear that the village leaders use affinal ties to acquire political power. The village leaders always support the entering into of strategic marriages. The consideration of potential political influence in some proposed marriages overrides the usual preferences for marriage, thus relating even two families representing contrasting socio-economic status. Two cases of political marriages in the study village (see Fig. -1 & Fig. -2) as an expression of electoral alliance involved number of small lineage segments. Two separate blocks containing small corporate kin groups were formed to fight the election battle. This situation is analogous to what Barth (1965:104) spoke of : a series of alliances of small corporate groups to form blocks.

The political significance of marriage, therefore, leads us to say that marriage alliance creates new groups of relatives and regulates recruitment in factions and as such affects the power structure. In many cases of political marriages, marriage link may be looked upon as a symbol of political alliances.

On the basis of limited findings these conclusions suggest themselves. However, this study does not hint that everything went well after the marriage. The myriad shapes that political marriage can take must be examined in the backdrop of conflictual model of rural power structure. This paper will expect a thorough and separate treatment of this phenomenon.

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# Accommodation and Efficiency at Industrial Work : Case of Bengali Peasant Migrants in Britain

Md. Mainul Islam

The advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe during the post second World War years and, particularly in the 1960s, were determined to maintain full employment for compelling political reasons. This policy almost dried up the industrial reserve army available within national frontiers. Consequently Britain along with other West European countries had to look for non-traditional sources of labour reserves. Admission and recruitment of immigrant workers from underdeveloped countries is a modern version of the traditional industrial reserve army in Western Europe including Britain. Bengali immigrants as a part of the coloured labour force in Britain went there in response to the need of the British economy of the 1960s to fill up certain important gaps and perform certain important functions for the British industry.

The majority of Bengali workers went to Britain having experience in a traditional agriculture only. An attempt will be made here to analyse and evaluate the extent to which these peasants from the simple and traditional environment of subsistence farming were able to accommodate themselves to sophisticated and highly disciplined industrial work in an economically advanced country. Their accommodation with industrial work is also an indicator of the level of their efficiency at work. The data for the present article was collected in course of field work by the author for his Ph.D. thesis under Prof. V. A. Allen of the School of Economic Studies, University of Leeds, England in 1976.

The term 'accommodation' is used here rather than 'adaptation' because the latter bears close resemblance to the concept of 'labour commitment' over which an elaborate theory has been built up. The main assertion of this is that to be a good or efficient factory worker, the labour force must be 'committed' or, in other words, they must accept the norms and values of industrial work and the way of life based on it. Moore and Feldman put it as follows :

"Commitment involves both performance and acceptance of the behaviours appropriate to an industrial way of life. The concept

is thus concerned with overt actions and with norms. The fully committed worker, in other words, has internalised the norms of the new productive organization and social system. By implication, therefore, there are degrees of commitment and partial substitutions....."<sup>1</sup>

In a similar vein, Kerr *et. al.* also talk about 'industrial man' who has the necessary 'commitment'. They too, defined commitment as a process of 'achieving of the workers' permanent attachment to and acceptance of industrial employment as a way of life.'<sup>2</sup>. They considered that commitment was a long and intricate process and there were "four stages or points on the continuum of behavioural change which mark the transition of the work force from a traditional society into adherence to an industrial way of life."<sup>3</sup>

According to the stages of commitment, workers were grouped into four categories : the uncommitted ; the partially committed ; the generally committed ; and the specifically committed worker. Workers at every state of commitment had their distinct levels and indicators of efficiency.

In the case of workers belonging to the first two categories, absenteeism and labour turnover were found to be abnormally high. They tended to maintain strong ties with their family and society in rural areas. As a result they were found to oscillate between traditional and industrial life, which resulted in their lower efficiency and productivity.

Workers in the third category were tolerably efficient a great drop was seen in the percentage of turnover and absenteeism. But by far the most efficient worker was the over-committed one, who had not only severed his connection with the land and stuck to industrial work, but has developed a permanent attachment to a particular type of work of firm. Such a worker "has largely lost his mobility ; turnover is low and security is high, as industrial life becomes bureaucratized and feudalized."<sup>4</sup>

As it will appear from the above, commitment theorists consider industrial behaviour of a labour force as a function of overt actions and norms. Particular emphasis is placed on norms which go hand-in-hand with the new productive organization and social system. The whole concept of commitment is considered as a product of a new culture emerging from the new system of production and social system. The sooner workers from traditional and backward peasant societies can accept this new culture appropriate to the factory system of production, the greater the level of efficiency. Efficiency of a labour force has therefore no material basis ; it is all an acceptance of and acting according to new factory culture.

The data in the following pages will, however, show that Bengalis coming from rural and peasant societies and used only to non-industrial work have proved themselves to be efficient industrial workers in Britain without going through any elaborate stages as commitment theorists would like to imply. My findings are, however, nothing new in the field. Research in the developing countries of Africa and Asia has borne out the fact that people from traditional peasant societies joining modern industries may have excellent records of discipline, time-keeping and adherence to work. Their rates of turn-over and absenteeism remain at a surprisingly low level.

Walls and Warmington, in their investigation into the behaviour of the industrial labour force in Nigeria and the Comeroons found that it was possible to achieve a degree of stability with a labour force of a developing country, both of industrially advanced countries.<sup>5</sup>

In Nigeria, such a degree of stability was found to be true, not only in established concerns, who could be selective in hiring workers, but also in newer one where many workers turned up to early for work, despite the fact that they had to walk about four miles.<sup>6</sup>

Much has also been said about the rate of turnover among workers from developing countries because of the oscillatory nature of their migration between rural and industrial areas. But it has been proved by the experience of industrialization in several developing countries that provided the right conditions are made available in the shape of adequate wages, proper housing and some kind of social security, periodic circulation of workers between urban and rural areas tends to cease and a surprising degree of stability in the work force does takes place.

This was borne out by the experience of the copper mines of Zambia and Zaire where a system of oscillating migrant workers was replaced with a stable labour force by a deliberate and successful policy of the management. Positive inducement were made in the form of improved housing facilities, the provision of adequate schooling and training, and a "generous pension scheme which made workers think twice before leaving".<sup>7</sup>

It is not my intention here to say that workers from peasant societies do not encounter any difficulties at the initial stage of their work in industries. There are difference in the nature and environment of these two types of work. Industrial work often demands a different and rigid set of rules to be obeyed by workers, frequently under the threat of punishment. These rules are embodied in the authority structure, time and speed of work, rules and routines. attendance must be at the right time and place ; tasks are mostly specialized and have to be carried

out at a speed set by machine. By contrast, the nature and sequence of activities in a peasant economy are determined by the natural environment and the rhythm of the seasons. Industrial work requires sustained effort for a set period of time, year in and year out, while work in subsistence farming is sessional. Besides continuous and permanent work, industrial work also involves regular wage-earning, which is not the case in peasant farming.

These differences do give rise to some difficulties in accommodation to the new environment during the initial period of industrial work. But these difficulties faced by workers from peasant societies in the new work situation of industries are not so formidable as to warrant a long and intricate process of commitment in order to become efficient workers, as the protagonists of the commitment theory would like us to believe.

Periodic turnover and long periods of absence which are found with industrial workers from rural peasant societies are not caused by their non-acceptance of industrial work or way of life ; but by their need for the kind of security and support which a traditional rural society can offer far better than an urban-industrial society. It is because of this that we find the phenomenon of periodic or seasonal migration among workers from developing countries. Where positive steps have been taken to alleviate these short-comings and a minimum of amenities and securities of life have been made available such periodic rural-urban migration with consequent absenteeism has ceased as in the case of workers in the copper belts of Zambia and Zaire.

In fact, there is very little reason for a work force to go through any long or intricate process of commitment to turn into a satisfactory labour force. Nor is there any cogent reason for a duely in their loyalties between a traditional and an industrial way of life. The point is that a worker comes to a factory to work to earn his livelihood, and he obviously does so from necessity. The importance of earning a livelihood on the worker's side and the rigid rules, discipline and bureaucratic organization of modern industrial work leaves hardly any room for a gradual process of transition for a worker. He has to respond to the organizational and technological demands of the work instantaneously, as required.

Coming back to our theme of accommodation and efficiency at work, it was found during our investigation that the Bengalis in Britain accommodated to their new work discipline remarkably well. An important indicator of their acceptance of work discipline is their willingness to accept orders. It was universally cited by the respondents that one of their greatest virtues and an important reason for being recruited

by some employers was that they ungrudgingly accept orders and work-rules.

"We rarely argue with the foreman and do what ever we are told to do—this is why we are recruited in some of the factories in Britain"—was a remark often made.

That the level of general discipline among Asian workers was high was also found by some other investigators. During his interview survey, Wright found a majority of the managers were of the opinion that Asians were more amenable to discipline.<sup>8</sup> Similar views were found among managers of hosiery mills by Pulls in his investigation : "The widely held explanation was that Indians were more prepared to take orders, and are more reliable than British workers. One personnel manager said that the answer to the docks problem would be to "sack the dockers and replace them with Ugandan Asians". Another said that "if Jaguar cars had a labour force of the Asian concentration such as we do they would really be making their money".<sup>9</sup>

While these statements show an attitude of paternalism on the part of management, nevertheless, they also admit that a greater degree of discipline is shown by Asian workers.

Bengalis were also found to be excellent time-keepers. They were neither late starters nor early leavers. In most cases they found to report at work at least 15-30 minutes early. This was found among Asian workers at the Mansfield Hosiery Mill, Loughborough, where there were about thirty Bengalis. According to a Sunday Times reporter, Asians regularly turned up for half an hour before the strating time.<sup>10</sup>

Besides starting on time or ahead of time, it was reported by several respondents that the majority of them continue to work until the last minute. It is probably because of this that the Personnel Manager of a factory told Peter Wright that the Pakistanis would "do as they were told until the cows come home".<sup>11</sup>

Managers in the Walshall Metal Trades also spoke of the excellent record of time-keeping among Asian workers to Dennis Brooks during his enquiry.<sup>12</sup>

The higher degree of acceptance of and accommodation to discipline at work by the Bengalis is a product of their great motivation to work and to earn money. This, however, in the very logic of their situation, lies in their leaving the familiar world of home and family and taking a long journey to an unknown foreign land. Another reason for their successful accommodation is the sense of fear, insecurity and inferiority installed in them by the prevalent racism in Britain and poverty in

Bangladesh. Prejudice and hostility towards coloured immigrants breed insecurity and fear, and the increasingly severe poverty in Bangladesh leaves them with no other choice than to seek their fortune in Britain. These are the variables which account for much of their compliance with and discipline at work.

Let us now take up two specific measures of accommodation and efficiency at work.

### **Turnover**

An important measure of accommodation and efficiency at work of a labour force is their rate of turnover. Separation from a job arises either from the exercise of free will to choose among alternative jobs (also called voluntary turnover) or the obligation to seek new employment as a result of lay off or redundancy (also called involuntary turnover).

So far as the latter is concerned, no systematic data was collected about lay-offs or redundancies among Bengalis. But during my field study a good deal of evidence was found which showed that when a factory was closed down or a general recession occurred, Bengalis, as a part of the coloured work force were among the first to be laid off as they were mainly unskilled and specially vulnerable.

Unemployment among coloured workers rises much faster than among the white population in a general recession was confirmed by recent Government statistics. The British under Secretary for Employment, in a speech in Birmingham on 4th September 1975, said that unemployment among coloured workers rose by 156% between November 1973 and May 1975, compared with a rise of 65% for the white community.<sup>13</sup> Due to more favourable labour market situations during the period when data on absenteeism and turnover was collected, no wide-spread redundancies among the Bengalis were however found.

We are therefore mainly concerned here with voluntary turnover among Bengalis, and the present study<sup>14</sup> showed this to be at a very low level.

However, it was higher at the time of their first arrival in the U.K. about 11 to 15 years ago when a large number of them came. It appears from the data that they moved from place to place and from job to job, from brickfields to bakeries, from textiles to foundries and from rubber factories to asbestos plants in search of good wages and pleasant work conditions, but they failed.<sup>15</sup> "Eventually they settled down in those places where steady work with reasonably good wages were available.

In the course of this present study, the work histories of 100 Bengali manual workers were collected; and on analysis it was found that over the ten years to 1972, 68% and 72% of the jobs held by the semi-skilled and unskilled Bengalis respectively lasted for about 2 years and six months. The average duration of employment in a job was slightly over 2 years.

This contrasts sharply with the rate of turnover amongst unskilled and semi-skilled British manual workers. Quoting a Labour Mobility Survey for British workers, Gordon Rose said that over ten years from 1952 to 1962, 70% of the jobs held by unskilled men lasted less than 1 year. The corresponding figure for non-manual partly skilled men was 62%.<sup>16</sup> Although this data for British workers are slightly outdated, making it difficult to make an accurate comparison, it nonetheless provides us with some valid indication of the trend among British workers.

The low rate of turnover for coloured workers is also corroborated by Bosanquet. Writing in a report on Race and Employment in Britain, Bosanquet said in 1972 :

"However, unlike black workers in the United States, they (coloured immigrants) do not appear to change jobs more frequently than similarly situated whites, at least in recent years. Partly this may be because discrimination may limit their alternative employment. But partly because it may be because they are keen to accumulate savings to send home. For whatever reason, they do not exhibit high labour turnover on the pattern found in the black labour market in the United States . . . ."<sup>17</sup>

Peter Wright during his research in 1961 and 1962 on coloured workers in British industry found the same evidence to warrant the same conclusion on the rate of turnover among coloured workers. Results of his questionnaire survey showed that 48% of the respondents (firms) stated that labour turnover was lower amongst coloured workers than amongst white 33% stated that it was about the same; and only 19% stated that it was higher. In the interview survey, 54% stated that labour turnover was lower amongst coloured workers than amongst white; 19% stated that it was about the same and 27% stated that it was higher. Naturally, therefore, Wright found no higher rate of labour turnover amongst coloured workers. Rather he concluded that while a few managers still believed that labour turnover rates were higher among coloured workers, the majority were of the opinion that they were as slow or even lower, and more often the latter.<sup>18</sup>

Several case studies made in Leeds about Bengali turnover pattern and behaviour bear this out. A typical case was that of S.A., a foundry

labourer, whose job was to lay out and remove heavy cores after molten metal was poured in. He had quite a few accidents and received several injuries. He was about 50 years old, and the work was hard for him ; but on being advised to change over to an easier job in view of his age, he replied :

"I can not leave my present job and go out looking for another one because I am not sure when another will be available. It may take a month or two if I am lucky, but it may take more than that. Even if I get a job, I am not sure what the wages will be or the conditions of work. Also, if I leave my job voluntarily, I shall not only lose wages during the intervening period, but also several weeks' unemployment benefit.<sup>19</sup> I have only been back from Bangladesh for six months and I contracted a good deal of debt during my stay there. Now I need to repay that money. Over and above, unprecedented floods have washed away all my standing crops at home, and almost famine conditions prevail there. I am receiving letters from my family that they are in dire need of money."

Several views making the same points were made by a large number of respondents. Another, stated by W. Meah from Leeds is worth quoting here. In reply to my enquiry about the turnover pattern and behaviour amongst Bengalis, he said :

"If he can earn the right amount of money (about £ 30 a week), a Bengali does not like to change jobs. This is because : (a) he knows full well he won't get another easily. If he leaves his present one voluntarily without having another job ready, he loses not only wages at his present job, but also unemployment benefit for several weeks. In any case, you should keep in mind that our people do not want unemployment benefit which means subsistence money.

(b) Even if he has the chance of getting another job, he does not like to run to and fro because the days lost in interview, joining, learning the job and accommodation to the new work environment or even moving from one town to another if necessary—all these mean loss, financially and psychologically. If a Bengali loses two week's wages, he can only make it up by working for 12 weeks. So even if the wages are slightly lower, generally a Bengali sticks to his job."<sup>20</sup>

The serious difficulty in having alternative employment is found to be the most important reason for the rate of turnover, and this was stated by almost all respondents.

A Bengali worker employed in a wine bottling factory in Bromely, London, said that he had found jobs were very scarce for coloured people

in Britain. It was not easy for them to get a job. If vacancies arise for pleasant jobs, white workers are available, and 'they' get first priority in employment. He said that coloured workers are employed only when white workers are not available in sufficient numbers for the dirty, heavy or otherwise unpleasant jobs with relatively low pay. He added that in his bottling plant, most of the workers were Asians. The reason for this was the great pressure at work caused by the speed of the conveyor belt, rotating nature of the shift and comparatively low hourly wages.

Similar reasons were cited by many respondents for the low rate of turnover:

"We do not change jobs frequently. We don't have many jobs to go around. Frequent change means losing money, which in its turn means less saving, lower remittances and more delay in returning home. And what is the use in changing jobs? All jobs are of the same quality. Good work is never available to us. By good work, I mean a job which is easier, more pleasant and with better wages, good foreman and work-mates."<sup>21</sup>

(M. V. ; a plastics worker in Startford, London)

"Our people leave jobs most reluctantly. They cling to a job as long as they can earn a reasonable wages and work does not become unbearable. I have been trying to bring my wife and children over to Britain, and I need at least 1,000 to pay all the expenses for the trip. If I don't work, where shall I get the necessary money?"

(A. S., Clothing worker, Tower Hamlets, E. London)

"We do not leave our jobs as often because we don't have many other jobs available to us. Moreover, we don't like to remain unemployed."<sup>22</sup>

(N. I., a bus conductor with London Transport)

Fear of losing wages and work, and severe difficulty in finding alternative employment were found to be the chief constraints to higher turnover among the Bengalis. That the difficulty in obtaining alternative employment was a formidable reason behind the low rate of turnover among coloured workers in Britain was also found by Wright. Several managers in Wright's survey attributed the low rate of turnover amongst coloured workers to the difficulties of obtaining alternative employment.

This is not at all surprising as we have already seen that the Bengalis are concentrated in a very narrow labour market which consists of few specific industries, occupations and shifts with the worst jobs and conditions of work.

This is a fact which was once again brought to light by a recent P.E.P. report which said :

"We have already established that labour turnover is no higher among the minorities than among white workers: in fact it is, if anything, lower. This means that an Asian or West Indian has to make about twice as many job applications as a white person before finding a job. It would be hard to explain this by assuming that the experience of applicants from the minority groups was inferior, since these are nonskilled jobs, for which little, if any, experience is required." The report continues:

".....this suggests that on an average, white applicants are given preference. The effect of this is that the minorities are used as a marginal source of labour."

An important factor restricting mobility of Bengalis is the severe limitation of opportunities for alternative jobs. Coupled with it is the concern felt by them about losing wages during the intervening period of leaving one job and getting another.

The major reason for the high turnover amongst British manual workers as found by a Government survey of labour mobility between 1953 and 1963 was dislike of the present work and the desire to have a better job.<sup>23</sup> Whether they like them or not, Bengalis tend to cling to their jobs because they do not have many other jobs to go to, as we have already noted. This persistence to remain at a job, unless becoming unbearable mainly for reasons outside works, was found to be the dominant feature of their attitude towards mobility or turnover at work. However, their severance from work comes when they decide to go back to Bangladesh. In that case, they completely withdraw from the British labour market and go for an extended visit to Bangladesh in order to live a normal family life.

According to the present survey, the average length of immigration (counting from the day they first arrived in Britain) of 100 Bengali manual workers, was found to be about 13 years, up to June 1973.

The duration of each stay in the U.K. was 4 years 2 months on average. After the first arrival they were found to have made two extended visits to Bangladesh, each lasting an average of 17 months. This is a situation which is more or less forced upon them by the long separation from their families.

Once they get a job which is steady and tolerably good, and wages are reasonably satisfactory, they therefore stick to it, work for long

hours as and when necessary, live austere, and save as much as possible, either to go back to Bangladesh for a prolonged stay with their families or to bring them over to Britain, which is the recent trend.

### Absenteeism

An important evidence of successful accommodation to industrial work is the low rate of absenteeism. Obviously, high absenteeism is an indication of an inadequate or a lower level of accommodation and efficiency.

As has already been shown, the majority of Bengali workers in Britain were peasants before migrating to the U.K. an examination of their rate of absenteeism will provide an important measure of their accommodation to work in Britain.

The present survey data show that the average work days lost per man per year was 8.5. Data was available for 128 workers, of which 107 were manual workers and 21 office workers. The average for the manual workers was 9.1, while for office workers (routine clerical workers) it was 7.6 work days lost per man per year.

According to the General Household Survey of 1973, the average absence from work due to illness, injury, etc. among men in employment in 1971 in Britain was 9.1 days per man per year.<sup>24</sup> Apparently, comparison between the two averages does not show any gross difference. However, when one takes into account the fact that the figure for the U.K. as a whole consists of all groups of people, ranging from highly satisfied professional workers, employers and managers with a high rate of absence, the real difference becomes apparent.

The following table made from survey data, together with data from the General Household Survey, 1953, as quoted by Robert Taylor<sup>25</sup> shows the difference between the two absence rates in sharp relief:—

|                     | Average work days lost per man per year |                                   |
|---------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
|                     | Bengalis                                | All men in employment in the U.K. |
| Professionals       | Not applicable                          | 3.9                               |
| Employers/Managers  | Not applicable                          | 7.2                               |
| Junior non-manual   | Not applicable                          | 6.7                               |
| Office workers      | 7.6                                     | Nil                               |
| Skilled manual      | 7.4                                     | 9.3                               |
| Semi-skilled manual | 8.5                                     | 11.5                              |
| Unskilled manual    | 9.7                                     | 18.4                              |
| Average :           | 8.9                                     | 9.1                               |

From this table, it would appear that the Bengalis as a whole, and the unskilled manual workers in particular (who form the bulk of the Bengali workers in Britain) have a far lower rate of absence than the average for the U.K. in general. Peter Wright agreed to this view when he said :

".....although no systematic data were collected concerning attendance, the respondents who mentioned this subject invariably stated that it was better amongst coloured workers."<sup>26</sup>

Experiences in West Germany and France with immigrant workers also bear this out. According to Castles and Kosack, the rate of absenteeism due to illness for all workers in Germany was 5.5%, whereas for Italian it was only 4.56%, for Greeks it was 4.77%, for Spaniards 4.8%.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, a study carried out among 5,000 foreign workers in a Simca car factory in Paris region found that absenteeism for illness is lower amongst foreigners than among French workers, three to seven days per year being the average for the former group.<sup>28</sup>

It emerged very clearly in the course of field study that the Bengalis were anxious to give a good account of themselves at work. Besides good time keeping, their earnestness not to absent themselves from work unless compelled to by serious illness or circumstances, appeared as a most remarkable feature of their working life in Britain.

Several cases were found of Bengalis going to work with minor illness like slight fever, colds or 'flu, minor stomach upsets or pain in throat or ear.

Some of the respondents told me that they were reluctant to bring their families to Britain because they were afraid they would have to be absent more often because of sickness in the family. Their wives would not be able to call in or deal with a doctor as they were very conservative and would not be able to speak English, so that husband would have to take a sick wife or child to the doctor or to the hospital.<sup>29</sup> Not surprisingly, a good number of Bengalis stated that they had not been absent for a single day during the preceding 12 months.

It was also noticed that those who frequently stayed off their work for minor illness or without valid reason become the object of criticism and ridicule among fellow compatriots or inmates of the house in which they live. The reason for their attitude was that absence of this nature does not justify the cost the malingerer had paid to come to Britain in terms of separation from his family and the community and the obligation that he owes to them. He is criticised and ridiculed also because his frequent absence is an evidence of his failure to stand up to the challenge of work and life in Britain. A happy-go-lucky attitude of a fellow com-

patriot is considered to be a deviation from the norm of the majority, which is regular and—if necessary—overtime work, earning and saving money to support dependants at home and buying land or building 'pucca' or brick built houses.

But there is another reason. If he works in a group of Bengalis, his shortcomings threaten them in another way. His high absentee rate brings all of them into disrepute in the eyes of the management. They take care to guard against this, as the following case will show :

A. M., S. M., T. A. and R. A. were workers in a group of foundries in Leeds. When A. M. started absenting himself too much, the foreman used to ask his other compatriots where he was. In his absence three men had to do four men's work. They were scared and ashamed. So when A. M. returned, all three scolded him and asked the foremen to transfer A. M. to another department.

As the respondents added "one such man brings all his compatriots into disrepute. For no good reason a coloured man is already held in low esteem, and the shortcomings of one man brings a slur on all the others."

When the topics of absenteeism was put before a group of Bengalis, one after another respondent told of their low record of sickness and a dislike of going to doctors or hospitals.

During my stay with Bengali workers in Leeds, I caught influenza on several occasions. When I was found staying at home and taking medicine, some of them told me not to do this, because it only indulged the disease. The rough jobs they have to do, the rough attitude that they encounter inside and outside work, and the rough and bare life that they lead in the U.K.—all combine to make them tough, to endure and not to give into minor hazards of life.

### **Other reasons**

But there are other cogent reasons as well. Those are more or less the same reasons which account for the lower enjoyment of social security benefits on their part and even at the risk of being repetitive it is considered worthwhile to mention a few of them once again to emphasise the point I am going to make here. The majority of the Bengalis are single manual workers and are not paid during absence by the employers. Sickness benefit for a few single man during the survey period was found only little over seven pounds a week excluding rent. It was too meagre a sum for a Bengali who was a single man in Britain, but who had a larger responsibility to his family in Bangladesh. Besides, their maintenance at home, we have seen that he needs a considerable

sum of money for an extended visit every four years. Now that the major trend is to send for their families to come to Britain, a large sum of money is needed once again to finance their immigration. No wonder unemployment or sickness benefit is a positive disincentive to take time off. Moreover, there is the problem of completing forms in connection with giving a sick note and having to meet queries. For the overwhelming majority, uneducated in English, benefits available from a sick note for one or two days' absence are not considered to be worth the trouble. This point was made most frequently by single workers as the reason for not going absent for minor reasons.

The following remarks of a textile worker in Bradford was typical:

"I did not stay off work for a single day during the last 12 months because I did not suffer from any major illness. If I give a sick note, I would get only about 8. If I work, I got 28. Moreover, it is a big fuse to give a sick note for two or three days. Tell me which is better—to get 8 and take all the trouble of giving a sick note, or earning 28 at work."

The absence of family, friends, or any other suitable way to spend free time plays no insignificant role in lowering their rate of absenteeism. An inability to spend much on enjoying leisure, even if there was scope, was also limiting factor. One way of enjoying absence meaningfully is in the company of family and friends. As we have seen, the majority of Bengalis have no family with them. Friends are invariably compatriots who are hard to see during weekdays. Going to movies, dances, etc. involve expenditure which although a Bengali can afford, does not find it justifiable in view of the need to support his dependents and saving for his other aims.

A respondent from the London borough of Enfield said: "We do not go absent unless compelled to. What can we do at home? One cannot sleep all the time, nor can he talk to the walls. During weekdays all the inmates of the house, as well as all other compatriots living in the locality go to work. Where, then, can I go? I do not go to a pub because I am a Muslim and I don't drink. I do not go to the betting shop because I do not want to get into a habit of gambling. I do not feel like going to the cinema too often because I do not think this would be fair to my family who are having a very hard time with the crop failure in Bangladesh this year."

Besides losing wages and the lack of opportunity for any meaningful and inexpensive way of spending leisure time, there is a great

deal of concern over keeping their jobs. This constantly stops them taking leave other than unavoidable ones. Bengalis are fully aware of the fact that jobs are not easily available to them, as a group of coloured immigrants. More than normal absence on their part, despite valid reasons, invites prompt and sharp action from management. A number of instance of warning and dismissal in a discriminatory manner were given by the immigrants. As one respondent told me:

"We must always be on our toes to retain our jobs. What our white colleagues can easily indulge in, we don't dare to do. In our case, warnings come too quickly and dismissal orders will not be far behind if we go absent too often or for too long. And it is not easy for us to get another job."

In fact, absence for minor reasons, or voluntary absenteeism is very low and infrequent for a majority of Bengalis. But this is not true for a small minority who have their families with them, or those who have cut off all their ties with Bangladesh.

Our survey included 13 people with their wives and children in Britain, and 4 others who had ceased to have any link with their families at home for over 8 to 10 years. Absenteeism in their case was found higher on average 14.1 working days per year. The main reason behind this comparatively higher rate of absenteeism was the availability of social security benefits which were not far short their normal wages.

Although no definite trend of wilful absence or maligering was noticeable among this group during the course of observation or interviewing, it was found that those with families were not so desperate to work as the single immigrants. Consequently workers with families felt freer to take a few days off with minor ailments. Besides higher rate of social security benefits helping to mitigate much of the financial loss involved in absence, the presence of a family enabled the absentee to enjoy absence in meaningful ways.

However this comparatively higher rate of absenteeism is still confined to a small minority of Bengalis and that rate, too, is lower than the national average for manual workers. This is because of the awareness of the fact that their opportunities in the labour market are very limited. They also maintain close ties with their extended family back home and still need to support them financially.

The subject of absenteeism has come in for much discussion and has assumed great importance in recent years, not because of a rise in absence due to genuine illness, but because of massive voluntary absence in the Western industrial countries. The rising trend is not confined to

Britain alone. All the Western industrialised countries are experiencing the same phenomenon. Sweden, with high wages and a high standard of living, has a rate of absenteeism which rose by 60% from 1962-69. Germany, Denmark and Italy show similar trends."<sup>30</sup>

This rising trend of absenteeism, despite improved working conditions and rising living standards has been termed by Dr. I. Gadovick of the University of Groningen, Holland, as "one of the paradoxes of post-war development in Western countries."<sup>31</sup>

This paradox can be better understood when one takes it as a phenomenon of deliberate absence and this is stressed by the Department of Employment when it says :

".....the enormous increases in sickness absence associated with the introduction of sick pay schemes cannot wholly be ascribed to genuinely sick workers.....For example, Buzzard and Shaw, in 1948-50 study of industrial workers in Government employment, reported a doubling of sickness absence, which was not to any extent accounted for by a reduction in absence of other kinds.....It can be seen that approximately 20% of cases fail to attend, while a further 10% to 20% submit evidence of recovery before examination. The implication could be drawn that something like 20% of cases of reported sickness absence may be spurious."<sup>32</sup>

While the majority of workers in Britain and in all other Western countries are not satisfied with their work, what is the attitude of the Bengalis ? Are they very satisfied with their work in Britain, as they have a lower rate of absence ?

The answer is an emphatic 'No'. During the present survey, not a single Bengali manual worker was found who was satisfied with his work. All but one respondent expressed dissatisfaction outright. One skilled worker, who said he was satisfied, in fact turned out to be not so much satisfied with his work; as with the money and status he enjoyed at the workplace as well as in the local Bengali community. The following two typical remarks illustrate the amount of dissatisfaction with which they hold their jobs in Britain :

"The type of work that we do here and the manner in which we are treated at work often makes us feel like going back home to eat just one frugal meal a day or even starve there instead of working here. We work in this country not for any pleasure from work, but because of the money—an amount of money which is impossible for us to earn at home."

(A textile worker from Bradford)

"All the worst jobs on earth are available for us in Britain. Why do we come back to this country again and again? We come back because of the money, good food, clothing and better medical care available in Britain."

(A foundry worker from Leeds)

Low paid, menial and unpleasant jobs can hardly be mentally rewarding. No worker, therefore, that the Bengalis in Britain strongly detest their work. It is because of such a strong dislike that most of them do not go absent unless they are compelled to. Untill 1972-73, when the economy and society in Bangladesh had not yet been ravaged by war, famine and flood, it was only by working more that they could minimise their stay in Britain. Since 1973, their aim has been to bring their families over to Britain, and fear of losing their jobs and wages, which would frustrate this aim, driven a men to work in order to achieve his adjective as quickly as possible.

To emphasise this important point again the low rate of absenteeism and turnover among the Bengalis does not mean that their work is inherently rewarding. Work is considered rather as a means of providing a better and more secure standard of living compared with the life offered by subsistence farming in Bangladesh. Work is therefore only means to an end, far from being an end in itself.

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# Problems of Working Capital Management in the Jute Mills of Bangladesh

Abhinaya Ch. Saha

Jute manufacturing industry is the premier manufacturing industry of Bangladesh and it has a key position in the national economy.

Bangladesh is a land of agriculture. Jute industry is the largest agro-based, labour intensive and export oriented industry of Bangladesh.<sup>1</sup> The industry constitutes about 85 per cent of the foreign exchange earnings, provides employment to 2 lakhs workers and employees which constitute about 22 per cent of the total industrial labour force of the country.<sup>2</sup> The First Five Year Plan of Bangladesh provides that all the jute mills must guarantee a fixed return of 7.5 per cent on the original investment.<sup>3</sup> Despite the emphasis on the rapid development of jute industry, it is a pity that all the jute mills had to incur heavy losses after nationalisation. The position of operating losses amounted to Tk. 245 crores in the jute mills of Bangladesh during 1972-73 to 1977-78. There was a negative net working capital of Tk. 5297 lakh during 1972-73.<sup>4</sup> Jaman,<sup>5</sup> Habibullah,<sup>6</sup> Ahmad,<sup>7</sup> Hoque<sup>8</sup> and others found that all the jute mills were suffering from acute shortage of net working capital due to excessive accumulation of inventory and receivables during 1972-73 to 1975-76. Taking clues from the above studies as well as that from review of related research and literature and keeping in mind the significance and relevance of the study to the jute mills and Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, the present study is planned.

## Statement of the Problem

The title of the present study reads as follows :

"Problems of working capital management in the jute mills of Bangladesh."

Concepts of working capital are mainly of two types :— Gross concept and net concept. The gross working capital, simply as working capital, refers to the firm's investment in current assets. Current assets are the assets which can be converted in to cash within an accounting year and include cash, short term securities, debtors, loans and advances and

inventories. The term net working capital refers to the difference between current assets and current liabilities. Current liabilities are those claims of outsiders which are expected to mature for payment within an accounting year and include creditors, bills payable, bank over draft and outstanding expenses. For the purpose of present study, the gross concept of working capital is followed.

Working capital management means the management of inventory, receivables, cash, short-term investment and current liabilities. Or in other words working capital management means determining the requirements of working capital, financing the requirements and efficient utilisation of the requirements of working capital.<sup>9</sup> The fundamental object of working capital management is to maintain the optimum liquidity, minimise the cost of short-term finance and maximise the rate of return on investment. Problems of working capital management are mainly related to the management of inventory, receivables, cash and working finance in the jute mills during the period under study.

### **The Scope and Objectives of the Study**

The specific scope and objectives of the study are as follows :

1. To analyse the efficiency of working capital management in the jute mills of Bangladesh during the first-plan period i.e. 1972-73 to 1977-78.
2. To identify the problems of working capital management in each of its components like inventory, receivables, cash balances, and working finance.
3. To find out the problems of inventory management regarding its adequacy in each of its components like raw materials, work-in-progress, finished goods, stores and spare parts etc.
4. To determine the problems of receivables management in each of its components like accounts receivable, loan and advances.
5. To verify the availability of balances as per operational requirements, liquidity and solvency of the jute mills.
6. To analyse the sources of working finance and availability of bank credit.
7. To make suggestions for a better working capital management in the jute mills.

### **Methodology**

#### **Selection of Sample**

The sample includes six jute mills out of 47 jute mills in Bangladesh having Hessian sacking and carpet backing looms. All the jute

mills were classified into three groups viz. big, medium and small. Jute mills having the capacity of 350 looms to 650 looms were classified as medium size mills ; those having below 350 looms were treated as small and those having more than 650 looms were classed as big mills.<sup>10</sup> Out of these three groups, six jute mills were selected on the basis of the availability of data for the period under study.

### Sources of Data and their Collection

The data used in the present study are mainly of two types. The primary data consisting of the annual balance sheets profit and loss accounts and audit reports of the jute mills were collected from the jute mills by visiting the mills personally by the researcher. The secondary data on over all working capital of the jute industry, total production, number of looms, capital size etc. were collected from the various issues of Annual Reports, Quarterly Summary of Jute goods and other Reports of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation.

### Methods of Analysis

The following analyses have been done :

1. The ratio trend analysis of the relevant data or working capital for the individual mills has been made for the period under study.
2. Inter-firm comparison of the specific ratios on working capital has been done.
3. The average ratios of the big, medium and small mills have been studied separately.
4. The average inventory, receivables, cash and working finance have been compared with the working capital norms of the Tandon Study Group.<sup>11</sup>
5. The average inventory has been compared with the inventory norms of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation.<sup>12</sup>
6. The average working capital position has been compared with the working capital position in Indian Jute Mills during 1977-78.<sup>13</sup>

### Major Findings

The jute mills under study failed to achieve efficiency in working capital management due to excessive accumulation of current assets and negative gross margin in the jute mills during the period under study. The value of excess current assets in the jute mills amounted to Tk. 3834.18 lakhs compared to the working capital norms of the Tandon Study Group, and the average percentage of negative gross margin was 3.45 during the period under study. The excess accumulation of current

assets was mainly in the form of inventory of work-in-progress, finished goods, stores and spares and there was a declining trend in accumulation of inventory from 1975-76 to 1977-78. There was little accumulation of receivables on local sales amounting to Tk. 54.11 lakhs during 1972-73 to 1977-78, compared to the receivables norm of the Tandon Study Group. There was also excessive accumulation of receivables during the period under study, compared to the receivables position in Indian Jute Mills during 1972-73 to 1977-78 and the standard suggested by the experts in financial management. There was increasing trend in the accumulation of receivables from 1976-77 to 1977-78.

The big mill had higher percentage of net loss on working capital than that of medium mills, inspite of the highest turnover of working capital during the period under study. This was due to the highest percentage of negative gross margin i.e. 3.84 during 1972-73 to 1977-78. The medium mills had the lowest turnover of working capital and lowest percentage of net loss on working capital because of the lowest percentage of negative gross margin i.e. 2.82 during the period under study. The small mills, having higher turnover of working capital than that in the medium mills, had higher percentage of net loss on working capital because of the higher percentage of negative gross margin than that of the medium mills i.e. 3.72 during the period under study. The negative gross margin was due to high cost of production and unrepresentative sales price in the jute mills during the period under study. High cost of production was mainly due to increase in prices of raw jute, other direct materials, stores and spares, low productive efficiency, under-utilisation of the capacity of the jute mills during the same period. Excess accumulation of working capital was also one of the factors leading to high cost of production through carrying costs of excess inventory and receivables in the jute mills under study during 1972-73 to 1977-78. If the working capital would be reduced to the level of the working capital norms of the Tandon Study Group, interest amounting to Tk. 402.59 lakhs would be saved on the release of working capital, amounting to Tk. 3834.18 lakhs in the jute mills during the period under study. There was also additional scope of savings in other carrying costs of inventory and receivables in the jute mills but in absence of specific rates and records of the jute mills, the exact quantification of the saving is not possible to be done. Unrepresentative sales price was due to excessive dependence on exports i.e. 95 per cent of the sales were export sales. There was decline in the world demand for jute goods due to the heavy competition with the synthetic substitutes. The increase in cost of production was more than the increase in sales price during 1974-75 to 1977-78.

The financing of working capital shows that there was absence of internal finance during the period under study, due to heavy losses from

operations. The liquidity position of the jute mill was adverse during the period under study because of heavy cash losses from operations, excessive dependence on bank borrowings, excessive accumulation of current assets during the years 1972-73 to 1977-78. The analysis of the questionnaire shows that absence of planning and control of working capital is one of the causes of the adverse liquidity position of the jute mills and the problems of working capital management is one of the factors responsible for the heavy losses in the jute mills.

From the overall discussion and interpretation of the findings it appears that there was further scope of better control of working capital in the jute mills during the period under study in the light of the working capital norms of the Tandon Study Group and working capital position of the Indian Jute Mills. Better planning and control of working capital would further increase the earning power of the jute mills subject to the existence of margin. Simultaneously, efforts must be made to have better working capital management and margin in the jute mills which may increase the earning power to a greater extent. The individual mills and BJMC should strive to evolve norms for working capital consistent with the needs of export market and demand of the Bangladesh Jute Mills.

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# The Nature of Sharecropping in Rural Bangladesh—A Case Study in Mohanandakhali : Some Preliminary Findings\*

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## Introduction

A very many of the social scientists now-a-days are recognizing the fact that under utilisation of resources, particularly labour, low productivity, slow adoption of improved technology and its inefficient utilisation is an outcome of the size-tenure structure and tenurial position of a cultivator (Alam, Mahmudul: 1974 : 15-36 ; FFYP : 1973 : 5, 187 ; Khan A. R. : 1972 : 52-53). While there is a considerable agreements among professional scholars that from the view point of productivity, growth and employment, it is not the input-intensification programme, rather the tenurial change which stands as the prime determining factor in the overall agricultural and rural development of a country, it is wise on the part of researchers and policy makers to focus radiantly on the "twilight zone" existing between the puzzling tenurial structure and the required change in it. For broad-based development through a dynamic approach to land reform and successful "Package Programmes" it is essential.

\*This study attempts to highlight the nature of sharecropping, causes of growth & its implication in a multi-caste & multi-religion rural community in Bangladesh. The site selected for this study was Mohanandakhali, a village in Rajshahi district, situated on the south bank of the Beranoi river. The households surveyed totalled one hundred (56 are Muslim & 44 are Hindus). We defined household as the economic unit partaking of food from the same kitchen (Mukherjee: 1971: XXXIII).

The field work for this study was conducted largely at Mohanandakhali over a period of ten months in 1975-76. The most important techniques we adopted in collecting informations were: (i) participant observation; (ii) using key informants, irrespective of sex-caste-religion base and (iii) using interview schedule and filled up by house to house inquiry with the help of assistants. This is a village with a total population of about 638:351 male and 287 female. Out of this 60% are Muslims and 40% are Hindus. About 70% of the population have absolutely no education. Our approach is dual in the sense that we have tried to analyse the findings of the survey both from the angle of economics and anthropology.

In different regions of a country, especially in the developing world, different tenurial arrangements can be found to exist. Among those crop-sharing tenancy is one of the earliest forms of production organisation in agriculture (Bardhan P. K. & Srinivasan, T. N. : 1971 : 48). It is still a matter of considerable importance in peasant agriculture in many countries. Needless to say, the institution of sharecropping are shaped by diverse historical, political, socio-logical and anthropological factors peculiar to different regions ; but an economist persists in believing that the "relations of production" ultimately reflect some of the basic economic "forces of production".

It can not be denied that sharecropping is a subtle form of tenancy (Khusro A. M. : 1973:23) and the issues relating to it are gaining prominence in the controversy of structural change and tenurial pattern in Bangladesh. This striking system is still a hot-bed of empirical research not only because of its barring impact on "efficiency of production" but also due to its long-ranging policy-implication in the development complex of our country. The traditional theoreticians upholds that sharecropping is an "inefficient form of tenurial arrangements compared with either owner-farming or fixed rent tenancy because the terms of sharecropping provide disincentives to resource use (Bardhan P.K. & Srinivasan T. N. : 1971 ; Johnson, D. G. : 1950 ; Marshall A. : 1952). Some researchers, of course, in the recent time, have tried to put forward theoretically that like other tenurial arrangements, sharecropping and resource allocation and productivity are inversely related with each other (Cheung, S.N.S. : 1968 ; Newbery D. M. G. : 1975). Still, as a counter-attack, the sharp weapons of arguments are quite ample also on the empirical side.

### **Share Cropping: What it is ?**

The institution of sharecropping contains the essence that a tenant who receives in return a certain proportion of the produce from the landowner are to abide by the contract in contributing a part of the working capital, and often of fixed capital, in addition to labour. To put it in a different fashion : it is the tenant who parts with a proportion of the produce and this is often a very high proportion, making this form of tenancy a highly profitable and lucrative arrangement for the landlord. Sharecropping tenants have this in common with farm servants: they give labour to the farm and they receive a part of the farm's produce. But tenancy is distinguished from service by the contribution of capital. A servant serves but need not and does not give capital ; a tenant does.

Normally, in Bangladesh, wherever sharecropping exists, the produce is equally divided between the landlord and the tenant, but some

times the share of the landlord comes down to one-third of the gross produce. The proportion in which it is actually divided is chiefly determined by local custom, but it also depends to a certain extent on the quality of the land, the kind of produce, the contribution made by the landlord towards the expenses, and finally, the relation between the demand for and supply of such land. Ordinarily, the landlord supplied the seed and bears the expense of manure, and where he does this, his share in the produce is half. In those cases, where he does not bear any of these expenses, he has naturally to be content with a smaller share. This is, however, modified by other consideration as mentioned earlier. If the land is very fertile, or if the demand for such land is very large in relation to the supply, the *bargadar* may agree to surrender a part of the customary share, while under reverse conditions, he may obtain somewhat more than that (Shaha, K. B. : 1930 : 101).

Like most of the developing countries, the sharecropper or *bargadar*, as he is called in Bangladesh, is generally regarded as a mere labourer<sup>1</sup>. The owner of the land is supposed to have the right to resume it from the sharecropper at the end of any crop and transfer it to another ; and when this is done, the former sharecropper who is ousted do not show any opposition and resentment against this transfer because of his insecure economic and social position. Often, however, when the sharecropper is an honest and efficient tenant, he is allowed to cultivate the same land for a number of years. The fear that continued cultivation of the land by the same person may lead to the creation of some sort of right is the root of the transfer that generally takes place. In such cases, a good sharecropper is reinstated on the same land after a short interval.

In comparison with the money rent of similar lands, the rent of the sharecropped lands seems to be unusually high. In Bangladesh, both owing to its insecurity and to the high incidence of rent, sharecropping turns out to be a highly exploitative form of tenancy. No wonder it has been favoured and continued by owners under the garb of cultivation through hired servants.

### The Extent of Sharecropping

How widely prevalent is sharecropping? How many are the sharecropping families and how extensive is the sharecropping acreage? It

<sup>1</sup>The position of the sharecropper was uncertain under the Act of 1885. According to the latter Act, a sharecropper is not a tenant unless—(a) he has been expressly admitted to be a tenant by his landlord in a document, or (b) he has been or is held by a civil court to be a tenant. See Sec. 3, Clause 17 of the Bengal Tenancy Act as amended in 1928.

would be best to answer these questions in the light of tenurial arrangements in Bangladesh, which can be identified in three broad categories (Table 1): owner-farms, owner-cum-tenant farms and tenant farms. Tenants operate land either on cash rent or on sharecropping basis.

**Table 1**  
**Bangladesh : Land Tenure**

| Type of Tenure         | Average Size of Farms (acres) |      |      | Percentage of Farms |      |      |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|------|------|---------------------|------|------|
|                        | 1960                          | 1968 | 1974 | 1960                | 1968 | 1974 |
| Owner-Farms            | 3.1                           | 2.7  | 2.3  | 61                  | 66   | 67   |
| Owner-cum-Tenant Farms | 4.3                           | 4.0  | 4.1  | 37                  | 30   | 27   |
| Tenant Farms           | 2.4                           | 3.0  | 2.4  | 2                   | 4    | 6    |
| Total                  | 3.5                           | 3.2  | 2.8  | 100                 | 100  | 100  |

**Farm Area (Percentage)**

|                   | 1960 | 1968 | 1974 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|
| Owner-operated    | 82   | 83   | 75   |
| Tenant-operated   | 18   | 17   | 25   |
| (i) Cash Rented   | 2    |      |      |
| ii) Share Cropped | 16   |      |      |

**Source:** 1960: Pakistan Census of Agriculture : Vol. 1.  
1968: Master Survey of Agriculture  
1974 : BIDS Survey

Owner farms accounted for 61% of total farms in 1960 and the proportion increased to 67% in 1974. During the same period percentage of owner-cum-tenant farms declined from 37% to 27% and that of tenant farms increased from 2% to 6%. Small proportion of tenant farms indicate that there is a preference on the part of the land owners to rent out land in a sharecropping to other landowners, large or small (Alamgir, M. : BIDS: Vol. III, No. 3 : July 1975 : 269). On the other hand, land-

less farmers who could operate land as pure tenants do not have implements or working capital required for carrying out self-managed farming.

In terms of area operated 82% are owner-operated while only about 18% are tenant operated of which 16% are sharecropped<sup>2</sup>. It involves about 25 to 50 percent of all farmers in the country. In the dimension of agricultural development, this system is frequently identified with inefficiency. The argument is that, it resembles a system of very high proportional taxation and hence is responsible for a great deal of disincentive on the part of the operator, while this system is prevalent over a significant proportion of land area, it can certainly not be described as the dominant mode of production<sup>3</sup>.

A few words about the situation under which sharecropping arrangements are acceptable to the contracting parties. Any combinations of the following situations will make sharecropping a desirable alternative from the viewpoint of the owner as well as the tenant: (a) the farming unit is too small for economic operation, (b) the farm area is either too large or too fragmented for efficient management by the owner, (c) the owner does not have access to adequate fixed and working capital, (d) the farm may belong to absentee landlord, and (e) the owner may not have adequate supply of family labour<sup>4</sup>.

In point of fact, sharecropping arrangement may be more socially desirable than owner-operation with hired labour. This follows from the familiar argument that the sharecropper who uses family labour will tend to increase labour input until its marginal value product is zero. While the owner-operator employing hired labour will equate marginal value product with the market wage rate. Here the nature of cost-sharing practices will play an important role (Raquibuz Zaman, M: 1973).

Conventionally speaking, in Bangladesh a majority of the sharecroppers possess tiny bit of holdings. In order to have a favourable resource combination and to exploit their surplus labour together with other

<sup>2</sup>Some economists holds the view that area rented on sharecropping basis as proportion of total cultivated area amounts to 16.2 percent. See P. C. Jashi's *Land Reform: An Urgent Problem in Bangladesh Economy: Problems and Prospects*, ed. by V.K. R.V. Rao, Vikas Publications, 1972, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>The possibility of serious under-reporting by the land owners, who are afraid of land reform legislation, relating to sharecropping cannot be ignored as it happens in some cases. Because known figures about tenant cultivation, whether derived from village papers, land survey reports or Agricultural Census speak only of open & recorded tenancies.

<sup>4</sup>Raquibuzzaman found (a) and (b) to be important factors in two areas of Bangladesh [pp. 153-54]

fixed resources in the most optimum manner they have to rent in some more lands from the affluent farmers. They cannot claim any occupancy right on the land they rent; they only cultivate it on the basis of some contracts. Anticipating that, if the sharecroppers are allowed to cultivate the land, they rent, for long years, they may attempt to establish their occupancy rights<sup>5</sup>, landowners are often found to change their sharecroppers every year. While this situation of insecurity of tenure are prevailing, the sharecroppers are found reluctant in making any positive contribution in the improvement of the land or to stimulate the productivity by adopting an "improved innovation package programme".

### Findings of the Survey

The area under study is Mohanandakhali, a multi-caste and multi-religion complex rural community in Bangladesh. Data for this study were collected from a survey of 100 households who are mostly agricultural. From our study we observed that side by side with the owner-farming and other tenurial arrangements, sharecropping is an important system of agriculture in Mohanandakhali. Here in the normal sharecropping agreement, the owner of the land provides only the land. He normally sends a representative to help with the harvest, mainly to see that he is not cheated. The man who takes the field must prepare it, provide the seed, do all the work of transplanting, weeding, threshing, winnowing and harvesting.

Two main types of sharecropping system are found to exist in the area under research: (1) *adhi barga* system and (2) contract system.

The *adhi barga* system can be sub-divided into three main categories:

(a) If the land is superior in quality, then the cultivators contribute all labour, seed and incidental expenses except the cost of fertilizer. But it can be noted that if the landowner gives *barga* for 3-4 years or more than 4 years, then the cultivators contribute chemical fertilizers. The yield is equally divided between the cultivator and the owner of the land. In case of crop failure, both of them suffer equally.

(b) If the land in question is found bad or medium in quality, then the cultivators contribute all labour and incidental expenses except the cost of seed and chemical fertilizers, half of which is borne by the land owner. The produce is equally divided between the cultivator and the owner of the land.

<sup>5</sup>Certain provisions of the tenancy legislations of the 1950's imply that if a farmer ploughs a land of another for over three years, he may claim occupancy right on that land.

(c) If the landowner is a well-to-do person and the quality of the land is superior or medium but the economic condition of the sharecroppers is quite reverse to that of landowner (i.e. if he is poor) and is unable to bear the cost of seed, chemical fertilizers etc., then the cultivator contributes only labour and incidental expenses. Naturally, the cost of irrigation, seed and chemical fertilizer is borne by the landowner. After winnowing, the land owner deducts an amount of grain according to the market price which he (the landowner) has spent for the cost of irrigation, seed and fertilizer. After the deduction is made, the rest of the crops are equally shared between the sharecropper and the land owner.

(2) Under the contract system, the cultivator bears all expenses including the cost of the seed, fertilizer, irrigation and so on. He is bound by an agreement to give the landowner, a certain amount of crop per unit of land. In this system, the risk of crop failure is entirely taken by the cultivator who has to supply a stipulated amount of crops irrespective of failure or success of it in any season. The contract system can be found in between the cultivator and the landowner whose main occupation is service. For example, in Mohanandakhali, Mr. Rajab Ali Khan has given land to Mr. Fulbash Mandal, for sharecropping on a contract basis because Mr. Khan is working in Chittagong as a serviceholder.

### **Reasons behind Sharecropping**

In Mohanandakhali, land is given on shares for a variety of reasons, the following being most significant :

(i) A disabled person, an old man or a widow may give land on shares, because they are unable to contribute labour of their own or to supervise hired labourers on their own land.

(ii) Very occasionally, a wealthy person, who has a surplus of cultivable land, gives some to sharecroppers. In Mohanandakhali, Mr. Tarani Kanta Mondal, a son of ex-landlord, has given cultivable land on shares.

(iii) A well-to-do man commonly allows to be sharecropped only those fields which lie in areas too distant for cultivation by himself and his servants.

(iv) A landowner whose main occupation is service gives land on *borga*.

(v) A businessman who also owns land will give it to cultivators for sharecropping, as he is too busy to cultivate his land by his own efforts. In

Mohanandakhali Mr. Narayan Chandra Saha is a businessman whose cultivable land has been given to Mr. Bipin Behari Mondal for sharecropping.

The reasons for taking land on a share basis are also manifold, for example :

(i) Land owners who have got very small unit of holding accept land for sharecropping from bigger land owners or from other persons who are unable to cultivate their land by their own efforts.

(ii) Landless cultivators who own a *hal* (plough) take land for sharecropping.

(iii) Most persons who own enough land for their own purposes are not eager to cultivate additional land on shares. But if there is land of a relative in his village and the relative is too far away to handle it himself, then the farmer will cultivate his relative's land on sharecropping arrangement.

(iv) A person may have all the land he needs for cultivation, but sometimes he will take additional land on shares if it is in the irrigation boundary, far from such land he receives the maximum profit. If some of his land is outside of the irrigation facility, he may give that on shares, concentrating instead on the irrigated land

It should be remembered that a man who cannot afford to buy a plough or bullocks is too poor to sharecrop, on the other hand, it should be noted that with the introduction of modern irrigation, chemical fertilizers and seed the productivity of land has risen and farming has become really profitable. Therefore, landowners have become more interested in tilling their land themselves, or in hiring labourers, rather than in giving their land on share. Thus, sharecropping is declining in Mahanandakhali and elsewhere under these prevailing conditions, and sharecroppers are now becoming landless labourers. For example, Mr. Narendra Nath Bhaduri who has five bighas of land within the irrigation boundary, is cultivating it by hired labour under his own supervision for attaining maximum profit. But before the irrigation facility was installed, he gave his land to two sharecroppers, Mr. Monir Shaikh and Mr. Panchanan Das. Now, Mr. Shaikh and Mr. Das are landless labourers and consequently, Shaikh is working as a carter and Das is now a vegetable shopkeeper, sitting twice a week in the nearby hat at Nawhata. Before the hat day, he purchases vegetables from the interior villages and carries those himself to the hat for sale.

Tables given below enables us to get a clear picture of the taking and giving of land on shares, as well as the relation between receivers and givers.

They also shows the number of families who do not receive or give land on share. For the sake of perfection, we have used here separate tables: (i) showing religion-wise distribution and (ii) showing the *barga* system among the Hindu caste only.

**Table 2**  
**Religion-wise Distribution of Persons Interested**  
**in Receiving and Giving Barga**

| Nature of participation in barga →<br>Religious Group ↓ | Gives Barga |        |      | Receives Barga |        |      | Total | Neither gives nor receives | Grand Total |
|---|-------------|--------|------|----------------|--------|------|-------|----------------------------|-------------|
|   | Relatives   | Others | Both | Relatives      | Others | Both |       |                            |             |
| Hindu   | 4           | 6      | 2    | 2              | 4      | —    | 18    | 26                         | 44          |
| Muslim  | 3           | 3      | 3    | 7              | 1      | 1    | 18    | 38                         | 56          |
| Total   | 7           | 9      | 5    | 9              | 5      | 1    | 36    | 64                         | 100         |

The table above reveals some of the important facts. The total number of households were 100, out of which 44 were Hindus and 56 were Muslims. Comparatively, with a greater number of families, the number of persons giving land on *barga* are much less among Muslims than the Hindus. Among the Hindus the percentage of persons giving lands on *barga* (27.27%) is double to that of the persons receiving *barga* lands (13.63%). On the contrary, among the Muslim, the percentage of persons giving and receiving lands on *barga* are both equal i.e. 9.09% each. Again, 59.09% Hindu families keep themselves aloof from the sharecropping arrangements, while the percentage of non-givers and non-receivers of sharecropped lands is 67.85% among Muslims. The number of persons taking sharecropped lands from the relatives are fairly much greater among the Muslims than the Hindus. On the other hand, the percentage of persons giving land on share basis to relatives are somewhat larger among the Hindus than the Muslims. Finally, a little over one-third of all the families either give or take land on shares whereas nearly two-thirds of them do neither of those who receive *barga*, there appears tenancy for them to get it from relatives (the reasons may be closer relationships or relaxable terms and conditions), quite understandable in the familistic society of rural Bangladesh.

Next, we like to focus into the nature of sharecropping arrangements among the multicaste-complex Hindu society in our projected area, which are shown by the table given below.

**Table 3**  
**Hindu-Caste-wise distribution of Persons involved and not involved in the Sharecropping arrangement**

| Nature of participation in barga Castes | Gives Barga |        |      | Receives Barga |        |      | Total | Neither gives nor receives | Grand Total |
|---|-------------|--------|------|----------------|--------|------|-------|----------------------------|-------------|
|   | Relatives   | Others | Both | Relatives      | Others | Both |       |                            |             |
| 1. Brahmin                              | —           | 2      | —    | —              | —      | —    | 2     | —                          | 2           |
| 2. Vaishnab                             | —           | —      | —    | —              | 1      | —    | 1     | 7                          | 8           |
| 3. Halwai*                              | 3           | 3      | 2    | 2              | 1      | —    | 11    | 14                         | 25          |
| 4. Maheshya                             | —           | —      | —    | —              | 1      | —    | 1     | 3                          | 4           |
| 5. Sunri                                | 1           | 1      | —    | —              | —      | —    | 2     | 1                          | 3           |
| 6. Namasudra                            | —           | —      | —    | —              | 1      | —    | 1     | 1                          | 2           |
| Total                                   | 4           | 6      | 2    | 2              | 4      | —    | 18    | 26                         | 44          |

\* One family of Halwai both gives and receives barga. He has received barga for getting maximum profit because the land is within the irrigation boundary.

In Mahanandakhali, Brahmin do not receive barga and only two families give it out to other castes. The Vaishnab are quite self-sufficient and only one Vaishnab family are taking land on barga. As the Halwai are economically dominant (they are also prominent in relation to their numbers among the total households) in the village they give barga either to relatives, to others or to both, but only three of their families receives barga. Almost half of the Halwai families neither give nor receive. The other Hindu families are numerically insignificant, but we see that two Sunri families give land on shares. From the above table it appears that only the Brahmins do not take land on barga, of course, numerically, their number is quite small.

#### **Patron-Client relationship in connection with Landowner and Sharecropper : An anthropological View**

No rural study can be made sufficient without reference to certain institutionalized vertical relationships between individuals and through them between families (McKim Marriott : 1967: M.N. Srinivas: 1-35, 26-27). Among these relationships, which is existing between landowner and the sharecropper cuts across the cost, sect, and religion barriers in Mahananda-

khali. The relationship between the landowner and the sharecropper is also intimate one, and like all intimate relationships, it is frequently merked by conflict. Sharecroppers are often heard complaining against the exploitation of the landowners; they have begun to feel that the landowners have got no right to receive income from the land equally because it is the sharecroppers who are to bear the greater amount of the expenses of production.

In our survey area, there is an acute shortage of land (quite similar to the general case in Bangladesh), and where landowners and sharecropper, or competing tenants, belong to different castes, the struggle over land may be seen as a clash of castes and sects. In most of the cases, the landowners being displeased with the sharecroppers take away the land from him and intends to handover it to others. On the fear of losing the tenancy, the sharecroppers hardly agitates against the landowner. Most often the sharecropper and the landowner establishes a fictive kin relationship between themselves. Occasionally, the sharecropper do not furnish the actual amount of the produce and through serious under reporting there is every possibility to cheat the landowner from his due share. Thus, the landowner develops a good relationship with the sharecropper so that he is not exploited of his desired amount of the produce. Again, in Mahanandakhali, sometimes, it can be also found that the person who rent in land on share, gives the landowner some seasonal fruits, vegetables, cow-milk and sends new dishes in order to maintain a intimate relationship with the owner so that the rented land can be had under his cultivation for long period. To put in a nutshell, in the case of sharecropping, the share cropper set up *dharma atnyo* (fictive kin) with the landowners for barga over several seasons instead of only one, and the landowner feels that if he agrees to this arrangements then he will get the proper share of the crops. In this way, landowner and bargadar set up their '*dyadic contracts*' in Foster's sense of the term (Foster : 1967 : 212).

### Are Sharecroppers accessible to Institutionalized Facilities ?

Some economists has suggested that it is the large farmers who do not have enough capital (internal surplus) to finance their farm business and thus generally resort to sharecropping (Khan: 197, p. 135). Contrary to this, in our survey area, we have found that, in reality, capital shortage is a more serious limitation for sharecroppers to increase the amount of their land ownership because they do not have adequate security to borrow from institutional sources and therefore, they fall back on their landlords for credit at high rates of interest. The sharecroppers have no other better alternatives except in allocating their small quantum of Working Capital to the absolute maximum necessities.

It is quite natural that in this way, the landowners exerts some sort of economic influence on the life and livelihood of the sharecroppers by controlling the volume of capital. Thus, often he is to submit at the desire and evil will of the landowner and here lies the danger that the nature and magnitude of exploitation may get complicated and increased.

Credits are the main ingredients in the newly-developed seed-fertilizer-irrigation technology and due to the paucity of working capital it becomes difficult on the part of the sharecropper to invest in modern inputs and enter into scientific methods of cultivation. On the other hand, the relative position of the landowner is much more favourable than his tenants in getting credit facilities against his lands from institutional sources (e.g. banks and co-operatives). Together with this credit accessibility of the landowner, if there exists a balanced and harmonious relationship between the parties, only in that case the landowners are found to share the ingredients like fertilizer, seed, etc. In Mahanandakhali, we have observed that this parting of the credits between the landowners and the sharecroppers is a function of the quality of the land and the economic condition of the person renting the land on share basis.

Evidence suggests that some sharecroppers has ownership of land, whatever smaller it might be. But the loan he gets by mortgaging this land is relatively meagre in amount. The money thus taken on loan whether to be invested on the sharecropped land or land of his own in terms of buying modern inputs is determined by the relative fertility position of the land concerned. Most often the qualitatively better sharecropped land yields higher return from the purchased modern inputs and this explain the reason why in some cases the sharecropper contribute all labour, seed and incidental expenses even when sharing half of the produce with the land-owner.

### **Conclusion: Some Social and Economic Implications**

Our's paper is an empirical study through which we have humbly tried to focus into the nature of sharecropping, the reasons behind its existence together with some of its long ranging implication in an area in Bangladesh, where the farmers are operating some modernizing practices in the field of cultivation side by side with primitive technology.

With the establishment of a co-operative society (in 1968, consisting of 50 members, those who have cultivable land in the irrigation area, irrespective of religious group, sect and Jati) irrigation pumps, supply of improved seed and chemical fertilizers, plus weekly group discussion with the model farmers (Mr. Kashem Mandal, Taikat Ali and Dillar Mollah)—a little change has taken place in crop production and the economic condition of the people. But these changes are confined to the landowners within

the irrigated area. These people are growing crops three times in a year, and because of the third and extra crop about 21 families are now self-sufficient in food and 10 of them have surplus grains to sell. On the other hand, poor farmers and sharecroppers in Mahanandakhali have got very little access in the arena of modern technology, thus carrying on their cultivation work with the help of primitive methods like *seti*<sup>6</sup> and *jant*<sup>7</sup> (Mukherjee: 1971: 99) and uses less fertilizers—some due to irregularity of supply and some on the belief of its effects on fertility applies indigenous manures like cowdung.

We have observed that with a break-through in agricultural technology and the use of HYV seed, a rapid increase in the yields per acre of tracts in Mahanandakhali has occurred. Land, especially within the irrigation boundary have been highly valued, because of its augmented profitability and the desire on the part of the landowners to resume their land for personal cultivation has increased enormously; this could lead to a lot of resumption and hence evictions of tenants causing substantial hardships. Thus, while many farmers have climbed the "agricultural ladder" from the unpaid family worker to a hired labourer status, through tenancy, and finally to owner-operatorship, the tendency of the landowner in the project area to cultivate the land with irrigation facilities by his own effort, instead of giving it on share basis, have turned the sharecroppers into status of landless agricultural labourers and now-a-days sharecropping as a tenancy is declining steadily. Here two opposing forces are at work: (i) If this trend is to be allowed to continue and sharecropping is to be abolished from the rural scene in Bangladesh and Mahanandakhali in particular, sufficient employment opportunities together with other avenues required for a reasonable standard of living should be created for those who are becoming landless labourers in this way; (ii) Under the static efficiency criteria, it is socially profitable to cultivate land on sharecropping basis. Again under dynamic

<sup>6</sup>*Seti* : *Seti* is a vessel made of galvanised iron sheets at the two sides of which two strings are attached. The cultivators frequently use it for the purpose of irrigation. Two persons are required to operate the water scoop. They stand facing each other near the reservoir of water, each with a string in hand. The vessel is dipped into the reservoir and then taken up carrying water in it which is poured into the channel dug for the purpose of conveying the water to the fields. The *seti* lasts for about two to three years and can be of use only in small scale cultivation.

<sup>7</sup>*Jant* : *Jant* is a better, but more expensive, water scoop made of wood in the shape of a dugout. It can be operated by lever action by one man alone and takes less time to irrigate the field as it can lift more water than a *seti* (vessel made of galvanised iron sheets). It lasts for about ten to twelve years. The *Jant* is placed by the side of the water reservoir. The operator then tilts up the end away from the source of water, so that the end towards it goes down and the *Jant* is filled with water. Next he pushes down the side which was tilted up before, and the water flows into the field.

conditions also, sharecropping may become desirable if the owner operator does not possess enough labour for cultivation. Hence, while social profitability permits the existence of sharecropping, there should be wide diffusion of "improved package programmes" in the sharecropped area also, so that the landowner cannot exploit their monopoly situation as regards to the irrigation facilities and thus the sharecroppers may be retained in their earlier position. This will restrict the dual practice in agricultural operation within the same area and will go a long way in maintaining social justice. Which of the two will come in true depends on the relative strength of the forces mentioned above.

In our research area, we have seen that some land owners rented out part or whole of their land because (i) they had non-farm activities and (ii) they have some urban connections but they do not abandon completely the rural base because land is a highly secured long-term investment and farm income is a necessary supplement to small non-farm income of many families for maintaining a reasonable standard of living. For such landowners, efficiency may not be the prime considerations in their motivation to own land.

It should be mentioned here that the sharecroppers in rural Bangladesh do not form a class by themselves. They are rarely a compacted class and since large members of sharecroppers competed to rent land, landowners could dictate rental terms to their advantage. They could also exploit them by limiting the amount of land rented to a single tenant, by continuously changing tenants, by not sharing non-land inputs, by forcing to accept lower than market wage but exorbitantly higher than market rate of interest.

From the economic standpoint, it can not be denied that the cultivation of sharecropped land is not so efficient as that of the cash-paying lands. The incentive of the application of labour and capital by the cultivator to the barga lands is weakened by the thought that half the product of such application will go to the landlord. The employment of labour and capital in the cultivation of land is carried to what may be called the margin of profitability. As there is no security of tenure, the sharecropper is also not likely to make any investment of capital for the permanent improvement of the land. We thus find that the cultivation of land under the sharecropping arrangement tends to check the employment of capital and labour, and therefore, do diminish the production of agricultural wealth and in its turn have adverse effect on national dividend.

From the anthropological viewpoint, we suggest the existence of sharecropping because in a multi-caste and multi-religion rural society, it tends to remove the caste-sect barrier and through mutual interdependency, it

helps to develop some sort of dyadic contracts between different caste and religion groups. Hence, while various religious affiliations and caste complexity are the long standing impediments on the way of rural development, we think that sharecropping as a prominent form of tenancy can do much in harnessing close cooperation between different social groups which is urgently required for the general welfare of the rural people. But a note of caution could be mentioned here also. In the rural scene of Bangladesh, the conflict of interest and a change in attitude as regards to personal welfare instead of social welfare, in between sharecroppers and landlords is becoming, and is bound to become, sharp with the emergence of higher yields per acre. In this context, one sensible method of preserving the rights of tenants and of preventing exploitation is to promote trade unionism among the sharecroppers under official auspices. Of course if trade Unionism is not promoted in an organised way, a disorderly attempt to share the new gains on the basis of greater egalitarianism may surely be expected.

And again, it would be an inevitable task on the part of the government to consider seriously the promotion of measures for developing cost-sharing practices, between sharecroppers and owners, in order to take the exploitative edge off tenancy arrangements.

From the welfare viewpoint, it can be said that, given the uncertainties of finding a handsome job, if rural people, particularly small land owners in Bangladesh, are forced to sell their lands rather than renting them out on share for the time being, a great loss of welfare can be found to occur. It should not be an objective of agricultural policy in our country to make it difficult for people to adjust their occupations and improve their mobilities. Permission to rent out one's land on *barga* is an important aspect of the social mobility of labour.

Generally speaking, in Bangladesh, and Mahanandakhali in particular, sharecropping is not only the substantial magnitude of tenancy which generates a lot of interrelated problems, serious by affecting the socio-economic matrix of the area. The gravity of the problems that assumes a new significance if one remembers that even though not all the rural poor belong to the category of sharecroppers, there is no doubt that most of the tenants in this group belong to the category of the rural poor. So, in course of formulating, modification and implementing any land reform policy we should pay guard the rights and interests of the sharecroppers and channelise the programme in such a way so that it subserves the objectives of rural growth as well as equity.

Finally, it can be said that under conditions of high man-land ratio and lack of alternative avenues outside agriculture, there is cut-

throat competition for land among the sharecroppers in Mahanandakhali. In this area, the sharecroppers are eking out their subsistence under inequitable terms and condition and as the basic economic forces labour surplus and scarcity of land and capital tends to work against their interests, any kind of economic measure should necessarily operate in conjunction with non-economic forces like support of political groups and tenant organizations in order to tilt the economic balance in favour of the sharecroppers.

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# A Closer Look Into the Efficiency of Bangladesh Krishi Bank\*

A. F. M. Ashraf Ali

## Introduction

The desire for making the country self sufficient in food by increasing agricultural output motivated the erstwhile Government of Pakistan to establish agricultural bank with a view to developing an efficient system of institutional credit<sup>1</sup>. The overall performance of the bank was, however, far from satisfactory<sup>2</sup>. Planning Commission of Bangladesh observed that proper administration of rural credit institutions assumed particular importance and so the country should give serious attention to rationalise its organization and management<sup>3</sup>. The need for increased capital investment in agriculture is being greatly emphasized in a bid to break the stagnancy of agricultural production but the sources of fund of the Government is very limited<sup>4</sup>. There is no scope to misuse the fund provided by the Government for investment in agricultural sector. The Government desired greater participation in agricultural financing by Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) through efficient management<sup>5</sup>. Actually, the need for institutional credit through the effective management of a financial institution like BKB in augmenting agricultural production is evident from a number of work of the then Pakistan. Having recognised that, the author tries to examine the existing efficiency of the operative management level of BKB.

\*This article has been prepared by revising a chapter of the author's Ph.D. Thesis entitled "Management of Agricultural Credit: A Study of the Bangladesh Krishi Bank in Rajshahi District" submitted to Rajshahi University, 1983.

<sup>1</sup>Report of the Food and Agriculture Commission, 1960, Malik Amir Mohammad Khan, Chairman (Karachi: Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of Pakistan, 1960), p. 184.

<sup>2</sup>Planning Commission of Bangladesh estimated that about 9-10 per cent of the rural credit was supplied by the bank.

<sup>3</sup>Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, *The Second Five Year Plan, 1980-85* (Dhaka: Planning Commission, 1980), p. XVIII-44.

<sup>4</sup>M. Habibullah, *Some Aspect of Rural Capital Formation in East Pakistan* (Dhaka: Bureau of Economic Research, 1963), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Bangladesh Bank, *Annual Report, 1979-80* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bank, 1980), p. 58.

This paper is divided into three sections. Section 1 deals with the methodology of the study, Section 2 tries to depict findings regarding the efficiency of the bank in question while Section 3 presents the policy implications.

## SECTION 1 : METHODOLOGY

As has been stated, the main objective of this paper is to have a closer look into the efficiency of the operative management level of Bangladesh Krishi Bank. Given the nature of the study, it was required to collect data both from the secondary and the primary sources. The author was always careful of the objective and collected data accordingly to accomplish the predetermined objective.

### 1.1 Secondary Data

Secondary data were required to know the disbursement target, recovery target, profit and loss etc. of the bank. These data were collected by consulting various documents, such as, Circulars, Office Orders, Loan Manuals, Statements and so on.

### 1.2 Primary Data

Primary data were collected from a carefully designed sample-survey, the details of which are described below.

**1.2.1 Selection of the Study Area :** Because of various constraints such as time, money, and energy, the author could not but confine his study within a district<sup>6</sup>. Before selecting a district, the first step taken was the consideration of the district-wise disbursement during the year 1980-81 by BKB<sup>7</sup>. For the selection of the district, the data were arranged in descending order to see the position of each district according to disbursement<sup>8</sup>. It was thought that a district which disbursed the highest amount of credit would be suitable for the purpose of the study. It was seen (from Appendix I) that Dhaka and Chittagong cover maximum amount of loan disbursed. However, from consideration of time, energy, cost of transportation, and discussion with experts, it was decided to select Rajshahi district as the study area purposively although in terms of ranking its position was 12th in the year 1980-81<sup>9</sup>.

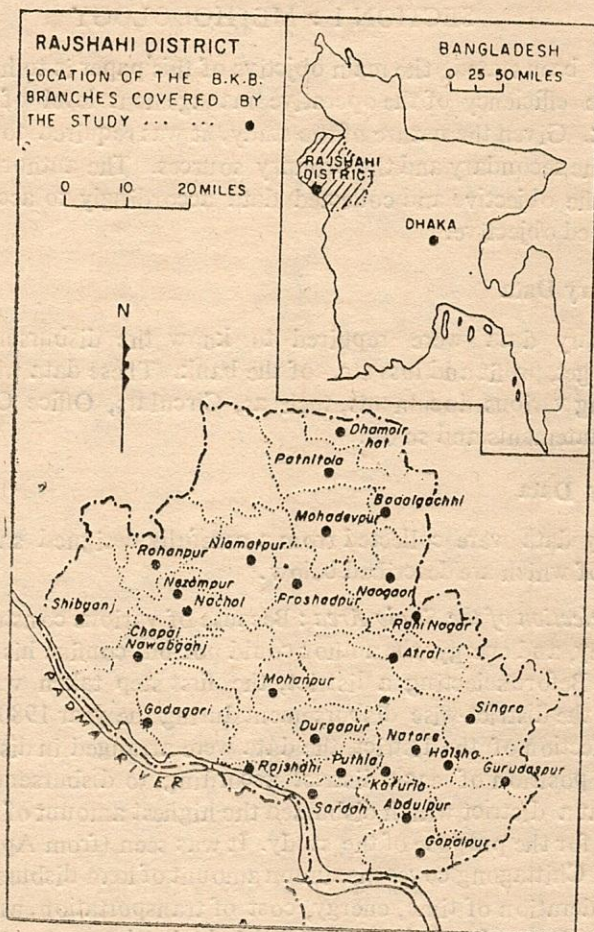
<sup>6</sup>The whole of Bangladesh was divided into 20 districts in 1980-81.

<sup>7</sup>The author collected the required data of 1980-81 during 1981-82. The year 1980-81 was selected arbitrarily as it was an immediate past year to facilitate collecting data from the bank officials. That year was also a normal economic year.

<sup>8</sup>See Appendix I for details of disbursement.

<sup>9</sup>The author was then working at the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, University of Rajshahi for his Ph.D. Degree.

1.2.2 *Selection of the Bank Branches* : Next step was to select a number of bank branches from this chosen district. There were as many as 30 branches of BKB upto 30th June, 1981 (See map 1 for the location of the branches). All the branches were grouped into 3 categories viz. higher, medium, and lower according disbursement<sup>10</sup>.



Map 1

It was seen (from Appendix II) that a total of Taka 549.33 lakhs were disbursed by all the branches operating within Rajshahi district during 1980-81. Of these amount, some branches disbursed more than Taka 20 lakhs (termed as "Higher disbursing branches"), some disbursed less than

<sup>10</sup>See Appendix II for details of disbursement of each branch located in Rajshahi district.

Taka 16 lakhs but more than Taka 10 lakhs (termed as "medium disbursing branches"), while others disbursed less than Taka 7 lakhs (and termed as "lower disbursing branches"). Initially it was planned to cover 30 per cent of the total number of branches representing every category *pro rata* in order to measure the efficiency of operative management level of BKB. However, while collecting data, it was revealed that nature of the problem of different branches differed substantially from one another. This ultimately prompted him to include all the 30 branches for the study. Then again he faced the problem of communication, and this became, in some cases, insurmountable and led him to exclude 3 branches. Thus, he covered 27, branches by his study.

1.2.3 *Selection of the Respondents*: As the selection of the branches was made, he included all the Managers, the Accountants, and the Supervisors of the 27 branches under consideration. So, the respondents interviewed were :

| Sl. No. | Designation | No. of respondents |
|---------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1.      | Managers    | 27                 |
| 2.      | Accountants | 27                 |
| 3.      | Supervisors | 27                 |
|         |             | <hr/> Total : 81   |

It may be mentioned here that in some branches, the post of the Accountant was lying vacant. But there was an employee who was entrusted with the task of performing the duties of the Accountant. The author treated him as Accountant. The same policy was adopted in case of the Supervisor.

1.2.4 *Method of Data Collection* : For collecting data from the bank branches, an interview-schedule was prepared and operated upon them. All the Managers, the Accountants, and the Supervisors of the selected 27 branches were interviewed separately to know their independent views. The schedule contained simple questions and many of them were open-ended. Before finalizing, the schedule was pretested to judge the suitability of the prescribed questions. The pretesting was done by interviewing 3 branches covering every category of higher, medium, and lower disbursements.

## SECTION 2 : EFFICIENCY OF BKB

Efficiency can broadly be defined as "the effectiveness or competence with which a structure performs its designed functions"<sup>11</sup>. Efficiency is also defined as the ratio between input and output, effort and result, expen-

<sup>11</sup>Z.Y. Jasdanwalla, *Marketing Efficiency in Indian Agriculture* (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Ltd., 1966), p. 2.

diture and income, cost and the resulting satisfaction. In banking, it refers to the accomplishing of the greatest amount of work in the best possible manner with the least expenditure of time and resources.

Keeping these definitions in mind, the author has chosen the following criteria for measuring the efficiency of operative management level of BKB in Rajshahi district :

1. Disbursement ;
2. Recovery ;
3. Profit and Loss ; and
4. Default.

An analysis of each of the above stated criterion is warranted below :

### 2.1 Disbursement Target and Actual Disbursement

If any branch can achieve its disbursement target, that branch is said to be more efficient than a branch which fails to do so *ceteris paribus*. Considering from this point of view, the author has tried to know the disbursement target and actual disbursement during 1980-81 of all the 27 branches covered by the study. The relevant information are shown in Table 1.

It is seen from the table that the performance of different branches vary quite markedly. For some branches the percentages of achievement in relation to target exceed 100 and for others fall far below the same. For the purpose of the present analysis the author has distinguished 3 types of branches viz., those exceeding 100 per cent (graded as "Very Good"), those above 75 per cent but less than 100 per cent (graded as "Good"), and those with less than 75 per cent (graded as "Not Good"). The resulting calculations are presented in the table. It is now seen that out of 27 branches, 5 branches (from serial number 1 to 5) fall in the category "Very Good", 7 branches (from serial number 6 to 12) fall in category "Good" and the rest 15 branches fall in the category "Not Good". It can be rightly stated that "Very Good" branches are more efficient than the "Good" branches, and "Good" branches are more efficient than the "Not Good" ones in respect of disbursement target and actual disbursement. It is further seen from the table that over the entire district under review 78.87 per cent of the targeted amount could only be disbursed. In other words, 21.13 per cent of the target could not be achieved. The author now wishes to identify the factors which may have been responsible for the performances as they are. These include (1) Loan sanctioning procedure, (2) Loan sanctioning power of the Branch Manager, and (3) Time required for disbursement. These are discussed in short in the paragraphs to follow<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup>For details, see author's Ph.D. Thesis, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-153.

**Table—1**  
**Disbursement Target and Actual Disbursement of Different**  
**Branches in Rajshahi District During 1980-81**  
 (Amount in Lakhs of Taka)

| Sl. No. | Branch      | Target | Actual | % of Target achieved | Grade     |
|---------|-------------|--------|--------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1.      | Nezampur    | 2.53   | 5.43   | 214.62               | Very Good |
| 2.      | Badalgachhi | 12.58  | 15.14  | 120.35               | "         |
| 3.      | Proshadpur  | 26.10  | 30.40  | 116.48               | "         |
| 4.      | Gurudaspur  | 13.30  | 14.28  | 107.37               | "         |
| 5.      | Patnitola   | 23.35  | 24.33  | 104.20               | "         |
| 6.      | Singra      | 37.55  | 37.15  | 98.88                | Good      |
| 7.      | Gopalpur    | 12.35  | 12.27  | 97.92                | "         |
| 8.      | Rajshahi    | 59.95  | 57.57  | 96.03                | "         |
| 9.      | Puthia      | 49.45  | 46.08  | 93.19                | "         |
| 10.     | Godagari    | 14.75  | 13.48  | 91.39                | "         |
| 11.     | Shibgonj    | 25.00  | 22.72  | 90.88                | "         |
| 12.     | Niamatpur   | 15.65  | 14.18  | 90.61                | "         |
| 13.     | Natore      | 52.00  | 38.44  | 73.92                | Not Good  |
| 14.     | Atrai       | 46.00  | 33.38  | 71.78                | "         |
| 15.     | Durgapur    | 2.50   | 1.73   | 69.20                | "         |
| 16.     | Rohanpur    | 8.00   | 5.52   | 69.00                | "         |
| 17.     | Nawabgonj   | 49.45  | 33.46  | 67.66                | "         |
| 18.     | Mohadevpur  | 18.30  | 12.36  | 67.54                | "         |
| 19.     | Kafuria     | 10.30  | 6.54   | 63.50                | "         |
| 20.     | Sardha      | 37.15  | 21.12  | 56.93                | "         |
| 21.     | Abdulpur    | 36.90  | 20.13  | 54.55                | "         |
| 22.     | Nachol      | 15.50  | 8.18   | 52.77                | "         |
| 23.     | Dhamoirhat  | 24.30  | 11.54  | 47.49                | "         |
| 24.     | Naogaon     | 35.35  | 15.65  | 44.27                | "         |
| 25.     | Halsha      | 10.00  | 2.52   | 25.20                | "         |
| 26.     | Mohanpur*   | —      | —      | —                    | —         |
| 27.     | Rani Nagar* | —      | —      | —                    | —         |
| Total : |             | 638.49 | 503.58 | 78.87                |           |

**Note :** \*These two branches were opened during the latter part of 1981 and had neither any target nor any remarkable disbursement.

**Source :** Interview with the Accountants of the relevant branches.

**2.1.1 Loan Sanctioning Procedure :** A procedure implies a series of steps often taken by different individuals to complete a work<sup>13</sup>. BKB

<sup>13</sup>William, H. Newman, *Administrative Action : The Techniques of Organization and Management* (N. Y. : Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963 ; p. 43).

has got a set of procedure for sanctioning loan. Loans are generally sanctioned on security of land. Applications for loans are entertained on prescribed forms.

It was observed that the loan sanctioning procedure is the same for all the branches and so apparently it cannot be held responsible for "Very Good", or "Not Good" performance of any branch. However, in practice it was observed that the loan sanctioning procedure was not followed into by all the Branch Managers under considerations. While interviewing the local level bank officials, it appeared that there may have been some leniency of the loan sanctioning procedure shown by some Branch Managers falling under "Very Good" and "Good" categories. For example, the Manager of the Nezampur Branch has stated clearly that to avoid unnecessary harassment of the poor cultivators, he accepts applications without certificate from the Chairman of the locality if he personally knows the applicant. In case of Gopalpur branch, the Manager has admitted the fact that in many cases, he does not wait for mutation certificate to disburse loan in time. Therefore, it may be concluded that "efficiency of operative management level" and "leniency shown in following loan sanctioning procedure" are positively correlated.

**2.1.2 Loan Sanctioning Power of the Branch Manager :** There are two grades of Branch Managers in Rajshahi region<sup>14</sup> having loan sanctioning power of Taka 5,000 and Taka 8,000 in cash and/or kind. However, in case of "Machinery loan" (such as irrigation device), all of them have got equal power of sanctioning loan upto Taka 30,000.

Now, the author wants to see whether the sanctioning power (in cash and/or kind) has played any role in achieving disbursement target<sup>15</sup>.

It was observed that 60 per cent of "Very Good" grade and 57 per cent of "Good" grade Branch Managers have got more sanctioning power (Taka 8,000) while 80 per cent of "Not Good" grade Branch Managers have got less sanctioning power (Taka 5,000). So, it can be inferred that the sanctioning power of the Branch Managers have got a positive bearing upon the disbursement of loans by the branches—the more the sanctioning power, the more is the disbursement and vice versa.

**2.1.3 Time Required to Disburse loan :** The author was inquisitive to know whether the branches having "Very Good" and "Good" dis-

<sup>14</sup>Rajshahi region consisted of all the branches under Rajshahi district in the year 1980-81. Recently another region has been opened at Naogaon.

<sup>15</sup>Appendix III shows the sanctioning power of each Branch Manager under consideration (during 1980-81).

bursement records could disburse loan quicker than the branches having "Not Good" disbursement records.

It was noticed that on the average 23 days were required to disburse loan from the date of application to the date of disbursement by different branches in Rajshahi. Of this, "Very Good" category of the branches required 18 days, "Good" category required 24 days, while "Not Good" category required 26 days. It is further observed that the branches which are situated in the sub-divisional (now district) headquarters seemed to have taken the longest period of time (35-40 days). So, it is seen that the more prompt a branch is in disposing off applications, the more disbursement it can make and vice versa. From this point of view first category of the branches may be called more efficient followed by the second and the third ones.

## 2.2 Recovery Target and Actual Recovery of Loan

The next criterion of measuring the efficiency of management at Branch level was taken to be "recovery target and actual recovery" of loan during the period 1980-81. Table 2 shows the position of different branches in this respect.

Here, again, the branches have been classified into 3 groups—"Very Good", "Good", and "Not Good" according to performance. Branches making more than 100 per cent recovery of the target were placed into "Very Good" category, making more than 70 per cent but less than 100 per cent into "Good" category, and the remaining ones into "Not Good" category<sup>16</sup>.

It is seen from the table that 7 branches (from serial number 1 to 7) could recover more than 100 per cent of their target, another 7 branches (from serial number 8 to 14) recovered more than 70 per cent but less than 100 per cent, while the remaining ones (from serial number 15 to 27) recovered less than 70 per cent of their target.

The following factors are reported to have been responsible for these performance of different branches.

2.2.1 *Supervision* : Supervision is said to be one of the most important factors which help making good recovery. To examine the role of supervision in achieving the recovery target of the branches, the author

<sup>16</sup>There is a big gap between the target and the amount fallen due for recovery. For example, the amount due for recovery of Rajshahi Branch was Taka 56.29 lakhs while the target was Taka 29.36 lakhs only.

has taken note of a number of points. These include the number of Supervisors and the number of unions and their population they are supposed to serve. In addition, the remark of the concerned Branch Manager about the sincerity of the Supervisors under his control was considered.

**Table—2**  
**Recovery Target and Actual Recovery of Loan by Different**  
**Branches in Rajshahi District During 1980-81**  
(Amount in Lakhs of Taka)

| Sl. No. | Branch      | Target | Actual | Percentage | Grade     |
|---------|-------------|--------|--------|------------|-----------|
| 1.      | Godagari    | 2.56   | 3.91   | 152.73     | Very Good |
| 2.      | Niamatpur   | 1.26   | 1.56   | 123.81     |           |
| 3.      | Gopalpur    | 2.68   | 3.26   | 121.64     |           |
| 4.      | Rajshahi    | 29.36  | 35.27  | 120.13     |           |
| 5.      | Nezampur    | 0.40   | 0.47   | 117.50     | "         |
| 6.      | Patnitola   | 16.16  | 18.13  | 112.19     |           |
| 7.      | Dhamoirhat  | 2.24   | 2.26   | 100.89     |           |
| 8.      | Nawabgonj   | 18.60  | 16.84  | 90.54      |           |
| 9.      | Kafuria     | 4.50   | 3.81   | 84.67      | Good      |
| 10.     | Natore      | 33.20  | 26.96  | 81.20      |           |
| 11.     | Atrai       | 30.16  | 22.51  | 74.63      |           |
| 12.     | Singra      | 29.20  | 21.75  | 74.49      |           |
| 13.     | Mohadevpur  | 2.92   | 2.16   | 73.97      | "         |
| 14.     | Gurudaspur  | 2.52   | 1.78   | 70.63      |           |
| 15.     | Nachol      | 6.16   | 3.91   | 63.47      |           |
| 16.     | Proshadpur  | 21.04  | 12.10  | 57.51      |           |
| 17.     | Naogaon     | 58.96  | 31.86  | 54.04      | Not Good  |
| 18.     | Puthia      | 28.24  | 12.76  | 45.18      |           |
| 19.     | Shibgonj    | 17.24  | 6.87   | 39.85      |           |
| 20.     | Sardah      | 20.20  | 7.78   | 38.51      |           |
| 21.     | Rohanpur    | 1.50   | 0.54   | 36.00      | "         |
| 22.     | Abdulpur    | 27.60  | 9.53   | 34.53      |           |
| 23.     | Halsha      | 2.50   | 0.73   | 29.20      |           |
| 24.     | Durgapur    | 0.40   | 0.08   | 20.00      |           |
| 25.     | Badalgachhi | 10.40  | 1.90   | 18.27      | "         |
| 26.     | Mohanpur    | —      | —      | —          |           |
| 27.     | Nani Nagar  | —      | —      | —          |           |
|         | Total :     | 370.00 | 248.73 | 67.22      | "         |

Source : Interview with the Accountants of the relevant branches.

It is seen that on the average the 3 categories of branches distinguished for the purpose have 2 Supervisors each, implying that number of Supervisors may not be a dominant factor for recovery of loans. However, when the number of Supervisors are related to the number of unions and their population, it appears that in the first category of branches (i.e., "Very Good") the Supervisors are to serve, again on the average, less number of unions and less population in comparison to others.

This means that the area and the population which a Supervisor is to serve is a non-negligible factor for achieving the recovery target. Interestingly enough this observation corresponds well to the remarks given by the concerned Branch Manager. In other words, sincerity of the Supervisor plays an important role in achieving the recovery target. It may be added that the sincerity of the Managers themselves was also observed to be related to the overall performance of the branches. Thus, it can be inferred that the greater the Supervision, the higher is the recovery of loans and vice versa thereby indicating a direct relationship between supervision and loan recovery.

#### 2.2.2 Co-operation from Government Officials and Political Leaders :

Co-operation is "the collective action of one person with another or others towards a common good"<sup>17</sup>. Co-operation from Government officials and political leaders of the locality is sometimes helpful to have a good recovery of loans. When asked for, almost cent per cent of the bank officials alleged to have no co-operation from them for the following reasons.

Government officers are busy with their own affairs and have little time to serve the cause of BKB. The Branch Managers cannot, in any way, please them and so they do not like to co-operate<sup>18</sup>. It is alleged that certificate issuing officers co-operate with the defaulters instead of the bank. It is known that most of the Thana (now upazilla) level officials including the Inspector of Police have no directive from the Government to help Bangladesh Krishi Bank if required.

Some political leaders in Bangladesh are not always faithful. Some of them are big defaulters of Bangladesh Krishi Bank and as such cannot press others to repay, it is stated. It is also gathered that some of the leaders generally come forward recommending loans to the farmers but do nothing at the time of recovery. They press the bank staff not to recover loans

<sup>17</sup>George R. Terry, *Principles of Management* (Illinois: Richard D. Irwin Inc., 1956), p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Branch Managers cannot entertain them even with a cup of tea officially as their "entertainment allowance" has been stopped by the top management of Bangladesh Krishi Bank.

from the defaulters only to gain cheap popularity. Furthermore, Bangladesh Krishi Bank does not, in any way, serve their interest nor pay any benefit to them and so they do not co-operate.

### 2.3. Profit and Loss

Efficient management pre-supposes earning a good amount of profit. In commercial organizations profitability is considered to be the most important criterion for measuring efficiency. Since Bangladesh Krishi Bank's main objective is to increase agricultural output rather than profit, this criterion may not be strictly applicable. However, from the point of this analysis, it would be rather unwise to neglect this criterion altogether. For the present analysis the author has considered the profit or the loss of all the branches under review. Will it be justified to use the absolute figures of profit or loss for judging the efficiency of a branch? Probably, it is not. It should be related to the capital invested. Because of various methodological problems relating to the measurement of capital, an alternative measure has been used. This is the amount of money disbursed by each branch during the period 1980-81 when the profit or the loss is related to the amount of money disbursed becomes the appropriate criterion for the purpose in hand.

The data given in Table 3 show that the amount of profit as proportion of disbursement vary quite significantly from a positive figure of 35 per cent to a negative figure of 18 per cent. To be in line with the various analytical technique, here too an attempt is made to distinguish between different branches. Where to cut off? The bank gives 15 per cent interest to the depositors. Taking this as a minimum proposition, there are 6 branches (from serial number 1 to 6) and the author has termed them as "very Good". On the same rationale, branches incurring no loss have been grouped under the head "Good". The remaining branches which have incurred losses of various proportions have been categorised as "Bad".

It is seen from the table that 44 per cent of the branches in Rajshahi district could earn some profits while 56 per cent incurred losses during the period under review. It may be mentioned here that the profit shown by different branches are not actual and realized, but accrued and credited only. All the "Defaulters' Accounts" have been debited with the original interest, compound interest, and penal interest, and the "Income Account" has been credited. This has, automatically, caused profit to increase. While interviewing some of the defaulters, it was noticed that, in some cases, the defaulter has no real existence and his whereabouts cannot be traced out. Another point is that the bank branches are not found to

**Table—3**  
**Profitability in Relation to Disbursement of Different**  
**Branches in Rajshahi District During 1980-81**  
 (Amount in Lakhs of Taka)

| Sl. No.           | Branch      | Disbursement | Profit or (Loss) | % to disbursement | Remarks   |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1.                | Naogaon     | 15.65        | 5.43             | 34.70             | Very Good |
| 2.                | Abdulpur    | 20.13        | 5.63             | 27.97             | "         |
| 3.                | Natore      | 38.44        | 9.04             | 23.52             | "         |
| 4.                | Atrai       | 33.38        | 7.11             | 21.30             | "         |
| 5.                | Singra      | 37.15        | 7.54             | 20.30             | "         |
| 6.                | Patnitola   | 24.33        | 3.55             | 14.59             | "         |
|                   | Average :   | 28.18        | 6.38             | 22.64             |           |
| 7.                | Sardah      | 21.12        | 2.65             | 12.55             | Good      |
| 8.                | Proshadpur  | 30.40        | 3.50             | 11.51             | "         |
| 9.                | Puthia      | 46.08        | 4.02             | 8.72              | "         |
| 10.               | Nawabgonj   | 33.46        | 2.45             | 7.32              | "         |
| 11.               | Shibgonj    | 22.72        | 0.91             | 4.01              | "         |
| 12.               | Rajshahi    | 57.57        | 1.30             | 2.25              | "         |
|                   | Average :   | 35.23        | 2.47             | 7.01              |           |
| 13.               | Nachol      | 8.18         | (0.08)           | (0.98)            | Bad       |
| 14.               | Gurudaspur  | 14.28        | (0.24)           | (1.68)            | "         |
| 15.               | Niamatpur   | 14.18        | (0.33)           | (2.33)            | "         |
| 16.               | Rohanpur    | 5.52         | (0.15)           | (2.72)            | "         |
| 17.               | Gopalpur    | 12.27        | (0.46)           | (3.75)            | "         |
| 18.               | Godagari    | 13.48        | (0.51)           | (3.78)            | "         |
| 19.               | Badalgachhi | 15.14        | (0.62)           | (4.10)            | "         |
| 20.               | Mohadevpur  | 12.36        | (0.60)           | (4.10)            | "         |
| 21.               | Dhamoirhat  | 11.54        | (0.81)           | (7.02)            | "         |
| 22.               | Nezampur    | 5.43         | (0.65)           | (11.79)           | "         |
| 23.               | Kafuria     | 6.54         | (0.80)           | (12.23)           | "         |
| 24.               | Durgapur    | 1.73         | (0.23)           | (13.29)           | "         |
| 25.               | Halsha      | 2.52         | (0.46)           | (18.25)           | "         |
| 26.               | Mohanpur    | —            | —                | —                 | "         |
| 27.               | Rani Nagar  | —            | —                | —                 | "         |
|                   | Average :   | 9.47         | (0.46)           | (4.86)            |           |
| Overall Average : |             | 24.29        | 2.80             | 8.26              |           |

**Note :** The figures in the parentheses indicate loss.

**Source :** Interview with the Accountants of the relevant branches.

maintain any "Provision for Bad and Doubtful Debts". So it can be stated that the actual position of the branches in respect of profit and loss would be worse than what has been shown. From this point of view, the branches working in Rajshahi district cannot be said to be efficient in the real sense of the term. It can, however, be stated that in relative sense branches are more efficient than others.

With this background in mind, the author now tries to find out the factors which might have been responsible for the performance of different categories of the branches as under.

**2.3.1 Volume of Business :** The volume of business may itself become an important factor for the profitability of the bank. This gets confirmed when we look at the contents of Table 3. It is seen that there is a positive relationship between the amount of loan disbursed and the amount of profit earned. The branches which have been grouped in the categories "Very Good" or "Good" have disbursed Taka 31.71 lakhs on the average in comparison to Taka 9.47 lakhs as disbursed, on the average, by the branches incurring losses.

**2.3.2 Recurring Expenditure :** Another important factor having direct relationship with profitability is recurring expenditure of the concerned branches. It is learnt that the total recurring expenditure of the bank is composed of three elements :

- (a) Personal expenses.
- (b) General expenses, and
- (c) Interest and Commission paid.

For this purpose, the author has thought it to be more relevant to include the first two elements (i.e. personal expenses and general expenses) in recurring expenditure and to exclude the last one (i.e. interest and commission paid) on the ground that the rates of 'interest and commission paid' are the same for all the branches.

It was noticed that the recurring expenditure of the "Very Good" and the "Good" categories was 8 per cent on the average to disbursement. On the other hand, the recurring expenditure of the "Bad" category branches was 15 per cent approximately. So it can be rightly stated that the recurring expenditure of the "Bad" category branches was much more than the other two categories, implying that recurring expenditure has a dominant impact on the profitability of the bank.

It may be of some interest to add that the 3 categories of branches reviewed above also differ in terms of the attitude towards work. While visiting the concerned branches, it was noticed that most of the bank

officials of the "Bad" category branches were not very sincere and dutiful—many of them were found to pass time simply by gossiping. This lack of devotion to work has certainly negative impact on the profitability of the bank.

## 2.4 Defaults

Finally the author wishes to measure management efficiency of Bangladesh Krishi Bank in terms of defaults. Ideally, this criterion entails the relationship between the amount of default and the corresponding amount of disbursement. Unfortunately, this type of data could not be collected from either the branch office or the regional office of Bangladesh Krishi Bank in Rajshahi. This compelled the writer to consider the information as portrayed in Table 4. The disbursement figures relating to 1980-81 had to be compared with the figures on accumulated defaults. Since similar sort of data have been obtained for all the branches under review, it is believed that the proportion of accumulated defaults to disbursements may still give some idea about the efficiency in management.

Here again the author finds 3 categories of branches—one having upto 10 per cent defaults (termed as "Very Good"), another having upto 50 per cent defaults (termed as "Good"). It may be stated that the first category branches are more efficient than the other two categories. It is also seen that the last category branches (termed as "Bad") have got alarmingly high percentage of defaults—in some cases more than 200 per cent. This criterion, therefore, gives that the branches fallen within the last category are very inefficient.

## 2.5 Overall Efficiency

Application of different criteria treated separately gives that no branch is efficient in terms of all the criteria. One branch, namely Nachol, has however, been found to be inefficient by all the criteria disbursed earlier. To examine the overall efficiency of the branches, a summary table is prepared giving different weights to levels of performance, i.e., "Very Good" = 3, "Good" = 2, and "Not Good" or "Bad" = 1. Thus, if a branch obtains 12 scores, this would be considered to be efficient in all respects. The contents of Table 5 exhibit the picture well. It appears that no branch is efficient more appropriately 'Very Good'). Six branches out of 27 have scored 9 or 10 points, 9 branches 7 or 8 points, and the rest 12 branches 6 or less points. If we consider 7 points to be bare minimum score required for becoming efficient, then it would appear that nearly half of the branches in Rajshahi district are functioning inefficiently.

Table—4

Percentage of Default to Disbursement of Different Branches  
of the BKB in Rajshahi District during 1980-81  
(Amount in Lakhs of Taka)

| Sl. No. | Branch      | Disbursement | Default | Percentage | Grade     |
|---------|-------------|--------------|---------|------------|-----------|
| 1.      | Rani Nagar  | —            | —       | —          | Very Good |
| 2.      | Mohanpur    | —            | —       | —          |           |
| 3.      | Rohanpur    | 5.52         | —       | —          |           |
| 4.      | Durgapur    | 1.73         | —       | —          |           |
| 5.      | Halsha      | 2.52         | —       | —          |           |
| 6.      | Niamatpur   | 14.18        | —       | —          |           |
| 7.      | Gopalpur    | 12.27        | 0.35    | 2.85       |           |
| 8.      | Badalgachhi | 15.14        | 1.50    | 9.91       |           |
| 9.      | Gurudaspur  | 14.28        | 1.52    | 10.64      |           |
|         | Average :   | 9.38         | 1.12    | 7.80       |           |
| 10.     | Mohadevpur  | 12.36        | 2.76    | 22.33      | Good      |
| 11.     | Godagari    | 13.48        | 3.13    | 23.22      |           |
| 12.     | Dhamoirhat  | 11.54        | 2.80    | 24.26      |           |
| 13.     | Shibgonj    | 22.72        | 6.62    | 29.14      |           |
| 14.     | Singra      | 37.15        | 11.65   | 31.36      |           |
| 15.     | Rajshahi    | 57.57        | 21.35   | 37.09      |           |
| 16.     | Kafuria     | 6.54         | 2.59    | 39.60      |           |
| 17.     | Puthia      | 46.08        | 22.77   | 49.42      |           |
|         | Average :   | 24.39        | 9.21    | 32.05      |           |
| 18.     | Nawabgonj   | 33.46        | 18.25   | 54.54      | Bad       |
| 19.     | Nezampur    | 5.43         | 3.07    | 56.54      |           |
| 20.     | Nachol      | 8.18         | 5.20    | 63.57      |           |
| 21.     | Atrai       | 33.38        | 27.00   | 80.89      |           |
| 22.     | Sardah      | 21.12        | 17.57   | 81.06      |           |
| 23.     | Proshadpur  | 30.40        | 26.59   | 87.47      |           |
| 24.     | Natore      | 38.44        | 38.31   | 99.66      |           |
| 25.     | Patnitola   | 24.33        | 27.20   | 111.80     |           |
| 26.     | Abdulpur    | 20.13        | 55.96   | 278.00     |           |
| 27.     | Naogan      | 15.65        | 57.77   | 369.14     |           |
|         | Average :   | 23.05        | 27.69   | 128.27     |           |

Source : Interview with the Accountants of the relevant branches.

Table 5

**Overall Efficiency of Different Branches Under  
Rajshahi District During 1980-81**

| Sl. No. | Criteria Branches | Disbursement | Recovery | Profit & Loss | Defaults | Total |
|---------|-------------------|--------------|----------|---------------|----------|-------|
| 1.      | Patnitola         | 3            | 3        | 3             | 1        | 10    |
| 2.      | Rajshahi          | 2            | 3        | 2             | 2        | 9     |
| 3.      | Gurudaspur        | 3            | 2        | 1             | 3        | 9     |
| 4.      | Singra            | 2            | 2        | 3             | 2        | 9     |
| 5.      | Gopalpur          | 2            | 3        | 1             | 3        | 9     |
| 6.      | Niamatpur         | 2            | 3        | 1             | 3        | 9     |
| 7.      | Nezampur          | 3            | 3        | 1             | 1        | 8     |
| 8.      | Badalgachhi       | 3            | 1        | 1             | 3        | 8     |
| 9.      | Godagari          | 2            | 3        | 1             | 2        | 8     |
| 10.     | Proshadpur        | 3            | 1        | 2             | 1        | 7     |
| 11.     | Shibgonj          | 2            | 1        | 2             | 2        | 7     |
| 12.     | Natore            | 1            | 2        | 3             | 1        | 7     |
| 13.     | Atrai             | 1            | 2        | 3             | 1        | 7     |
| 14.     | Puthia            | 2            | 1        | 2             | 2        | 7     |
| 15.     | Dhamoirhat        | 1            | 3        | 1             | 2        | 7     |
| 16.     | Durgapur          | 1            | 1        | 1             | 3        | 6     |
| 17.     | Rohanpur          | 1            | 1        | 1             | 3        | 6     |
| 18.     | Nowabgonj         | 1            | 2        | 2             | 1        | 6     |
| 19.     | Mohadevpur        | 1            | 2        | 1             | 2        | 6     |
| 20.     | Kafuria           | 1            | 2        | 1             | 2        | 6     |
| 21.     | Abdulpur          | 1            | 1        | 3             | 1        | 6     |
| 22.     | Naogaon           | 1            | 1        | 3             | 1        | 6     |
| 23.     | Halsha            | 1            | 1        | 1             | 3        | 6     |
| 24.     | Sardah            | 1            | 1        | 2             | 1        | 5     |
| 25.     | Nachol            | 1            | 1        | 1             | 1        | 4     |
| 26.     | Mohanpur          | —            | —        | —             | —        | —     |
| 27.     | Rani Nagar        | —            | —        | —             | —        | —     |

**Note :** Very Good=3; Good=2; and Not Good or Bad=1.

### SECTION 3 : POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Here the author proposes to deal with some policy issues arising out of the study, and to make some specific recommendations in the line.

### 3.1 Enhancing Sanctioning Capacity of the Branch Managers

Efficiency of the operative management level of Bangladesh Krishi Bank suffers due to a number of factors one of which is loan sanctioning power. The study reveals that some Branch Managers have got sanctioning capacity of Taka 5,000 while others have got Taka 8,000. This discriminating policy be given up and all the managers be empowered to sanction equal amount of loan to the farmers. It is further recommended that the loan sanctioning power of the Branch Managers be increased from Taka 5,000/8,000 to Taka 20,000 so that the loanees can keep pace with the price hike of agricultural inputs and implements and can produce more.

### 3.2 Posting Required Number of Field Staff

It was seen that 85 per cent of the bank personnel agreed that the present supervision was insufficient and ineffective. It is recommended that more field staff (Supervisors and/or Investigation Officers) be posted so that the investigation of each fresh loan case can be completed timely. In addition, end use of the old loan cases can be ensured by them. In short, we propose that the entire credit of Bangladesh Krishi Bank be made 'a system of supervised credit' which would help check diversion of use and ultimately would increase agricultural productivity.

One point in this respect should be borne in mind that 56 per cent of the branches in Rajshahi district incurred losses due to payment of excessive recurring expenditure. That means, those branches were overstaffed—not in supervisory staff but in other staff. So, in case of deploying more staff, categorywise requirement of the branch concerned should be reviewed thoroughly.

### 3.3 Following Principles of Accounting in Preparing Income and Expenditure Account

The indepth investigation revealed that the profit as appeared to have been earned by some branches was mainly due to jugglery of calculation. Note that in calculating profit, the bank branches did not take into account either the "Bad Debts" or the "Reserve for Bad Debts". On the other hand, they charged "Penal Interest" and "Compound Interest" on the debtors which might not have been realized at all. It is, therefore suggested that "Income and Expenditure Account" of the branches be prepared strictly according to the Principles of Accounting and every attempt be made to run their affairs on commercial basis keeping consistency with the objective of increasing agricultural output.

### 3.4 Re-introduction of Entertainment Allowances

The study showed that co-operation of the Union Parishad Chairmen and the Members, the Political Leaders, and the Officials of the locality was required to recover loans in time. This involves some cost. But the Branch Manager could not entertain them even with a cup of tea officially as his "Entertainment Allowance" has been stopped. It is recommended that "Entertainment Allowance" of the Branch Managers be re-introduced with immediate effect which would help getting co-operation from them.

### 3.5 More Management Development Training

It was observed that many bank personnel do not work sincerely and efficiently. It is, therefore, suggested that in the interest of efficient management and quick sanctioning and disbursement of loans better utilization and recovery of funds, management development training for the bank officials be specially emphasized as the present training is found to be inadequate and ineffective at least in Rajshahi district. They should be indoctrinated the idea that the organization is their own that they should stop unwise lending but expand appropriate business most willingly.

It is expected that if all these suggestions are implemented in action, it would help making higher disbursement, ensure better collection, cover high recurring expenditure, enhance profitability and expedite growth of the bank thereby increasing agricultural output.

### Appendix I

#### District-wise Disbursement of Credit by Bangladesh Krishi Bank During 1980-81

| Sl. No. | District   | Disbursement | Sl. No. | District               | Disbursement |
|---------|------------|--------------|---------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1.      | Dhaka      | 52.39        | 11.     | Dinajpur               | 5.53         |
| 2.      | Chittagong | 44.31        | 12.     | Rajshahi               | 5.49         |
| 3.      | Sylhet     | 11.39        | 13.     | Noakhali               | 5.28         |
| 4.      | Comilla    | 10.90        | 14.     | Faridpur               | 5.06         |
| 5.      | Rangpur    | 10.81        | 15.     | Barisal                | 4.74         |
| 6.      | Khulna     | 10.07        | 16.     | Jamalpur               | 4.66         |
| 7.      | Mymensingh | 8.61         | 17.     | Bogra                  | 4.60         |
| 8.      | Jessore    | 7.48         | 18.     | Pabna                  | 2.84         |
| 9.      | Kushtia    | 7.31         | 19.     | Patuakhali             | 2.02         |
| 10.     | Tangail    | 5.65         | 20.     | Chittagong Hill Tracts | 0.60         |
| Total : |            |              | 209.74  |                        |              |

Source : Annual Report of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, 1980-81, p. 45.

## Appendix II

## Credit Disbursement Made by Different Branches of Bangladesh Krishi Bank working within Rajshahi District During 1980-81

(Amount in Lakhs of Taka)

| Sl. No.                    | Branches    | Amount           | Sl. No.                   | Branches    | Amount             |
|----------------------------|-------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1.                         | Rajshahi    | 57.57<br>(10.49) | 16.                       | Niamatpur   | 14.18<br>(2.59)    |
| 2.                         | Puthia      | 46.04<br>(8.37)  | 17.                       | Godagari    | 13.48<br>(2.47)    |
| 3.                         | Natore      | 38.44<br>(6.99)  | 18.                       | Porsha(x)   | 13.25<br>(2.40)    |
| 4.                         | Singra      | 37.13<br>(6.75)  | 19.                       | Mohadevpur  | 12.36<br>(2.26)    |
| 5.                         | Nawabgonj   | 33.46<br>(6.10)  | 20.                       | Gopalpur    | 12.27<br>(2.24)    |
| 6.                         | Atrai       | 33.38<br>(6.08)  | 21.                       | Dhamoirhat  | 11.57<br>(2.09)    |
| 7.                         | Proshadpur  | 30.40<br>(5.53)  | <b>Lower Disbursement</b> |             |                    |
| 8.                         | Tanore(x)   | 26.12<br>(4.75)  | 22.                       | Kafuria     | 6.47<br>(1.18)     |
| 9.                         | Patnitola   | 24.33<br>(4.42)  | 23.                       | Nachole     | 6.38<br>(1.17)     |
| 10.                        | Shibgonj    | 22.72<br>(4.13)  | 24.                       | Rohanpur    | 5.52<br>(1.00)     |
| 11.                        | Sardah      | 21.06<br>(3.84)  | 25.                       | Nizampur    | 5.43<br>(0.98)     |
| 12.                        | Abdulpur    | 20.13<br>(3.66)  | 26.                       | Bholahat(x) | 5.26<br>(0.97)     |
| <b>Medium Disbursement</b> |             |                  | 27.                       | Mohanpur    | 3.08<br>(0.56)     |
| 13.                        | Naogaon     | 15.66<br>(2.86)  | 28.                       | Halsha      | 2.52<br>(0.52)     |
| 14.                        | Badalgachhi | 15.14<br>(2.75)  | 29.                       | Durgapur    | 1.73<br>(0.31)     |
| 15.                        | Gurudaspur  | 14.28<br>(2.60)  | 30.                       | Ranjnagar   | —                  |
|                            |             |                  |                           | Total       | 549.33<br>(100.00) |

Notes : i) The figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

ii) x-marked branches could not be covered for lack of communication.

Source : Office of the Regional Manager, Rajshahi.

## Appendix III

**Loan Sanctioning Power of the Branch Managers of Different  
Branches in Rajshahi District during 1980-81**

| Sl. No. | Branch      | Grade     | Sanctioning power (Taka) | Remarks  |
|---------|-------------|-----------|--------------------------|--|
| 1.      | Nezampur    | Very Good | 5,000                    | 60 per cent of this category of branches have got sanctioning power of Taka 8,000. |
| 2.      | Badalgachhi | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 3.      | Proshadpur  | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 4.      | Gurudaspur  | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 5.      | Patnitola   | "         |                          |  |
| 6.      | Singra      | Good      | 8,000                    | 57 per cent of this category of branches have got sanctioning power of Taka 8,000. |
| 7.      | Gopalpur    | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 8.      | Rajshahi    | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 9.      | Puthia      | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 10.     | Godagari    | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 11.     | Shibgonj    | "         | 5,000                    | 20 per cent of this category of branches have got sanctioning power of Taka 8,000  |
| 12.     | Niamatpur   | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 13.     | Natore      | Not Good  | 8,000                    |  |
| 14.     | Atrai       | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 15.     | Durgapur    | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 16.     | Rohanpur    | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 17.     | Nawabgonj   | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 18.     | Mohadevpur  | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 19.     | Kafuria     | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 20.     | Sardah      | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 21.     | Abdulpur    | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 22.     | Nachol      | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 23.     | Dhamoirhat  | "         | 8,000                    |  |
| 24.     | Naogaon     | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 25.     | Halsha      | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 26.     | Mohanpur    | "         | 5,000                    |  |
| 27.     | Rani Nagar  | "         | 5,000                    |  |

**Source :** Interview with the Managers of the relevant branches.

# Handloom Industry in the District of Pabna : An Analysis of its Present Situation

A.F.M. Mafizul Islam

## 1. Introduction

Handloom industry is the largest cottage industry in Bangladesh and it is the second largest activity in the rural areas of the country. Like agriculture, it is the hardcore of the country's economy. The handloom industry contributes about 90 percent of the total volume of domestic production of cloth leaving only 10 percent for the cotton textile mills.<sup>1</sup> This industry is by far the second largest employer after agriculture. It offers employment to about 8.5 lakh of people directly<sup>2</sup> and adds approximately the same number of other persons through services and commercial activities which covers about 5.6 percent of the total work force or about 9.5 percent of the rural labour force.<sup>3</sup> Considering the national figure of 6 dependants for each working member, it is argued that as many as 10 million people are supported by this industry as a whole. It is conceivable, therefore, that the handloom industry provides living to nearly 10 percent of the total population of Bangladesh.

The District of Pabna is fortunate enough to have one of the highest concentrations of handlooms in Bangladesh. The object of this paper is to firstly identify the position of handloom in the district of Pabna in national context. Secondly it deals with only the Pabna district handloom industry separately. Thirdly it takes up the operational status of the looms and yarn-output situation. The exploitations of the handloom weavers by the *Mahajans* in the district of Pabna are also analysed next in detail. Lastly it contains some policy prescriptions.

<sup>1</sup>A. R. Khan, *The Economy of Bangladesh* (Delhi : The McMillan Co. of India Ltd., 1972), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>*Report for Bangladesh Handloom Census—1978* (Dacca : Institute of Business Administration, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>M. Islam, A.F.M., 'Significance of Handloom Industry' *The Bangladesh Observer*, December 22 & 23, 1981.

## II

## 2. Source of Data and Limitations of The Study

*The Bangladesh Handloom Census—1978<sup>4</sup> and the Handloom Census : Report for the Rajshahi Division and Kushtia District 1978<sup>5</sup>* are the principal source materials for the study. The author has compiled data from different tables provided in the census reports. For the simplicity of analysis, some bimonthly data have been converted into yearly data through multiplication by 6 which may result in an over-estimated or under estimated figure. For example, the census report has presented production figure for only two months (August and September) which incidentally coincides with the two muslim festivals (Eid-ul-Fitre and Ed-ul-Azha), when production and sales of cloth are usually on the high side. Annual cloth production is obtained by multiplying this bimonthly figure by 6 to compute per capita production. Thus the figure for per capita production may be an over-estimate. It is because of inadequacies and inaccuracies of data in the census reports, it was not possible to go into an in-depth study.

## III

## 3. Handloom Industry in The District of Pabna :

## An Over-view in National Context

In Bangladesh, there are 4.37 lakh of handlooms in 1.98 lakh units of cottages.<sup>6</sup> Four districts in the country, viz. Pabna, Dhaka, Comilla and Tangail have the highest concentration of handlooms, and have about 60 percent of all units and about 70 percent of all looms. The Pabna district handloom industry had occupied an important place in the national context. The per capita loom is the highest for Pabna (0.259) than for any other district in the country, and this district has the largest number of looms per acre of land area (Table 1). The average number of loom per unit is 4.3 in Pabna. This figure is the highest in Bangladesh and it is double the national average which is 2.2. Of the four types of looms, viz. pit fly, pit throw, fly shuttle and semi-automatic loom, the last one is the modified and latest form of handloom the origin of which dates back to the 40's. In the district of Pabna these semi-automatic looms are the most important in terms of number. There are 60 thousand semi-automatic loom in the District of Pabna which covers 58.7 percent of the total loomage of this category in Bangladesh (Table 2).

<sup>4</sup>Report for Bangladesh Handloom Census—1978.

<sup>5</sup>M. Hossain, *Handloom Census : Report for Rajshahi Division and Kushtia District — 1978*, Department of Statistics, Rajshahi University.

<sup>6</sup>M. Islam, A.F.M., 'A Comparative Analysis of Productivity in Some Selected Handloom and Small Powerloom Industries of Bangladesh', *The Journal of Management, Business and Economics*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1982, p. 335.

Table 1

Loom per capita, per acre of land, per capita and percentage shares  
of total cloth production in some major areas  
in Bangladesh, 1978:

| Handloom area  | Loom per<br>capita | Loom per<br>acre of<br>land | Per capita<br>production<br>(yards) | % share of<br>total cloth<br>production |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Pabna district | 0.259              | 0.072                       | 45.99                               | 14.69                                   |
| Dhaka "        | 0.013              | 0.065                       | 52.75                               | 47.09                                   |
| Comilla "      | 0.009              | 0.036                       | 20.02                               | 13.01                                   |
| Tangail "      | 0.015              | 0.045                       | 24.94                               | 5.81                                    |
| Other "        | 0.002              | 0.004                       | 3.25                                | 19.40                                   |
| Bangladesh     | 0.005              | 0.012                       | 12.31                               | 100.00                                  |

Table 2

Composition of looms in the district of Pabna in relation to  
some major areas in Bangladesh, 1978:

| Handloom Area  | Number of looms by type  |                          |                            |                          |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
|                | Fly shuttle              | Throw shuttle            | Semi-automatic             | Total                    |
| Pabna district | 26100 [30.31]<br>(8.47)  | (—)                      | 60000 [79.69]<br>(58.71)   | 86100 [100]<br>(19.72)   |
| Dhaka "        | 94400 [78.54]<br>(30.65) | 4600 [3.88]<br>(17.36)   | 21200 [17.63]<br>(20.74)   | 120200 [100]<br>(27.52)  |
| Comilla "      | 58200 [07.16]<br>(18.90) | 100 [0.17]<br>(0.38)     | 1600 [2.67]<br>(1.57)      | 59900 [100]<br>(13.72)   |
| Tangail "      | 22300 [69.62]<br>(7.24)  | 1300 [3.48]<br>(4.91)    | 13800 [36.90]<br>(13.50)   | 37400 [100]<br>(8.56)    |
| Other "        | 107000 [80.39]           | 20500 [15.40]            | 5600 [4.21]                | 133100 [100]             |
| Bangladesh     | 308000 [70.53]<br>(100)  | 26500 [6.07]<br>(100.00) | 102200 [23.40]<br>(100.00) | 436700 [100]<br>(100.00) |

Note : (—) means negligible.

Figure in the first bracket indicate percentages of the  
columns total and those in the third bracket indicate per-  
centage of row total.

In relation to the total production of cloth in the country as a whole  
the position of Pabna district is second from the top, next to Dhaka. But  
per capita output of cloth is the highest for Pabna than for any other district

which is about 45.9 yards. The handloom industry of Pabna is famous for the production of fine *sharee*. *Sharee* cloth covers 82.4 percent of the total output. It is worth noting that the share of *sharee* in the total production of cloth is the highest for Pabna than for any other district in Bangladesh (Table 3)

Handloom being the major cottage industry in Bangladesh provides the largest part of off-farm employment in rural areas. Family members constitute 58 percent of total labour force employed in the handloom industry of Bangladesh. The district of Pabna deviates from the national average where percentage distribution of hired labour is fairly high (43.5) compared to the family labour (Table 4). This partly reflects that the handloom industry in the district of Pabna is more commercial oriented than family oriented. Thus handloom industry in this district is more important in the context of the overall handloom industry of Bangladesh. This district may be called the Manchester of Bangladesh in respect of this industry.

Table 3  
Percentage shares of total output by type of product, 1978.

| Varieties | Pabna | Dhake | Comilla | Tangail | Bangladesh |
|-----------|-------|-------|---------|---------|------------|
| Sharee    | 82.4  | 52.8  | 3.2     | 78.8    | 47.6       |
| Lungi     | 12.0  | 22.5  | 89.0    | 19.5    | 31.2       |
| Chadar    | 0.2   | 1.6   | 3.7     | 0.4     | 1.5        |
| Gamsa     | 3.9   | 7.4   | 0.3     | 0.2     | 8.8        |
| Others    | 1.5   | 15.7  | 3.8     | 1.1     | 10.9       |
| Total :   | 100   | 100   | 100     | 100     | 100        |

Table 4  
Employment Situation in Handloom Industry, 1978.

| Handloom Area  | Total persons | Percentage break down |                   |              | Total |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------|
|                |               | Family member         | Permanently hired | Casual hired |       |
| Pabna district | 14700         | 43.5                  | 43.5              | 13.0         | 100   |
| Dhaka "        | 304000        | 48.8                  | 36.7              | 14.5         | 100   |
| Comilla "      | 157000        | 60.5                  | 22.9              | 16.6         | 100   |
| Tangail "      | 65000         | 63.1                  | 30.8              | 6.1          | 100   |
| Other "        | 174000        | 82.8                  | 10.7              | 6.5          | 100   |
| Bangladesh     | 847000        | 58.0                  | 29.6              | 12.4         | 100   |

## IV

**Handloom Industry in Pabna : Present Situation**

The district of Pabna has 19,853 units with 86,041 looms. All the 16 thanas of the district are endowed with handlooms (Table 5). Belkuchi thana is the top in the list where the number of looms is 27,020 which constitutes 31.4 percent of the looms in the district. The Shahzadpur thana has the second highest concentration of hadlooms. These two thanas together account for about 60 percent of all the looms in the district leaving only 40 percent of the looms for remaining 14 thanas. Among the four types of looms in the district, semi-automatic looms are more dominant. They constitute about 70 percent of all looms (Table 6). The pit-fly looms are about 30 percent. The number of pit throw is only 32. There are only 16 fly shuttle frame loom in Rajshahi Division of which 3 are available in Pabna (Table 7). In the handloom industry of Pabna district the average number of looms per unit comes to about 4.33. One will not make much of mistake if one equals units of production with families. Thus, loom per weaving in different thanas varies, on the average, between 1.62 and 7.23. In terms of loom per unit, the Chouhali thana is in the top of the list. However, there is evidence of quite inequitable distribution of looms among units. Some units in the district of Pabna have more than 100 looms each.

Table 5

**Handloom Statistics in the district of Pabna by Thanass, 1978.**

| Thana         | Total number of units | Total number of looms | Loom per unit | % of total looms |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Belkuchi      | 4076                  | 27,020                | 6.63          | 31.40            |
| Shahzadpur    | 4737                  | 24,457                | 5.16          | 28.42            |
| Iswardi       | 135                   | 220                   | 1.62          | 0.26             |
| Santhia       | 1683                  | 4,480                 | 2.66          | 5.21             |
| Bera          | 1724                  | 4,038                 | 2.34          | 4.69             |
| Atghoria      | 561                   | 1,396                 | 2.48          | 1.62             |
| Chatmohor     | 369                   | 642                   | 1.73          | 0.75             |
| Sujanagar     | 1241                  | 2,941                 | 2.36          | 3.42             |
| Pabna Kotwali | 1215                  | 3,632                 | 2.98          | 4.22             |
| Faridpur      | 484                   | 1,011                 | 2.08          | 1.18             |
| Ullapara      | 610                   | 2,426                 | 3.97          | 2.82             |
| Kamarkhanda   | 308                   | 1,267                 | 4.11          | 1.47             |
| Sirajganj     | 1566                  | 5,741                 | 3.67          | 6.67             |
| Kazipur       | 146                   | 398                   | 2.72          | 0.46             |
| Raiganj       | 165                   | 349                   | 2.12          | 0.42             |
| Chowhali      | 833                   | 6,023                 | 7.23          | 7.00             |
| Total         | 19,853                | 86,041                | 4.33          | 100.00           |

Table 6

**Distribution of different types of looms and operational status  
of the looms in the district of Pabna, 1978.**

| Types of looms    | Installed looms  | Operational looms | Non-operational looms | Ratio of non-operational looms to total loomage (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Pit fly           | 26005<br>(30.22) | 11301<br>(20.18)  | 14704<br>(48.93)      | 56.54   |
| Pit throw         | 17<br>(0.03)     | 5<br>(0.01)       | 12<br>(0.06)          | 77.27   |
| Fly shuttle frame | 3<br>(0.001)     | 0<br>(00)         | 3<br>(0.01)           | 100.00  |
| Semi-automatic    | 60011<br>(69.75) | 44687<br>(79.81)  | 15324<br>(51.00)      | 25.54   |
| Total             | 86041<br>(100)   | 55993             | 30048                 | 34.92   |

**Note :** Bracketed figures indicate the percentage.

Table 7

**Statistics of Looms in the districts of Rajshahi Division, 1978.**

| Districts         | Total units       | Looms   |           |                   |            | Total             |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|-----------|-------------------|------------|-------------------|
|                   |                   | Pit fly | Pit throw | Fly shuttle frame | Semi-auto. |                   |
| Pabna             | 19,853<br>(12.92) | 26,005  | 22        | 3                 | 60,011     | 86,041<br>(81.75) |
| Rajshahi          | 3,470<br>(11.02)  | 4,841   | 340       | 11                | 1,123      | 6,315<br>(6.00)   |
| Bogra             | 4,690<br>(14.85)  | 4,198   | 1,998     | 0                 | 341        | 6,537<br>(6.21)   |
| Rangpur           | 1,812<br>(5.74)   | 2,951   | 178       | 1                 | 403        | 3,533<br>(3.36)   |
| Dinajpur          | 1,727<br>(5.47)   | 2,532   | 112       | 1                 | 180        | 2,825<br>(2.68)   |
| Rajshahi Division | 31,552<br>(100)   | 40,527  | 2,650     | 16                | 62,058     | 1,05,251<br>(100) |

**Note :** Bracketed figures indicate percentages of column total.

### Operational Status of the Industry

The handloom industry in the district of Pabna is not quite operationally sound. Many looms have been suffering from a very high proportion of unabsorbed use of installed capacity. That is to say, a large number of looms is remaining in the state of non-operation. The percentage share of operational looms is about 65.08. The rest 34.92 percent of the total looms have been deliberately kept idle (Table 6). Among the various types of looms, the ratio of non-operational looms in the category of pit fly is 56.64 percent, while the corresponding figure for the semiautomatic loom is 25.54 percent. There are only 17 pit throw looms in the district of which 12 are remaining idle. All the three fly shuttle frame looms have been kept idle.

This is one side of the picture. On the other side, it has been observed that operational looms in the district of Pabna are not running with their full capacity. In the handloom industry of this district, the average capacities per 8 hour shift per operational loom for semi-automatic and pit fly looms are 10.95 yards and 8 yards respectively. Interestingly enough the capacities of these two types of looms in the district of Pabna lie much below than those for Rajshahi district. Again, the average capacity for pit throw loom is 6.5 yards for Pabna while the corresponding figure for Rangpur is fairly large which is 17.46 yards. Some microstudies find that in the Shahzadpur area the capacity utilisation rate in the handlooms is about 77.92 percent<sup>7</sup> in relation to suitably defined maximum feasible hours.

#### 4.1 Yarn Situation in the Production of Cloth

Yarn shortage is one of the basic problems relating to idle loomage and underutilised looms. It is worth mentioning that the Bangladesh handloom industry uses yarn which is mostly domestically produced. Cotton yarn is the predominant among all types of yarn purchased. In the handloom industry of Pabna, cotton yarn constitutes about 95.19 percent of total yarn purchased. Another 4.35 percent is accounted for by the synthetic yarn, the rest 0.46 percent by other types of yarn and fibre (Table 8). The Pabna district handloom industry produces a variety of products viz. *sharee*, *lungi*, *gamsa*, *chadar*, etc. As of 1978, *sharee* is the main product, the output of which is about 82.5 percent of the total (Table 9). The next important output is *lungi* which accounts for 12 percent of the total output in the industry. *Gamsa* production is the third largest item followed by *chadar*. Other items constitute as low as 1.5 percent of the total. In terms of yarn type of the fabrics, it is observed that cotton fabrics constitute as high as 99 percent of all output (Table 8). Fibres, synthetic and other fabrics cover only 0.19 percent of the total fabrics in the industry.

<sup>7</sup>M. Islam, A.F.M., 'Handloom and Powerloom Industries in Bangladesh: An Economic Analysis of Productivity Employment and Capacity Utilisation', unpublished M. Phil. dissertation, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University.

**Table 8**  
**Output and Yarn in the Handloom Industry in Pabna, 1978.**

| Types of product | Output by yarn type (yards) | Yarn used by type (lbs) | Output produced per loom year (yards) | Yarn used per loom (lbs) | Output per lbs yarn (yards) |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cotton           | 158599116<br>(99.81)        | 30292182<br>(95.19)     | 2833                                  | 541                      | 5.24                        |
| Fibre            | 24000<br>(0.01)             | 8394<br>(0.02)          | 0.43                                  | 0.15                     | 2.87                        |
| Synthetic        | 198912<br>(0.13)            | 1382994<br>(4.35)       | 2.55                                  | 24.70                    | 0.14                        |
| Others           | 50328<br>(0.05)             | 140070<br>(0.44)        | 0.90                                  | 2.50                     | 0.36                        |
| Total            | 158872356<br>(100)          | 31823640<br>(100)       | 2837                                  | 568                      | 5.0                         |

**Table 9**  
**Varieties of products in the Handloom Industry in the district of Pabna, 1978.**

| Varieties | Output (yards) | % of total | Cumulative percentage |
|-----------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Sharee    | 130982094      | 82.44      | 82.44                 |
| Lungi     | 19045302       | 11.99      | 94.43                 |
| Chadar    | 288084         | 0.18       | 94.61                 |
| Gamsa     | 6143458        | 3.87       | 98.42                 |
| Others    | 2412918        | 1.52       | 100                   |
| Total     | 158872356      | 100        | —                     |

The handloom industry of Pabna mostly use 32 and 40 count yarn. Yarn of these two counts accounts for about two fifths of all yarn consumed (Table 10). Handlooms at Pabna also use a much higher proportion of higher grade yarn. It has been observed that the percentages of 41-60 counts and 61-80 counts of yarn consumed to total yarn consumption are smaller i. e., 31 percent and 26 percent respectively. These higher grades of yarn are used for production of fine *sharee*. The share of coarse yarn falling in the range of 10-20 counts is smaller than one percent. The overall count-wise use, however, reveals a picture of shortage in almost all counts of yarn in the handloom industry of Pabna. The handloom

industry in this district faces about 6 to 8 percent shortage of yarn for their operational looms. Shortage of fibre yarn for operational looms is most acute. These looms actually get about 63 percent less than their requirement of fibre yarn. The shortage of synthetic yarn is about 6.4 percent with the shortage of cotton yarn coming next 6 percent. Among various counts of yarn, the most acute shortage is felt in the 21-30 count range where the shortfall is about two-thirds of its requirement (Table 10). 31-40 and 41-60 counts of yarn are also in short supply; and the industry in the district could absorb about 15 percent more than what it got in 1978 for its operational looms. Taking all operational and idle looms, the Pabna district handloom industry gives a picture of the shortage of about 40 percent of its total annual yarn requirements.

**Table 10**  
**Yarn shortage in the handlooms in Pabna, 1978.**

( in lbs )

| Count of yarn | Yarn use in operational looms | Yarn required in operational looms | Yarn shortage in operational looms | Yarn required in non-operational looms | Total yarn shortage | Yarn shortage as a % of yarn required |
|---------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 10-20         | 286596<br>(0.90)              | 301608                             | 45012                              | 161855                                 | 176867              | 38.2                                  |
| 21-30         | 53790<br>(0.17)               | 87516                              | 33726                              | 46965                                  | 80691               | 60.0                                  |
| 31-40         | 12451884<br>(39.13)           | 13512096                           | 1060212                            | 7251111                                | 8311323             | 40.0                                  |
| 41-60         | 9857526<br>(30.98)            | 10368084                           | 510558                             | 5563913                                | 6074471             | 38.1                                  |
| 61-80         | 8182614<br>(25.71)            | 8475840                            | 293226                             | 4548462                                | 4841688             | 37.2                                  |
| Others        | 991230<br>(3.11)              | 1137612                            | 146382                             | 610486                                 | 756868              | 34.9                                  |
| Total         | 31823640<br>(100)             | 33883944                           | 2060304                            | 18182792                               | 20998776            | 40.3                                  |

**Note :** Bracketed figures indicate percentage of column total.

#### 4.2 Explanations of Weavers by the Mahajans

The Pabna district handloom industry has a greater potentiality of increase in output. The extent of this potentiality accounts for 42 per-

cent increase in product. Now the existing credit market situation, particularly the *mahajanism* is a problematic issue standing in the way of increase in output to the optimum level. The fact is that whatever may be the nature of the problems in the handloom sector, all the problems have some explicit link with the prevailing situation of credit market. It has been found that the shortage of capital, ranked high among all the problems, the frequency of which accounted for about 93 percent of the total (Table 11). Scarcity of labour constituted only 3.19 percent of the total frequency of problems. Interestingly enough that lack of yarn (yarn is the predominant factor required in the handloom industry) covered only 1.6 percent of the total frequency. The maximum frequency in the shortage of capital with a minimum frequency in the lack of necessary yarn reflects, in part, that yarn was not scarce in the market rather necessary fund was not in hand to the weaver. This lack of

Table 11  
Reasons for Non-operation of Looms in Pubna, 1978

| Reasons             | Frequency | % of total frequency |
|---------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Shortage of capital | 10,950    | 92.06                |
| Lack of labour      | 380       | 3.19                 |
| Lack of spares      | 20        | 0.17                 |
| Lack of yarn        | 192       | 1.61                 |
| Others              | 353       | 2.97                 |
| Total :             | 11,895    | 100                  |

finance was a serious drawback and standing on the way of operational efficiency of the handloom industry. Due to lack of finance a significant proportion of loan came from the *mahajans* either in kind or in cash on weekly payment basis at unusually higher price. It has been observed that out of total loan of Tk. 32 million, the *mahajans* distributed loan in kind or in cash of Tk. 31 million which covered about 97 percent of the total loan disbursed from different sources (Table 12). The Mahajans usually charged about 180 percent rate of interest which was unusually higher than the bank rate (i.e. 11-12%). These *mahajans* are, in fact, the registered businessmen and wholesalers. It is found that about 94 percent of the firms sold their products to them (Table 12). The weavers in fact want to get rid of these *mahajans*. About 93 percent of the prospective borrowers expressed their views that they expect loans from the banks. It is noted that none of the prospective borrowers expected loan from the *mahajans* (Table 14).

It is a matter of great regret that the weavers have little access to the bank loans, and therefore, they are compelled to take loans from the *mahajans*. Thus the weavers fall into the vicious circle of indebtedness to the *mahajans* and they are exploited by them.

Table 12

Sources of Loans and interest rate obtained for weavers in Pabna, 1978.

| Sources         | Loans obtained<br>(Taka) | % of total | Rate of<br>interest(%) |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| Co-operative    | 6,658                    | 0.02       | 11.45                  |
| Bank            | 858,600                  | 2.68       | 11.82                  |
| Friend/Relation | 64,073                   | 0.20       | 59.86                  |
| Mahajans        | 310,86,214               | 96.86      | 180.07                 |
| Others          | 78,957                   | 0.24       | 96.12                  |
| Total           | 320,94,502               | 100        | —                      |

Table 13

Product sales point of output in the district of Pabna 1978.

| Sales point             | Frequency | % of total |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Co-operative<br>society | 385       | 2.73       |
| Whole-sallars           | 12967     | 91.84      |
| Retailers               | 610       | 4.32       |
| Others                  | 157       | 1.11       |
| Total                   | 14119     | 100        |

Table 14

Distribution of prospective borrowers for further loans  
in Pabna District, 1978.

| Sources         | Frequency | % of total |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Co-operative    | 12046     | 7.00       |
| Bank            | 15099     | 92.97      |
| Friend/Relation | 1         | 0.01       |
| Mahajans        | 0         | 0.00       |
| Others          | 3         | 0.02       |
| Total           | 17207     | 100.00     |

## 5. Conclusions

Credit is the precondition for access to all material inputs to the handloom weavers. So a special credit arrangement should be made to help weavers with finance so that they can procure input easily. This will bring the weavers out of the vicious circle of inborn indebtedness. It is well-known that neither the Government co-operatives nor the nationalised commercial banks could supply credit at the door steps of the handloom weavers as yet. It is, therefore, suggested to form such an agency as to help develop the handloom weavers which will take the responsibility of lobbying for them under certain schemes. This agency may work even with nationalised banks and co-operative institutions. In order to induce institutional lenders to lend to the handloom weavers the agency is to operate not only as lobbies but also as a guarantee agency.

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# The Bengal Pact, 1923 : A Study of Hindu-Muslim Reactions

M. Ali Asgar Khan

The Bengal Pact, 1923 was an important event in the history of Bengal. It was concluded at a time when communal relations in India were deteriorating. Some important muslims including Ali Brothers and Moulana Abul Kalam Azad participated in the Congress meetings and efforts were made at reconciliation. The All Indian Congress Committee's decision of non-violence and boycott at Bardoli created rift in the ranks of the Congress. Matilal Nehru, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and others protested the decisions. They believed that pressure would compel imperialism to open negotiation with the Nationalist forces. The Act of 1919 did neither satisfy the Congress and the League. Consequently they boycotted the first election held under the Act in 1920. But the Congress wished to contest the second election of 1923 with the intention of wrecking the constitutions from within. In Bengal the ruling group of the Congress organised the *Swarajya*<sup>1</sup> Party under the leadership of C. R. Das. As early as 1917, Das realised that to be an effective leader in Bengal he would need Muslim support. So for increased backing for his party and to bring uncommitted Muslim members of the Legislative Council to his party C. R. Das worked out a provisional agreement with some Muslims leaders in Bengal. The agreement dealt with the rights of the two communities "in order to establish a real foundation of self-government in this province". The

<sup>1</sup>The Swarajya Party which came into existence in 1923 was another offshoot of the Indian National Congress. It was founded by eminent leaders like C.R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru due to dissatisfaction with the Gandhian programme of Non-Co-operation. The object of the party was 'reformism and constitutionalism'. They wanted to establish Swaraj or Dominion Status within the British empire through the method of 'uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction'. (*India's Struggle for Freedom*, Vol. III ed. J.S. Sharma, Delhi 1965, pp. 1172-1173).

agreement subsequently came to be known as Bengal Pact.<sup>2</sup> The main provisions of the pact were as follows :

"It is resolved that in order to establish a real foundation of Self-Govt. in this province it is necessary to bring about a pact between the Hindus and the Mohammadans of Bengal dealing with the rights of each community when the foundation of Self-Govt. is secured.

Be it resolved that :

a) Representation in the Bengal Legislative Council be on the population basis with separate elections subject to such adjustments as may be necessary by the ALL INDIA HINDU-MUSLIM PACT and by the Khilafat and the Congress.

b) Representation to local bodies to be in the proportion of 60 to 40 (This may be further considered) to every district—60 to the community which is in majority and 40 to the minority. Thus in a district where the Mohammadans are in a majority they will get 60 percent. Similarly where the Hindus are in majority they are to get 60% and the Mohammedans 40%. The question as to whether there should be separate or mixed electorates is postponed for the present to ascertain the views of both the communities.

c) Governments posts :

55% of the Govt. posts should go to Mohammadans to be worked out in the following manners :

Fixing of tests of different classes of appointments, the Mohammedans satisfying the least test should be preferred till the above percentage is attained, and after that according to the proportion of 55 to 45 the former to the Mohammadans and latter to the non-Mohammadans, subject to this

<sup>2</sup>In Bengal, the Muslims were the majority community but for various reasons they were educationally and politically backward. Even though they numbered over 50 percent of the population, they held hardly 30 percent of the posts under the Govt. Mr. C. R. Das was a great realist and immediately saw that the problem was an economic one. He realised that till the Mussalmans were given the necessary assurances for their economic future, they could not be expected to join the Congress whole-heartedly. He therefore made a declaration which impressed not only Bengal but the whole of India. The agreement was provisional because the terms of the pact would be fulfilled if Congress secured the ruins of power in Bengal (L.A. Gordon : *Bengal : the Nationalist Movement 1876-1940*, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 194-195 ; See also Humaira Momen : *Muslim Politics in Bengal*, p. 27 and Sukhbir Chowdhury : *Growth of Nationalism in India*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 132-133.

that for the intervening years a small percentage of posts say 20 percentage should go to the Hindus.

d) Religious toleration :

In not allowing any resolution or enactment which affects the religion of any of the different communities without the consent of the 75 percent of the elected members of that community. (2) In not allowing music in procession before any mosque. (3) In not interfering with cow-killing for religious sacrifices. (4) In providing that no legislation or enactment in respect of cow-killing for food will be taken up in the council. Endeavour should be made by members of both the communities outside the council to bring about an understanding between the communities. (5) In providing that cow-killing should be carried on in such a manner as not to wound the religious feeling of the Hindus. (6) In providing for the formation every year of representative committees in every sub-division, of which half of the members should be Mohammadans and half Hindus, each committee choosing its president from among themselves with power to prevent or arbitrate upon any dispute between the Hindus and the Mohammadans in accordance with provision herein stated.<sup>3</sup>

**Attitude of the Hindus towards the Pact**

The Pact was conceived in the best of spirits but it became the nucleus of political controversy. Communal sections among the Hindus vilified Deshbandhu and said that he had surrendered the rights of the Hindus. Even the more moderate opinion among the Hindus held that C.R. Das had gone too far in trying to win the confidence of the Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

After the publication of the Pact serious reaction started among the Hindus. In a letter to the editor under caption "Mr. Das and the Hindus" by an old observer said, "Finding himself in minority Mr. C. R. Das is now gambling with the future of a nation. With a view to win over the Moslems to his side he has committed to his party to a colossal surrender of the Hindu interest—a betrayal so complete and humiliating that if a bare suggestion of this nature had proceeded from some English official or Anglo-Indian journal the Ganges would have been on fire by this time."<sup>5</sup> He also discussed at length the various provisions of the Pact and accused Mr. Das of betraying Hindu cause. A Hindu voter in a letter titling "Swaraj

<sup>3</sup>H.N. Mitra, ed. : *Indian Quarterly Register*, Vol. 1, 1924, Calcutta ; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, December 26, 1923.

<sup>4</sup>Hemendra Nath Das Gupta: *Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das*, The Publication Div. Govt. of India, Delhi, 1960, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup>*The Statesman*, Calcutta, December 20, 1923.

and Mohammadan Pact" to the editor criticised C. R. Das as the apostle of Swaraj and for his false propaganda in the election campaign. He discussed the representation percentage in different districts and accused C. R. Das for the reduction of the Hindu element in the local bodies to an insignificant minority and the increase of the Mohammadan element beyond what was ever thought of ....<sup>6</sup> In political notes the paper wrote: "It can be asserted without fear of contradiction that the entire Hindu world has been shocked in reading the text of the Hindu-Muslim Pact. All the local journals, without exception have very strongly condemn it and the angry letters that are pouring in to the newspaper offices clearly show the extent of resentment which this novel and uncalled for pact has created all over the country. It is not understood why a fresh announcement dealing with the relationships between the two great communities in India was found necessary. It should be recalled that this particular question was discussed thread-bare in a session of the Congress held at Lucknow and decision was arrived at. This decision commonly known as 'Lucknow Compromise' was very exhaustively examined and discussed in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report."<sup>7</sup> *The Leader* of Allahabad in a caption under *Contemporary Opinion* complained against the Pact and said that the Pact was not placed before the electorates. It questioned the necessity of such a pact "when All India Congress has framed a sub-committee to deal with the issue. Probably the Muslim Swarajists might have demanded the immediate payment of the price of their adhesion to the party and so the Hindu-interests were precipitatedly surrendered in a Conference held behind the *pardah*. A Pact arrived at in this hole and corner fashion can only be regarded as worthless."<sup>8</sup> Everybody was puzzled at the immediate necessity of Bengal Pact miscalled Hindu-Muslim Pact. "An All India Pact is under preparation by Lajpat Rai and Dr. Ansari which will cover Bengal. But Bengal Swarajists has hatched a pact of their own without consulting the electorates or the communities nor its effects on other provinces. Mr. C. R. Das, the high priest of nationalism, is all for Bengal first, Bengal second and Bengal last. ...." "In Nagpur," he said, "Bengal was quite different from other provinces and they should be quite free to decide for themselves." He did not insist to a pact by the Congress. The Bengal Pact was one sided through and through.<sup>9</sup>

The Hindu community became upset at the pact of the Swaraj Party. Lala Lajpat Rai, the Marwaris and the up-country Hindus condemned

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* Calcutta, December 21, 1923.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* December 25, 1923.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* December 27, 1923.

the pact and were indignant.<sup>10</sup> A large meeting of the Hindus at Calcutta Barrabazar condemned the pact. Another large meeting under the Chairmanship of Maharaja of Darbhanga was held at Calcutta University Institute Hall. It questioned the leadership of C. R. Das and concluded that "This is simply preposterous and the Swaraj Party may be assured that the Hindu Bengal will very soon show that the great leaders' decree is not the last word on the subject."<sup>11</sup> Besides sixty leading Hindus headed by Surendra Nath Banerjee strongly condemned the pact and termed it as 'fraught with mischief'. They declared, "We have no hesitation in saying that the Pact is a one sided document, unjust to Hindus and highly detrimental to the cause of self-government and to the interest of the country at large."<sup>12</sup> *The Bengalee* had challenged C. R. Das's efforts to unite the Hindus and the Muslims and criticised the Hindu-Muslim Pact in the light of its consequences. It cited that the educational grants of Noakhali district Board had been distributed on the basis of population. As the Hindus were minority in the district, it was fatal for the Hindus. It appealed to the Hindu-members of the Swaraj Party in the Legislative Council to realise the mischief they had done to themselves.<sup>13</sup>

In a letter to the editor a Hindu voter under *Reyolt of the Hindus* wrote : "Mr. C. R. Das, it appears, with all his brotherly feelings and conciliatory spirit towards the Mohammadans, has forgotten to insert several important items in his famous Hindu-Muslim Pact. The principle of communal representation ought to be extended to the University examinations, and fair percentage of the Mohammadan students ought, for the sake of their higher education, to pass the examinations whether they have the necessary qualification or not. In every town and village several roads should be kept separate for the exclusive use of the Mohammadans and the Hindus under the circumstances should be allowed to lay down that under the Swaraj Government at least half the members of every Hindu family should be converted to Mohammadans for cementing the friendly feelings between the two communities and to avoid the possibilities of a future rupture. I hope, Mr. Das will soon rectify these omissions."<sup>14</sup> On the 28th December, 1923, a large public meeting was held in Calcutta under the chairmanship of S. N. Banerjee against the Hindu-

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* December 23, 1923 ; Sri Sudha Krishna Bagchi : *Deshbandhu Chittaranjan*, Aswin, 1333 B.S. Calcutta, p. 205. At Coconada Congress Bengal Pact was discussed. Here the Congress leaders like Sardar Patel, Pathabi Sitaramayya, Raja Gopal Acharia, Sarojini Naidu and others opposed and condemned the pact and proposed to delete Bengal Pact from the agenda. (See, *The Statesman*, Cal., January 1, 1924.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* p. 205.

<sup>12</sup>*The Pioneer*, January 13, 1924.

<sup>13</sup>*The Bengalee*, June 11, 1925

<sup>14</sup>*The Statesman*, Calcutta, December 25, 1923.

Muslim Pact. The chairman termed the pact as "irreparable blunder" from the point of view of detail or expediency or the vast charges it brought. 'The Swarajist Pact was conceived in secret, discussed in secret and adopted in secret with reckless precipitancy and at one single sitting. With equal precipitancy it was adopted by the Bengal Provincial Committee, again at a single sitting and even without notice in the agenda paper'.<sup>15</sup> The meeting condemned the pact in the strongest possible language.

### Attitude of the Muslims towards the Pact

Against these criticism Mvi. Abdul Karim,<sup>16</sup> the main protagonist of the Bengal Pact wrote four letters<sup>17</sup> explaining the position and circumstances of the pact. In his first letter, he said, "The idea of a pact did not originate in a time serving spirit, but in a far reaching endeavour to guard against a situation that seemed only likely to arise before long and prove disastrous to the interests of both the communities. It will be further seen that it was not Mr. C. R. Das who first moved in the matter with a view as supposed, to court the support of the Mohammadan members of the Bengal Legislative Council. On the contrary, the proposal in its inception came from the other party concerned and was developed into its final form after careful deliberation on both sides."

Realising the necessity of a pact, Mvi. Abdul Karim sent word to C. R. Das in the later part of September through Mvi. Tamizuddin

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.* December 29, 1923.

<sup>16</sup>Maulana Abdul Karim : His father's name was Mohammad Nadir and his predecessors came to Sylhet with Hazrat Shah Jalal and claimed to be descended from the tribe of the Quraish. One of the sons of Maulvi Abdul Karim was Abdul Hakim Quraishi who acted for some times as Treasurer of Rajshahi University. He was associated with Muslim politics of Bengal for a long time and worked for upliftment of the Bengali Muslims in various ways. He was Assistant Inspector of Schools, Bengal and then retired as Inspector of Schools, Bengal. He acted as President, Islamic Mission Society, President Muhammadan Educational Conference, Honourary Fellow of the University of Calcutta, Member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, President of Bengal Presidency Muslim League, Member of the Bengal Legislative Council and Member of the Council of State, India. He was author of a number of books. Principal among them :—

(i) *Prophet of Islam and His teachings*, Calcutta 1937. (i) *The Students History of India*, Calcutta, 1898. (iii) *Islam : A Universal Religion of peace and progress* Culcutta, 1938 and (iv) *Some Political, Economic and Educational Questions*, Calcutta, 1917. The subject matter of this book was discussed at length in a letter addressed to E.S. Montagu, Secretary of State for India. As President of the Bengal Presidency Muslim League he discussed the problems of the Muslims with C.R. Das, the then undisputed leader of Bengal. The result was the conclusion of the Bengal Pact of 1923.

<sup>17</sup>*The Statesman* : Calcutta, 5, 8, 16, 18, 1924.

Khan to arrange for a free and fair discussion of this important questions. C. R. Das agreed to have a talk with Abdul Karim on the subject. Abdul Karim this time, toured Dhaka and Chittagong in connection with election in the Council of State. During his stay in Dhaka and Chittagong, he was all the more convinced of the urgency of a clear understanding between the Hindus and the Mohammadans in order to avert the apprehended calamity of a violent rupture of relations between the two communities and to ensure success in the ensuing fight with the bureaucracy for the early attainment of responsible self-government. On his return to Calcutta, he met C. R. Das at which Nassim Ali and Bijoy Kristo Bose were present. He was glad to find that Das was inclined, unlike many of his short-sighted co-religionists to take a long view of the situation. C. R. Das wanted to know the terms on which the Mussulmans would agree to have a pact with the Hindus. When these were disclosed to him he said that the demands were not unreasonable and he saw no reason why they should not be accepted by the Hindus. Accordingly, a date, 9th of December was fixed for a thorough discussion of this outstanding national problems. On that date Abdul Karim called at Das's place with a draft of the proposed pact, drawn up in consultation with some of the leading Mussalmans. Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mvi. Nassim Ali, Wahid Hussain and others took part in the discussion which lasted for over two hours. As a result certain definite terms were agreed upon and Das undertook to put up the proposals for a pact before the conference of the Swarajists, members of the Bengal Council that was to have been held on December 16. In this conference after a thorough discussion, the terms of the draft pact were accepted with certain modifications. Besides a programme of work for the Swaraj Party within the Council was drawn up at the Conference and it was attached to the draft pact which was signed by the most of the Hindus and Mussalman Swarajist members of Bengal Council. This was how the pact came into being.<sup>18</sup>

As to the conclusion of the Pact, Moulana Azad said that "the complexity of the Hindu-Muslim problem is the greatest obstacle in the path for freedom for India. C. R. Das's great courage, fervent patriotism and burning passion for freedom elevated him far above the sphere of narrow communalism. On this question, he was prepared to sacrifice everything that was of lesser importance. The Hindu-Muslim Pact was one of his remarkable achievements. It had been hotly debated both by the supporters and opponents alike. But few people were aware how the Pact came into being. Hindu-Muslim problem is a thorny question. Whatever

<sup>18</sup>*The Statesman*, January 5, 1924. See Letter of Mvi. Abdul Karim to the Editor.

solution were proposed, one was confronted with a storm of vehement opposition. This was why no solution had yet been reached out side Bengal. But C. R. Das realised the necessity of the unity of the two communities. When Muslim demands were presented to him, he accepted them without hesitation. Thus one of the difficulties was safely passed over, but another difficulty at once cropped up. A storm of opposition was raised against the Bengal Pact, we are equal to the task of coping with the situation.<sup>19</sup>

The communal sections among Muslims said that the whole pact was merely a camouflage and Das was working to undermine the hold of Muslim leaders on their own community. The majority of the Muslims, however, hailed this pact, as a charter of their rights and almost overnight Deshbandhu became their unchallenged leader.<sup>20</sup> The Central Mohammadan Association welcomed the Hindu-Muslim Pact. At a meeting of the committee of Central Mohammadan Association held on Decmber 20 a resolution was adopted unanimously welcoming the Hindu-Muslim Pact in Bengal as formulated by the Swaraj Party within the Council, in that it substantially accorded with the demands of the Muslim community in Bengal as set forth in the Associations Memorial to H. E. the Viceroy dated 23, January, 1912 praying for the communal representation in Bengal on the population basis in the public services, Legislations and all local self-governing bodies and which memorial was supported by the London Muslim League in its representation dated March 20, 1912 to the Under Secretary of State for India.<sup>21</sup> A Muslim from Midnapore welcomed the Pact and said, "The shortsighted Hiundus are now furious over the very right and just Pact. This attitude of the vast majority of the Hindu community has always made two communities antagonisic to each other. The agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 itself was started simply out of the jealousy to find that the Mohammadans are going to be benefitted by the creation of a new province in which the Hindus would be nowhere. The agitation against the Pact favoured by so many broad-minded Hindus has been started out of the same jealous motives." He traced the origin of the Pact from 1916. The proportion of representation in Council were settled in Lucknow and Das has proposed to extend it in local bodies. Explaining different clauses of the Pact he called the Muslims to wake up and join Government side to avoid further disaster.<sup>22</sup> After the announcement of the Pact, a section of the Mohammadans became jubilant over

<sup>19</sup>Forward, July 18, 1925.

<sup>20</sup>Hemendra Nath Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>21</sup>The Statesman, Calcutta, December 27, 1923.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Jan., 9, 1924.

it. Bengal Khilafat Committee stated in its resolution : "Resolved that the Council of the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee consider that the Hindu-Muslim Pact recently formed in Bengal is a step towards the furtherance of Hindu-Muslim Unity under the present circumstances and invite the attention of the Central Khilafat Committee to the said pact."<sup>23</sup> The Calcutta Khilafat Committee went further and even warned the Hindus to the effect that no interference with the pact will be tolerated by the Mussalmans. It resolved, "While voicing the feelings of the Mussalmans, the Calcutta Khilafat Committee is strongly of opinion that the decision of the Swaraj Party regarding the Hindu-Muslim Pact can be the only practical guarantee to remove the mutual distrust and suspicion between the Hindus and Mussalmans. The Mussalmans will not accept any curtailment in any of the rights mentioned in the pact." It further added that the religious and political rights of the Mohammadans of Bengal embodied in the pact are just and reasonable without which it will not be possible to establish a real idea of self-government in this province or to formulate any scheme of Swaraj in India.<sup>24</sup> The Khilafatists of Calcutta were not without apprehension that the Hindu community would greatly revolt against the pact and so they thought it necessary to hold out a threat which ran as follows : "The Committee warns the great Hindu Community that any attempt on its part to annul the pact or to interfere with any religious or political rights of the Mussalmans by Legislation will seriously jeopardise the Hindu-Muslim relations in this province and will end the Congress ideal of Swaraj forever."<sup>25</sup>

The Khilafat Conference, in Calcutta held on 21 March, 1924 also 'fully supports the draft Hindu-Muslim Pact which the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee have after joint consultation and deliberation adopted.'<sup>26</sup> Regarding the criticism of the pact one Abdul Hamid from Dhaka wrote : "Our Hindu brethren and so-called well-wishers condemned the Pact chiefly because of the following two points :—Firstly, the pact gives Mussalmans a fair share in the administration of the country, thus depriving the Hindus of Hindusthan of the dream of a 'Hindu Raj'. Secondly, because it deprives the Hindus of the privilege of creating riots, arson and what not at the time of the Muslim festival of Id-Uz-Zoha (Bakr-Id). The plea is that the sacrifices of cows injures Hindu feeling on religious grounds. Now Sir, may I ask, have Hindus only religious feelings ? The Mussalmans are too human and have religious feelings.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.* December 23, 1923.

<sup>24</sup>*The Statesman*, December 23, 1923.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>*The Statesman*, Calcutta, March 22, 1924.

Suppose the Mussalmans demand that the Hindus must not perform their religious ceremonies in the cities, towns or in villages where there are mixed inhabitants, because (a) the ringing of the bells in the temples, (b) blowing of the conch-shell, (c) the worshipping of idols, publicly by the Hindus, are very repulsive to the Muslim religious feelings and (d) the Mussalmans can not tolerate idolatry on religious grounds. Are the Hindus ready to comply with this demand? Mr. M.A. Hamid also added: 'Let the Hindus frankly tell us that they can not tolerate the sacrifice of cows by Mussalmans and that they persist in beating 'tom-tombs' before mosque. The Mussalmans will say good bye to them and will do their level best to safeguard their religious rights.' He also sincerely thanked the Hindus because 'they by their controversy have awakened the Mussalmans from slumber'.<sup>27</sup> Azizuddin Ahmed, Ramna, Dhaka in his letter to the editor of the *Statesman* said; "Mr. Abdul Karim's letter 6th instant is a sort of agreeable surprise. The detractors of the pact will now see that the motive of C. R. Das simply to throw a bait to the Muslim community. The Pacts are arrived at after due consideration and at the instance of Abdul Karim. The objections reached against may be as follows :

a) The pact is 'bad' because it provides 55% of the public services for the Muslims who can better earn his living by cultivating the land.

b) The pact is pro-Muslim because it proposes to deprive the Hindu *Bhadraloog* of their birth-right in public services.

c) The pact is evil because it has served to raise in the Muslim mind an inordinate ambition which would otherwise have remained dormant for all time to come.

d) The pact is anti-Hindu because it does not provide men to interfere with the Muslim religion in so far as the beating of 'tom-tombs' by the side of a mosque at the time of prayer and the sacrifice of cows on the occasion of *kurbani* are concerned.

So the main objections of the Hindus occur round their vested interests. If the Hindus refuse to recognise the legitimate claims of the Muslims, discontent may, some day, give rise to very serious consequences.<sup>28</sup>

### Attitude of the Government

The resounding victory of the Swarajists in 1923 in the Bengal Provincial Council was not liked by the Govt. C. R. Das refused the offer of forming the Govt. The offer surprised everybody but was approved as a

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.* January 26, 1924.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.* January 9, 1924.

wise step. By this offer, the opposition could not say that the disc are loaded against them and that representative institutions were a farce. They had their chance and deliberately they threw it away. In his conversation with C. R. Das, Lord Lytton discussed the solution of Hindu-Muslim Unity. C. R. Das suggested that a pact between the two would solve the problem. Shortly after this, he published his 'notorious' pact for winning the 21 independent Muslim members. Though he was able to draw the members to his side, it had made the feud more bitter than ever. It infuriated the Hindus and the Mohammadans were equally dissatisfied. In this respect, he cited the example of Howrah riot. On New years day, a riot occured in Howrah which resulted in the death of two men and the injury of many others. The discovery of a pig in a sack in the grounds of a Mohammadan mosque infuriated the Moslem who proceeded to attack a number of Hindu houses in the neighbourhood. The battle raged furiously for several hours and the combatants were eventually dispersed by the police.<sup>29</sup>

The Bengal Pact provided the Swarajists majority in the Council.<sup>30</sup> Lord Lytton and his ministers were out in search for a majority and the officials gave every assistance to it. Fazlul Huq and Ghaznavi tried their level best to have majority and ministeries were held as inducements. They tried to bring back the Muslim members by saying that the Hindu dominated Swaraj Party was attempting to strike down a Muslim Ministry. Actually this was a communal attack. They called the Muslims to unite to oppose the Hindus.<sup>31</sup>

The official members of the Govt. encouraged communal divisions as the best hope of breaking the Swaraj Party. Their experience was that the reformed institutions under Montagu-Chelmsford Council could be kept functioning by a series of tactical expedients. Consequently communalism was used. But it was not the Govt. party but the Swarajists had declared total war against them.<sup>32</sup> The Muslim members of the Govt. specially Huq, Ghaznavi and Abdur Rahim asserted that in the general interests of the Muslim community its representatives in the Legislative Council should be united against the Swaraj Party. They argued that C. R. Das had taken advantage of Musilm factionalism. Unless these could

<sup>29</sup>India Office Library, London : Private papers of Lord Lytton, Mss. Eur. F. 160, Letter dt. January 3, 1924 from Calcutta to the King. The letter in question is in the India Office Library File. It is not known whether it was put for PM's comments or it evoke any reaction in the India Office Circle.

<sup>30</sup>*India in 1924-25*. Superintendent Govt. Printing, Calcutta 1925, p. 260.

<sup>31</sup>J.H. Broomfield: *Elite conflict in a plural society: Twentieth century Bengal*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965 p. 253.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.* p. 253.

be overcome, the community would remain weak and a liability to the Government.<sup>33</sup>

The best means of drawing off Das's Muslim followers was to destroy their faith in the Hindu-Muslim Pact. To this Khan Bahadur Musharraf Hussain, a Muslim supporter of the Govt. was persuaded to submit a resolution in the Council's first session for the immediate implementation of the pacts provision with regard to the employment of Muslims under the Provincial Govt. His proposal called for reservation 80 percent of Govt. appointments for the Muslims until they occupied 55 percent of all offices.<sup>34</sup> By this, C. R. Das was pushed into a tight corner. He would lose either his 21 Muhammadan followers at least or the Nationalists without whose help he would never have secured a majority. Khan Bahadur Musharraf Hussain received all sorts of encouragement from the supporters of the Govt. to stick to his resolution.<sup>35</sup>

The motion was placed in the Council before the voting on the budget and every effort was made to force the Swarajists to commit themselves. Govt. supporter and European non-officials emphasised that, it was merely a restatement of the Swarajist's own Hindu-Muslim Pact and it was an opportunity for the Hindu members of the Swaraj Party to prove their good faith.<sup>36</sup> Independent Nationalists in their speeches repudiated the Pact and the Muslim Swarajists revealed a painful conflict of loyalties. As a result, Das was in a very difficult position. He tried to avoid a division on the question and proposed an adjournment of the discussion *sine die*. His excuse was that he had not yet placed the pact before the country. After budget session, he intended to tour Bengal to have popular support for the Pact. Until this had been done, he said, any action in the Council would be precipitous.<sup>37</sup> So due to the vehement opposition of the Hindu-leaders the decision on the question was indefinitely postponed. C. R. Das himself emphasized that the provision of the Pact were to come into operation only upon the attainment of Swaraj.<sup>38</sup>

Though C.R. Das was able to carry his amendment,<sup>39</sup> the damage was done. The Ministers now were able to say to the Muslim members : "Now you can see how you were misled with empty promises." The cry

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.* p. 258.

<sup>34</sup>*ELCP*, 12 March 1924, Vol. XIV, No. 4, p. 55.

<sup>35</sup>*Minute* 27, July, 1925. C B. appointments 4M-12 (1-3), A70-71  $\frac{1}{2}$  November, 1925, See also Broomfield *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>36</sup>*Broomfield*, p. 254.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.* p. 255

<sup>38</sup>*ELCO*, 12-13 March, 1924 Vol. IV, No. 4, pp. 55-108.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.* See also Humaira Momen : *Politics in Bengal*, Dhaka, 1972, p. 28

was taken up in the press. If C. R. Das really wanted the wellbeing of the Muslims, he and his party would not certainly postpone the adoption of the resolution of Khan Bahadur Musharraf Husain. C. R. Das had said that "If the terms of the Pact are not fulfilled after the attainment of Swaraj, the Mussalmans will be quite entitled to realise their dues on the strength of the *Lathi*. In the mean-time the Hindus will become completely skilled in the use of *Lathi*, so that the Mussalmans will never be able to realise their dues . . . . we ask one fellow Mussalman to note the names of these Muslim members of Council who have voted against the resolution. . . .<sup>40</sup> There were angry replies from the Hindu newspapers and bitter attacks on the British for their attempt to 'divide and rule'.<sup>41</sup>

### Necessity of Hindu-Muslim Pact

After the publication of the Pact, there was some speculation about its underlying motive. Some even questioned the necessity of such a Pact. Between 1919-1922 Hindu-Muslim Unity assumed deep significance due to non-cooperation and Khilafat movement. But the 'Congress-League Lucknow Pact of 1916 received a rude shock after the World War I. The Muslims of Bengal were not happy with the Lucknow arrangement as it did not provide them opportunities that they were entitled on the basis of their numerical strength. Besides, there was a marked change in the Allies' attitude towards Turkey after World War I. Again, for various reasons, the relations between the two communities deteriorated since the Lucknow Pact and as such the idea of a Hindu-Muslim Pact assumed a much greater significance.<sup>42</sup> The critics however opposed the Pact as, 'the Pact was to blackmail the movement towards the ideal of Swaraj. It would hinder the growth of a nation that had already made some headway towards "Self-determination". C. R. Das clearly traced the idea of a Hindu-Muslim Pact contained nothing harmful particularly towards the promotion and elevation of Hindu individualism. Moreover, it could not retard the germination of a composite nationality. C. R. Das was a humanist with catholicity of faith. To him the highest consideration was that both the Hindus and the Muslims were the inhabitants of a common fatherland. So, the two communities could exist in happiness only through adjustments and compromise.<sup>43</sup> Hence the Bengal Pact.

<sup>40</sup>Moslem Hitaishi, 4 April, 1924.

<sup>41</sup>Viswamitra, 15 March, 1974.

<sup>42</sup>Dilip Kumar Chatterjee : *C. R. Das and Indian National Movement—A study in His Political Ideal*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 133.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. p. 134.

Explaining the necessity of a Pact, Abdul Karim pointed out the existing strained Hindu-Muslim relation. Without such a pact it may burst out at any moment. The Muslim fanaticism once woked up, can not be controlled. This was a factor which should be guarded against by all possible means and in time. He pointed out that in the beginning of the British rule, the Mussalmans of Bengal held a position of wealth and influence but for well known reasons the position of the two communities became altogether reversed. Though in the majority, they lost 80% of the official jobs to the Hindus. As a result, it was not uncommon to hear Mussalmans' say that in Bengal there was practically a 'Hindu-Raj'. But at present there was a legitimate inclination among the Muslims to assert themselves. Deep resentment existed among the Muslims<sup>44</sup> It is only those who have not had occasion to study the situation in Bengal at first hand and are consequently ignorant of the true feelings of the Mussalmans that can fail to realise the necessity and urgency of the definite commitment on both sides to a clearly defined programme of mutual tolerance and co-operation. It is nothing if not preposterous to say that a solemn agreement for united and reciprocative action can any way accentuate present differences or retard the growth of larger nationalism and political solidarity'.<sup>45</sup> C. R. Das had explained the matter more clearly. "I find that there is a great deal of misapprehension about the Bengal Hindu-Muslim Pact. People seem to think that it is a concluded agreement that the Swaraj Party and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee are trying to force a concluded agreement upon the people of Bengal. A moments' reflection would show that it is not, nor can it be, the fact. What the Swaraj Party has done is simply to put before the public a suggested pact. It does not become a pact of Hindus and Mussulamans of Bengal before it is accepted by them. Those who think that a pact is necessary cannot do their duty except by putting forward a suggested pact. What I expected to get from the Hindus and the Mussalmans of Bengal was suggestions showing, where it is wrong, but instead of that I find that some Hindus have contended themselves by condemning it and Mussalmans praising it. This is just the thing I wanted to avoid." "There are others of course who think that no pact is necessary. With them the Swaraj Party can not deal, because all Congressmen, at least the vast majority of them, believe that Hindu-Muslim Unity can not be secured without a reasonable pact between the two communities and that Swaraj can not be attained without such unity."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup>*The Statesman*, Calcutta, January 5, 1924. See *Letter of Abdul Karim*, Member of the Council of State, Calcutta January 3, 1924

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>*The Statesman*, Calcutta, December 30, 1923, See the Statement of C. R. Das at Coconada on December 29, 1923.

### Bengal Pact in the Coconada Congress

The Bengal Pact provided a basis for joint demand and joint action. C.R. Das fought hard to remove doubts and mistrust in both the communities. In his opinion, once the country became free, mistrust and suspicion would vanish and trust and co-operation would be possible. He said that Swaraj could not be achieved without non-violence and non-cooperation and this programme could be effective only on the basis of unity of outlook and action between the two communities.

C.R. Das realised that he must first win the support of the Congress for his point of view. His impassioned appeal for national unity and independence enabled him to sway the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee which accepted the pact. His next move was to secure the support of the All India Congress Committee. The matter was discussed in the Coconada Congress where there was a move to shelve the Bengal Pact on the ground that an All India Pact was under the committees consideration in accordance with a resolution of the special session in Delhi. During the discussions at Coconada some of the opponents went to the extent of demanding that the Bengal Pact should be deleted.<sup>47</sup>

C.R. Das expected some opposition but its extent surprised him. He was particularly offended by the attitude of ignoring the Bengal Pact. In an indignant speech, he declared :

"You may delete Bengal Pact from the resolutions but you can not delete Bengal from the Indian National Congress. Bengal demands her right of having her suggestion considered by the National Assembly. What right has anybody say that Bengal has to be deprived of her right? Bengal will not be deleted in this unceremonious fashion. I can not understand the agreement of those who cry 'delete the Bengal Pact'.

Is Bengal untouchable? Will you deny Bengal the right of suggestion on such a vital question? If you do, Bengal can take care of itself. You can't refuse Bengal the right to make a suggestion."<sup>48</sup>

The Coconada Congress decided that the all India Pact Committee would come to a decision only after the Provincial Congress Committee expressed their opinion on the proposals. This satisfied C.R. Das, as the Bengal Provincial Committee had already adopted the Bengal Pact and this would mean that the Bengal Pact would be considered by the All India Pact Committee. This meant that the discussion on the issue was avoided by resolving to appoint a sub-committee to call for further opinion and criticisms and

<sup>47</sup>Hemendra Nath Das Gupta, *op. cit.* p. 102.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.* p. 102, *The Statesman*, Calcutta, January 1, 1924.

submit reports by 31 March 1924 to the All India Congress leaders who were not interested in the Bengal Pact. Moreover, the newly appointed sub-committee was headed by Lala Lajpat Rai and Dr. Ansari. Both these leaders differed so sharply on the fundamentals of the National Pact that it was rather difficult to get an unanimous opinion on the Pact from them. And it was known beforehand that it would never be done.<sup>49</sup> The Congress also confirmed the position of the Swaraj Party and accorded recognition to Congressmen elected to the Legislative. In May 1924, a session of Bengal Provincial Congress was held at Serajganj. The Pact was again the subject of debate, but after C.R. Das replied to the critics in a speech which lasted for almost four hours, it was accepted with acclamation. The Pact continued to be an accepted programme of the Bengal Congress during his life-time.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion

It would not be fair to suggest that the entire Congress leadership was avoidly anti-Muslim. Men like C.R. Das and Matilal Nehru tried to pursue a non-communal policy. But the anti-Muslim elements in the Congress triumphed and at the end followed a strong policy towards the Muslims. In the special session of the Congress at Delhi (September, 1923) C.R. Das and Matilal Nehru succeeded to allow some Congressmen to stand as candidates for the Legislatures. In the first election that were held towards the end of 1923 C.R. Das created a stir in Bengal. He was not only an undisputed leader of the Hindus but also succeeded in creating a profound impression on the Muslims. Bengali Muslims, who constituted more than 50% of the population, held barely 30% of the posts under the Government because of their backwardness. C.R. Das in his famous Bengal Pact declared that this disparity would be rectified under Congress rule.<sup>51</sup> C.R. Das believed that Bengal is a Muslim majority area. Here by refusing the demands of the Muslims nobody can expect the formation of a Bengali nation.<sup>52</sup>

Chittaranjan believed that Hindu-Muslim Unity was the bedrock of Indian freedom. At the Gaya Congress he clearly stated: "The first duty of the National Congress was to establish unity and harmony among the different communities of India. For this, I think, the Congress should decide what should be rights and duties of every community, big or small

<sup>49</sup>Sukhbir Chowdhury : *Growth of Nationalism in India*, New Delhi 1973, Vol 11, p. 406.

<sup>50</sup>Hemendra Nath Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, See Subash Chandra Bose : *The Indian Struggle* (1920-1942). London 1964 (Compiled by Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta), p. 101.

<sup>51</sup>Khalid bin Sayeed : *Pakistan, the Formative Phase*, London, 1968, pp. 68-69.

<sup>52</sup>Sailesh Nath Vasi : *Chitta-Katha*, Calcutta, 1925 (1332 B.S. O, p. 4.

under the Swaraj Government...Every community must be given more than what its numerical strength permits. In fact, if we can not create such confidence in the minds of small communities that under Swaraj Government, the small will not be oppressed by the big and the weaker by the stronger, then unity and co-operation among different communities of India will not be permanent.<sup>53</sup> After the collapse of the non-cooperation movement Hindu-Muslim relations became strained. The Bengal Pact was an answer to the communal question. None of the Hindu Leaders at the time had the vision of C.R. Das to realise that Hindu-Muslim Unity was the *sine qua non* of the Indian freedom.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee in its meeting at Krishnanagar on 22 May, 1925 annulled the Bengal Pact.<sup>55</sup> It is to be regretted that after the death of C.R. Das on June 16, 1925 Hindu communalists became dominant and repudiated the Pact. In Moulana Azad's opinion, 'The result was that the Muslims of Bengal moved away from the Congress and the first seeds of partition were shown.'<sup>56</sup> It is futile to speculate on the 'might have beens' of History, but it can be said with confidence that if C.R. Das had lived, United India would in all likelihood have attained freedom long before 1947.<sup>57</sup> So we can safely conclude that the Bengal Pact was the last attempt for Hindu-Muslim re-approachment. When it was repudiated, the atmosphere changed and the air began to blow in other direction.

<sup>53</sup>India Office Library, London : *Deshbandhu Vakritamala*, Chittaranjan at Gaya Congress, 1922.

<sup>54</sup>Dilip Kumar Chattarjee *op. cit.*, p. XIII.

<sup>55</sup>*Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1925-26* p. XV.

<sup>56</sup>Sukhbir Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

<sup>57</sup>As quoted by Hemendranath Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

# Immortality of Pastoral Patterns : Jasim Uddin's Creative World\*

Mahmud Shah Qureshi

Je voudrais peindre de façon si simples  
qu'ala rigueur tout le monde qui a des  
yeux puisse y voir clair

Van Gogh\*\*

Had he been only a village poet, a *Pallikavi*, and left merely pastoral for posterity? Answering the question might be found useful not only to assess a celebrated poet but also to study the reasons for a gap, a certain missing link in the development of modern Bengali Literature of the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, Jasim Uddin (1904<sup>1</sup>-1976) was one of the few most distinguished literary figures, marked by his distinct albeit anachronistic lyrical personality. In the Bengali poets' pantheon, he would certainly be placed after Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976). Like his simple name without a family title such as is so common to his countrymen, Jasim Uddin's poetry is simple, unpretentious and devoid of unnecessary conventions or urban imagery. For nearly five decades he wrote pastoral poems, narrative *kavyas*, songs and dramas on folk themes. But these creations are fresh innovations or recreations of a modern mind and not just the blind imitations of timeless folklore. Hence Jasim Uddin instilled in the minds of modern Bengali intelligentsia a sense of value which emanates from the village, thus allowing everyone to feel the importance of the tradition and the heritage of rural civilization. And, unlike his peers, he could retain a relationship with the overwhelmingly illiterate and half-literate masses, no mean achievement in itself.

With the publication of his early poem, "Kabar" (the Graves) in the early thirties, he became famous overnight and known to the furthest corner of the country. The inclusion of this poem in a country-

\*Paper presented at the International Bengal Studies Conference held at the University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada on June 3, 1984.

\*\*\*"I would like to paint in such simple ways that at the most all who has got eyes, can see it clear."—Van Gogh.

<sup>1</sup>It seems that his date of birth cannot be ascertained exactly; for, many mentioned this, since he was still living as of January 1, 1902/1903/1904/1906.

wide school-final textbook of the University of Calcutta largely contributed to this fame. Besides, the fact that the poem was first published in a renowned journal of the *avant-garde* writers, the *Kallol* added prestige to his popularity. A close examination, however, reveals that at the time and even later, his success in the literary quarters was rather limited. Dinesh Chandra Sen, Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam—all had encouraged him but they had some doubts about the success of the *genre* which Jasim was introducing. Gradually however, he was able to create a world of his own during the thirties while a *sturm und drang* continued in Bengali literary history with the later writings of Tagore on the one hand, and of the writings of the so-called anti-Tagore modernists on the other. In 1939, Jasim's *Nakshi Kanthar Math* was translated into English and was received very well. This brought special kudos to his poetic career.

## II

The geographical entity now known as Bangladesh is, to a great extent yet a cluster of villages. It was more so during the first half of this century when Jasim Uddin lived there and enjoyed it so much that he collected folk songs and composed poems and songs to immortalize the eternal flow of the rural life in Bengal. E.M. Milford, his translator, justly observes:

"The villages of East Bengal have had a vigour and vitality of their own. Folk art and craft and dance have flourished there. Both Jasim Uddin, the poet and Jamini Roy, the artist, have found inspiration from them. The rivers and canals of East Bengal have reared a manly people accustomed to swimming and boating and fishing. On the other hand, there is an emotional strain in Bengalis which the sufferings of extreme poverty and a tragic history have developed in them. They are tender and imaginative ; given to tears and laughter, their stories end with tears unlimited."<sup>2</sup>

But with World War II already at hand the village folk no longer found before them the idyllic "Golden Bengal". Nor did the city dwellers having left parents and sometimes wives in the villages and feeling themselves uprooted. All suffered from an incurable nostalgia. All could receive a kind of solace in the pastorals or village ballads of Jasim Uddin. The forces and the weaknesses, the hopes and the despairs of the people of the delta had not been really written about before, particularly not in the way Jasim Uddin did. Another English writer,

<sup>2</sup>E.M. Milford : *The Field of the Embroidered Quilt* ; Dhaka, Oxford University Press, 1958 ; "Translator's Introduction To Second Edition", p. V.

Miss A. G. Stock, who came to teach at the University of Dhaka just after the British had left, had some interesting comments in her *Memoirs*. She writes about Jasim Uddin:

"He is that rare phenomenon, a good poet whose university education has not cut him off from the country tradition; illiterate villagers would accept his songs and ballads in the same spirit as those they learnt from their grandparents. I should think his standing among them was analogous to Douglas Hydes' among the native Irish speakers at the turn of the century . . . ."

Interestingly enough, she narrated Jasim Uddin's country, the East Pakistan of the time and Bengal of eternity, as "a natural landscape of greenness and wide waters, a human landscape compounded of poetry, politics and poverty."<sup>3</sup>

Now Faridpur, the native district of Jasim Uddin is perhaps especially compounded with poetry, politics and poverty. The place has produced a good number of illustrious sons of Bengal. Among these we may note Alaol, an outstanding poet in the middle ages; Nawab Abdul Latif, promoter of Muslim modernism in 19th Century Bengal; to Shaikh Mujibur Rahman, Father of the Nation of Bangladesh and the two giant *litterateurs* Kazi Abdul Wadud and Humayun Kabir. Besides, Faridpur had perhaps more Zamindars and other powerful people than other districts produced in modern times. But there was at the time of Jasim Uddin and there is yet indescribable poverty and human misery mainly due to natural calamities, caused sometimes by changes in the course of rivers or by inclements of weather which destroy human habitats and despoil rice and jute fields. Most of these uprooted people today swarm into Dhaka. Ask the rickshaw pullers or maid-servants in the houses of the Bangladesh capital and you will learn that they often have come from Faridpur.

Jasim Uddin himself comes from a poor family. Once solvent, the family had developed a taste for cultural pursuits. His father was a teacher. In those days, Jasim appeared to be a lone example among his muslim compatriots to complete a university education while busying himself all the time in literary activities. This education did not, however, alienate him from his people. The more he advanced in age and experience, the more he remained attached to them. This attachment, a life-long affair moulded his whole intellectual existence. In this matter he behaved very

<sup>3</sup>*Memoirs of Dacca University* : 1947-1951 ; Dhaka : Green Book House, 1973, pp. 29-34.

differently from his fellow writers and intellectuals, who found themselves developing split personalities. Barbara Painter rightly points out:

"Jasim Uddin knows every facet of village life in Bengal and is partial to rural people. The heroes of his poems and stories are farmers, fishermen, ferrymen, boatmen, weavers, cowherds, even roadside barbers, wandering gipsies, palmists and astrologers. For years he has listened to folksongs and folktales and in his own poetry has tried to capture the rural manner of speech and thought."<sup>4</sup>

### III

Jasim Uddin's creative world is quite impressive. Equally impressive are the reviews and critical studies on him.<sup>5</sup> A cautious reviewer might, however, feel that only a small number of his pastoral poems would reach height of artistic excellence even though his early poems, such as "Kabar" (The Graves), "Palli-Janani" (The Village Mother), "Pratidan" (Reciprocity) and the narrative *kavyas* like *Nakshi Kanthar Math* (The Field of the Embroidered Quilt) and *Sojan Badiyar Ghat* (Gipsy Wharf) are considered immortal pieces and loved by all. But there are many more remarkable poems on a wide variety of subjects and moods and they are generally centered around the rural scene. He composed hundreds of songs initiating a new genre of *Palli Sangit* (Village song), and several dramas which are full of songs and dance tableaux and hence contribute not only to the area of literature but also to that of the performing arts of modern Bengal. In this category, *Beder Meye* (Daughter of the Gipsy) attracts attention for its widespread popularity.

Prose writings of great poets are apt to be ignored. This has also happened in the case of Jasim Uddin. Yet there are a few critics, including the present writer, who would like to consider his prose as of special value not only for its readability but also for its extraordinary artistic qualities.<sup>6</sup> In fact, what Roman Jakobson writes on the prose of Pasternak can also be said about the prose of Jasim Uddin:

<sup>4</sup>Introduction of *Gipsy Wharf* (see bibl.), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>See *Bibliography* (hurriedly prepared for the purpose of serving as an appendix to this paper and could not be arranged scientifically, it has, however, more significant items than any other previously printed list.)

<sup>6</sup>After completing this paper, I noticed a recent article by Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal ("Jasim Uddiner Gadya Shaili", *Uttaradhikar*, a Bangla Academy Journal, vol. 12, No. 2, April-June, Dhaka, 1984) which underlines the importance of the poet's prose.

"Que sa demarche soit d'une touchante maladresse ou qu'elle atteste une habilité consommée, on sent qu'elle ne lui est pas naturelle ; elle ressemble trop aux pas d'un danseur, l'effort y est apparent"<sup>7</sup>

Like his great mentor D.C. Sen, the literary and cultural historian, Jasim created a prose which could be called "rhapsodic prose". The creations in this form are ideal for describing his nostalgia, his passion for the folk drama and subtle but simple feeling of the age-old experiences of life. Even the unusual formal (*sadhu*) style of his prose keeps us completely absorbed in reading his work.

Although timeless in its orientation, Jasim Uddin's poetry originates, no doubt, from the very core of the common people and it represents the general mood of rural folk. Living in the village in his early youth, Jasim felt the futility of the nineteenth century pseudo-classic tradition of Michael Madhusudan Dutt or the romantic lyricism of Rabindranath Tagore, which was created and consumed essentially by the sophisticated city people. As a young man, he also observed the political movements directed against the foreign rulers. These movements had so far been conducted from the city. But Gandhi's non-cooperation movement gave incentive to a "back to the village" approach. At the time Jasim's Faridpur was quite active with the revolutionaries of the *Anushilan* group and the Congress supporters. For some time, the poet himself remained an activist in the non-cooperation movement.<sup>8</sup> Hence, under the socio-political order of the day, Jasim's all-out effort was to recreate, with given materials, an ideal and eternal pastoralism which would immortalize him and his idea. He felt as if with a mission, that he, even at the risk of going against the current, must explore the different states of consciousness, dreams or reveries of his people. And this he had to achieve without ignoring the complex pattern and troubled coexistence of two equally important communities like the Hindus and the Muslims.

But Jasim did not view the problem from a communal angle. His ultimate intention was to reveal the beauties in a suffering humanity ; so he lovingly depicted the real internal situation of the life around him. Thus, he explains the background of his great ballad, *Sojan Badiyar Ghat* (Gipsy Wharf) :

"In our Faridpur district there live many poor farmers, Muslim and *Namashudra* (Hindus). Almost continuously there is a quarrel

<sup>7</sup>Roman Jakobson : "Notes marginales sur la prose du poete Pasternak" *Huit Questions de Poétique*, Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1977, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup>cf. *Jivan-Katha* (The story of life).

among them over some insignificant incident. In all these quarrels the wealthy Hindus and Moslems encourage them and drive them down the path of disaster. Among the rich and the landlords there is no distinction of caste. In the world of the exploiters all are of one class. If one could see the condition of these unfortunate Namasudras and Moslems are left in by the oppression of these people, one could not hold back tears from one's eyes. With just such incidents the plot of this book is constructed."<sup>9</sup>

From the beginning of his poetic career, Jasim could display this quality of impartiality. While reviewing his very first book of verses, *Rakhali* (Pastoral poems), Kalidas Ray, a poet of similar tendency and a critic of some distinction, compared him with Kumud Ranjan Mallick, a well-known poet of West Bengal. But Mallick, in Ray's opinion, "had seen the natural surroundings of the village (*Palli-prakrit*), as if with the eyes of a Hindu poet". "But", he continues, "Jasim has observed the same with the eyes of true-born Bengali, that is to say, he has observed it with the combined perspective of both the Hindus and Muslims. Herein lies the novelty of his poems."

This is indeed a great achievement for Jasim Uddin, and he could attain this by following the tradition of the folk poets and singers which existed then and still exists. To a large degree his contemporaries had been the victims of circumstances in this regard, losing that quality of impartiality.

In his pastoral poems and ballads, Jasim Uddin expressed his *Weltanschauung* more intensely than in other forms of literary creations. Consider, for example, the followings lines of the *Field of the Embroidered Quilt*:

"What may we know of the secret sorrow  
Of the shepherd in the field?  
In vain we search in our joy and our pain  
The secret of his to yield.  
Our griefs are written in verse and book  
That those who read may know.  
But dumb are the griefs of the shepherd boy  
which only the flute can show.  
Eternal the pain that is written only  
On the tablets of the heart,

<sup>9</sup>As translated and quoted by Barbara Painter, *Gipsy Wharf*, p. 15.

Unsung by the poets of our land  
 Who ignore the shepherd's dart.  
 Yet I may try to fathom this pain,  
 To the earth if I press my ear  
 The voice of the soil speaks to me  
 Its heart-beats I can hear.  
 The poets write of *Brindaban*\*  
 And tell of the play god ;  
 The joys and pains of Kings and emperors,  
 But not the men of the sod.  
 Exiled in the heart of the village  
 Their speech but half understood  
 How shall we know these brothers and sisters,  
 How shall we feel their mood ?  
 How shall we say what waves of pain,  
 In the heart of an exile beat ?  
 How can words express the grief  
 Of the bird that does not weep ?  
 Only he knows that the hunter's arrow  
 Has pierced his breast."<sup>10</sup>

\*Brindaban—renowned for the exploits of Krishna ; note by translator.

<sup>10</sup>E.M. Milford : *op. cit.*, p. 21 ; the Bengali text may be read along with this :

মাঠের রাখাল, বেদনা তাহার আয়রা কি অত বুঝি ?  
 মিছেই মোদের সুখ-দুখ দিয়ে তার সুখ-দুখ খুঁজি ।  
 আমাদের ব্যথা কেতাবেতে লেখা, পড়িলেই বোঝা যায় ;  
 যে লেখে বেদনা বে-বুঝ বাঁশীতে কেমন দেখাব তার ?  
 অনন্তকাল যাদের বেদনা রহিয়াছে শুধু বুকে,  
 এ দেশের কবি রাখে নাই যাহা মুখের ভাষায় টুকে ;  
 সে ব্যথাকে আমি কেমনে জানাব ? তবুও মাটিতে কান ;  
 পেতে রহি যদি কভু শোনা যায় কি কহে মাটির প্রাণ ।  
 মোরা জানি খোঁজ বৃন্দাবনেতে ভগবান করে খেলা,  
 রাজা-বাদশার সুখ-দুখ দিয়ে গড়েছি কথার মেলা ।  
 পল্লীর কোলে নির্বাসিত এ ভাইবোনগুলো হায়,  
 যাহাদের কথা আধ বোঝা যায়, আধ নাহি বোঝা যায় ;  
 তাহাদেরই এক বিরহিয়া বুক কি ব্যথা দিতেছে দোল,  
 কি করিয়া আমি দেখাইব তাহা, কোথা পাব সেই বোল ?  
 —সে বন-বিরহ কাঁদিতে জানে না, বেদনার ভাষা নাই,  
 ব্যাধের শায়ক বুকে বিঁধিয়াছে জানে তার বেদনাই ।

নব্বী কাঁধার মাঠ, ত্রয়োদশ সংস্করণ, ঢাকা : পলাশ প্রকাশনী, ১৯৭৩, পৃ. ২৬

We do not know if there can be any better introduction or justification for the pastoral patterns than this at a time when such attempts could easily be failures or at least considered as *demode*. It is strange to find that Bengali pastoralism has a distant parallel in English literature. For, not only in the nineteenth century did pastoral poetry flourish in England but as George Orwell writes in one of his 1940 essays:

"War poems apart, English verse of the 1910-25 period is mostly "country". The reason no doubt was that the *rentier*-professional class was ceasing once and for all to have any real relationship with the soil ; but at any rate there prevailed then, far more than now, a kind of snobism of belonging to the country and despising the town. England at that time was hardly more an agricultural country than it is now,.....Most middle-class boys grew up within sight of a farm, and naturally it was the picturesque side of farm life that appealed to them—the ploughing, harvesting, stack-thrashing and so forth. Unless he has to do it himself, a boy is not likely to notice the horrible drudgery of hoeing turnips, milking cows with chapped teats at four o'clock in the morning, etc.....Most boys had in their minds a vision of an idealized ploughman, gipsy, poacher, or gamekeeper, always pictured as a wild, free, roving blade, living a life of rabbit snaring, cockfighting, horses, bear, and women."<sup>11</sup>

True, the situation described by Orwell may not be that of Bengal in its entirety a few years later. However, there was a vogue in Bengal of this literary trend for some time. Several poets had attempted pastoral patterns in and around the years Jasim himself was writing. Kalidas Roy, Kumud Ranjan Mallick, Jatindra Mohan Bagchi, Sabitri Prasanna Chattopadhyay, Bande Ali Mian, Gobinda Lal Das, Kazi Kader Nawaz, Wahidul Alam are among the few admired ones. But the success of Jasim Uddin was most remarkable and none could surpass him. The reason perhaps lies in the fact what Verrier Elwin has to say about his *Field of the Embroidered Quilt*:

"It is impossible to read this deeply-moving tale and continue to feel superior or indifferent to the villager who is capable of such passionate love and such deep sorrow. The greatness of a man depends on his power to experience deeply—love or hate, joy or sorrow. Jasim Uddin's villagers rejoice and suffer, desire and are desired, hate and despair from the very depths of their souls ; there is nothing trivial about them, nothing superficial : They are real."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>George Orwell : "Inside the Wale", *A collection of Essays* ; New York : Harbrace Paper-bound Library, 1953 (1945), pp. 222-223.

<sup>12</sup>"Forward" ; *The Field*, (op. cit.), p. viii.

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