CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the attempt has been made to briefly sum up the findings of the thesis.

It is found that local self-government did exist in Bengal in one form or the other since ancient times. However, the British rulers of India, in the early phase of their governance introduced the local self-government on their own pattern at the village level specifically to maintain law and order, and to collect revenues. Public welfare and participatory democratic process were not their direct objectives.

However, a number of reforms were initiated by some concerned liberal British reformers with a view to widening the scope of local self-government but unfortunately, these were not implemented. Later on, certain acts were passed for the creation of local self-governing bodies at different levels. These bodies were entrusted with the responsibility of developing the rural areas to some extent. But, the bureaucratic structure and the extensive official control rendered these bodies practically ineffective.
In the earlier phase of the twentieth century, when the British rule was reaching its zenith, more democratic components were incorporated into existing framework of local self-governing institutions. As a result, bureaucratic influence was reduced, the number of elected representatives were proportionately increased and the development activities of these institutions were also extended. However, this does not in any way indicate the seriousness of the British rulers to establish local self-government in true sense i.e., democratizing the system for developing the rural areas. The reason behind this was that foreign rulers required mass-support for perpetuating their hold over the sub-continent.

The characteristics of local self-governing bodies during Pakistan period were not uniform. During the period 1947-58, the features of local bodies were more or less the same as prevailed during the last days of the British rule. However, one significant change that deserves mentioning in this period was the introduction of universal adult suffrage in local bodies.
But after 1958, local self-governing bodies witnessed a decline in respect of democratic norms and principles. The country came under Martial Law that caused abrupt halt to the process of democratization initiated in mid-fifties. Basic Democracies system introduced by Martial Law regime severely reduced the scope of participation of the people into the local self-governing bodies by increasing the number of the official members. The main object of such action was to consolidate the central authority at the local level. However, this regime authorized local self-governing institutions to perform more development works than before. Here again, it may be noted that the local bodies could not bring expected development in the rural areas due to excessive official interference.

After the creation of Bangladesh, the obvious expectation was to strengthen local self-governing institutions leaving their colonial legacy. Accordingly, steps were taken to democratize these institutions. Like the members of Union Parishad, its Chairman was to be directly elected. For, representation of peasants and women, provisions of their nomination in the Parishad were also made.
The other development was the introduction of the system of Gram Sarkar at the village level. As a result, the tiers of rural local bodies were enhanced from three to four. But this system lasted only for two years and therefore, its efficacy could not be properly assessed.

But the most significant change in post-liberation period was the introduction of upazila system in 1982 which is a land-mark in the history of local self-government. The Chairman of Upazila Parishad is directly elected. Other elected members of the upazila are the Chairmen of Union Parishads within the upazila. A good number of class one government employees serve as official members of Upazila Parishad. The upazila system being a new one is not free from administrative problems. Ego-hassles between the Chairman and Upazila Nirbahi Officer, or between the government officials and public representatives is found. It is gratifying to know that such problems have started diminishing.

The Local Government Ordinance, 1976 made the provision of an elected Chairman for Zila Parishad but it was never constituted under that ordinance. Deputy
Commissioner used to run the *Zila Parishad* administration. But later on, the *Zila Parishad Act, 1988* was passed. On the basis of which *Zila Parishad* was constituted for the first time in independent Bangladesh. Under the Act, the provision of a nominated non-official Chairman was made. In this connection, it may be suggested that to be a self-governing institution in true sense, the Chairman of *Zila Parishad* should be directly elected and if for some reasons, direct election of the Chairman is not possible, there must at least be a provision of indirect election.

Though a democratic trend has been found in the organization of Union *Parishad*, its multifarious responsibilities coupled with inadequate finance remained unchanged like the earlier period. Internal resource mobilization picture is very unsatisfactory. Proper attention should be given to improve the scenario. Union *Parishad* should be vitalized with a sufficient financial grant from the government for implementing different development programmes falling under its jurisdiction. Side by side attempts should also be made to mobilize resource internally. Due to a severe paucity of fund this body for several years could hardly undertake any worthwhile development scheme, from its long-list of
development functions placed at its disposal. If rural development is desired through local self-government, this grass-root level unit should be involved thoroughly. Union Parishad has a direct touch with the rural people, hence it can only ensure participatory development process in the rural areas.

It is evident that the introduction of upazila system has greatly reduced the development activities of the other two local self-governing bodies i.e., Zila and Union Parishads. In fact, some scholars have even started questioning about the necessity of maintaining a big organization like Zila Parishad, with practically no significant work at its disposal. But such an age-old institution should not be abolished abruptly. Steps may be taken to revitalize this institutions for practical purposes. Zila Parishad could be given more supervisory power on the development activities of the Upazila Parishad.

In this study, much emphasis has been given to the development activities of the Upazila Parishad. From the field study a trend of progress has been found in some key-sectors. But that is not upto the desired extent.
In evaluating development functions of the Upazila Parishad, preference has been given to the study of its planning-mechanism. It has been found that upazila system has generated ample scope for local level planning. But the upazila planning mechanism has not yet proved to be very effective due to a lot of deficiencies.

The main deficiencies are:

1) Lack of a thorough study of the problems and prospects of development of the upazila concerned.
2) Non-reflection of local needs and problems in planning process.
3) Absence of mass consciousness for the participation in planning process.
4) Lack of planning expertise.
5) Scarcity of resources.
6) Absence of monitoring and evaluation of various development schemes.
7) Limitations in the guideline itself etc.

Suggestions to overcome these hindrances have been provided in the thesis.
Comparing the system of rural local self-government in Bangladesh with the *Panchayati Raj* institutions of West Bengal, India, it has been found that these rural local bodies in West Bengal are functioning more effectively than the Bangladeshi ones. The main reasons seem to be: I) delegation of sufficient powers by West Bengal Government to the local self-governing bodies, II) the success of these bodies in arousing consciousness among the masses and III) participatory mechanism. In order to make the local self-government more successful in Bangladesh, the above points of *Panchayati Raj* of West Bengal, India, may be taken into consideration.

Finally, the success of the local self-governing institutions of Bangladesh will depend upon the sincerity, integrity and vigilance of the elected representatives, bureaucrats and general masses.