ABSTRACT

The thesis, 'Local Self-Government and Rural Development in Bangladesh (1971-88)', covers the different aspects of local self-governing institutions, and the evaluation of their role for the development of rural Bangladesh. With that objective, the thesis has been divided into six chapters.

First chapter, the Introduction, contains a brief sketch of the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh. Bangladesh being one of the poorest countries of the world has innumerable problems. These problems are mainly rooted in rural areas. There is a clear disparity in development between the rural and urban areas. An attempt has been made to highlight the major problems of rural Bangladesh. The necessity of local self-governing institutions for rural development has also been emphasized in the chapter, as they are supposed to play most vital role in this regard.

Chapter 2 deals with the historical background of local self-government in Bangladesh. This is necessary for paving the way for a systematic discussion.
on the local self-governing institutions of the post-liberation period under study (i.e., 1971-88). The pre-independence period has been divided into two broad sections. The former, section 2.1, covers the British rule in undivided India and the later, section 2.2, deals with the development of these institutions during Pakistan period.

The British felt the need of establishing local self-government with a view to perpetuating their rule. It seems that for achieving that objective they decided to delegate some powers to these institutions. In course of time, during the last stage of British rule, these bodies were made stronger with the introduction of a number of democratic principles which were absent earlier. Different tiers of local self-government in rural areas viz., Union Board, Local Board and District Board were performing minor development functions. The composition, powers and functions of these bodies, have been thoroughly discussed in section 2.1.

In section 2.2, the discussion has been directed to the local self-governing bodies during the Pakistan period, i.e., from 1947 to 1971. This section has again
been divided into two sub-sections. Sub-section 2.21 covers the period 1947 to 1958, i.e., upto the promulgation of Martial Law. The first sub-section shows that the local bodies were democratized with elected representatives. But after the promulgation of Martial Law, by General Ayub, in 1958, the whole process of democratization of the local self-governing bodies received a severe set-back and that continued till 1971, i.e., upto the establishment of Bangladesh. The whole period i.e., 1958-1971, has been placed under the sub-section 2.22. The system of Basic Democracies was introduced during that period with a four-tier pattern of local self-government for rural areas, viz., Divisional Council, District Council, Thana Council and Union Council. During this period the ascendancy of bureaucracy over democracy i.e., over the elected representatives of local self-governing institutions was distinct.

Chapter 3 deals with the various aspects of local self-government for rural areas during the post-independence era, specially 1971-88, and this is one of the main objectives of the thesis. This chapter contains four sections. To focus the changes in different aspects of rural local self-government from time to time due to
promulgation of certain acts and ordinances, these sections have again been divided into several phase-wise sub-sections.

Section 3.1 is concerned with the Union Parishad. Taking into consideration the changes brought in the composition, powers and functions of Union Parishad in different phases during this period this section has been fashioned into three sub-sections. Sub-section 3.11 (Phase I) covers the period of 1971-76. Immediately after the independence of Bangladesh all the local self-governing institutions existing during Pakistan period were abolished. The noticeable development in this phase was the promulgation of the Bangladesh Local Government (Union Parishad and Paurasabha) Order, 1973, under which Union Parishad was re-constituted. The second phase, i.e., 1976-83, has been discussed in the sub-section 3.12. Declaration of the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 is a significant development in the history of local self-governing institutions because through this a number of changes were made in the organization and functions of Union Parishad. The third and last phase, the period 1983-88, is placed in the sub-section 3.13. During this period, the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance, 1983 was
the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance, 1983 was promulgated. The changes cropped up in that Ordinance, were on the tenure, category of membership and functions of Union Parishad.

Section 3.2 deals with the local self-government at the thana/upazila level. This section, like the section 3.1, has been divided into three sub-sections. The phase I, i.e., 1971-76, is dealt with the sub-section 3.21. In sub-section 3.22, the phase II, i.e., 1976-82, has been discussed. Under the Local Government Ordinance, 1976, the erstwhile Thana Council was renamed as Thana Parishad. Sub-section 3.23 elaborates the phase III i.e., 1982-88. This phase is very remarkable in the history of local self-government in Bangladesh as the epoch-making decentralization-scheme at the thana level was introduced, making thana the focal point of rural administration and development. Initially, the thanas brought under that scheme were known as upgraded thanas which were later renamed as upazilas. And in different phases, all the thanas of Bangladesh were upgraded into upazilas. The local self-government unit at this level known as Upazila Parishad, is the most significant tier among the three tier local self-governing bodies in Bangladesh.
Section 3.3 is devoted to the local self-governing body which exists at the apex of the three tier system of local self-government i.e., at the district level. This section has two sub-sections, and their period-wise divisions are in the same order. Phase I (1971-76) is discussed in the sub-section 3.31 and Phase II (1976-88) in 3.32. This division has been made on the basis of the promulgation of two vital act and ordinance related to Zila Parishad viz., the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 and the Local Government (Zila Parishad) Act, 1988.

The last section of the Third Chapter, section 3.4 deals with the local self-government unit at the village level, Gram Sarkar, which lasted only for two years.

In Chapter 4, an attempt has been made to evaluate the role of local self-governing institutions for the rural development of Bangladesh and this is another main objective of the thesis.

The role of Zila and Union Parishads has not been discussed in details as after the introduction of upazila system, the role of these two bodies in development has greatly been reduced and Upazila Parishad
has become the focal point of rural development. This chapter contains two sections. In section 4.1, an emphasis has been given to evaluate how far the Upazila Parishad have succeeded to bring any worth-while development in some key-sectors like education, agriculture, communication, health, small and cottage industries etc.

In order to have a concrete picture of development, three upazilas from three divisions of the country have been selected as the areas under study. It has been observed that some developments have been resulted from the new system in different sectors, but these are not upto the desired extent.

In section 4.2, effectiveness of upazila mechanism has been evaluated. This section has been divided into four sub-sections.

In sub-section 4.21, the close link between planning and development has been discussed. In addition, the necessity of local level planning for area-wise development has been highlighted.
Sub-section 4.22 deals with the *upazila* level planning. One of the main objectives of the creation of *upazila* system is to introduce local level planning for rural development and to ensure the participation of rural people in planning-mechanism. It is found from the guidelines of National Planning Commission and other government documents and instructions that ample scope of local level planning has been created with administrative decentralization scheme.

In sub-section 4.23 on the basis of the field-study it has been found that systematic and proper planning at *upazila* level is still a far cry. And in absence of that, development in rural areas is greatly hampered.

A critical assessment on *upazila* planning mechanism and development has been made in sub-section 4.24. A discussion about proper monitoring and evaluation which is essential for successful implementation of *upazila* planning has occupied some space at the end of the section.
A comparative study between the rural local self-governments between Bangladesh and West Bengal (India) has been made in Chapter 5. In West Bengal, like Bangladesh, there exists a three-tier system of local self-government, viz., Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad, which as a whole, is known as Panchayati Raj. This system in West Bengal, as it is revealed from an empirical study, is functioning more effectively than the local self-governing institutions of Bangladesh. This system has contributed a lot to the rural development of West Bengal and, by now, it is fairly deep-rooted one. Perhaps, such a successful system of rural local self-government is not available even in any other state of India.

Sixth and last Chapter is the conclusion of the thesis. Here the observations of the whole study have been summed up.