CHAPTER III

STATE, URBANIZATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF BASTEES — THE CASE OF BANGLADESH

Before examining the social organization of the three selected bastees of Dhaka, it is necessary to bring to light the wider socio-economic and political dimensions that provide the very basis of the growth, existence and proliferation of these bastees. This invariably relates to the nature of the state that arises out of the class composition and the concomitant political structure which ultimately determines the nature of urbanization and the rise of the urban poor. This chapter examines these facts in the context of Bangladesh.

3.1: NATURE OF STATE: THE GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

Whether a country is republic or monarchical, democratic or autocratic, capitalistic or socialistic, all depend upon the policies and programmes adopted and executed by the government. It is the government that ultimately shapes the nature of the state that it represents. However, the state encompasses more than the government. It includes the executive, bureaucratic, legislative, judicial, and publicly controlled economic and educational institutions and the media and so on. Therefore, when we talk about the nature of a state, it reflects more than the policies and programmes adopted and executed by a particular or series of
governments. Through government policies and programmes certain distributive system of property and power evolves and certain socio-cultural milieu takes shape reflecting the nature of the state. So, the examination of the nature of state involves the unfolding of the pattern of its distribution of property and power that takes shape in a particular social order.

The present-day scenario of the world is based on a multi-dimensional and diversified nature of the constituent nation-states. However, the most significant and obvious difference in their nature arises out of the economic policies and programmes. On this very trait, a nation-state can be termed as either socialistic or capitalistic. Whereas, a socialistic country is expected to ensure basic needs like food, shelter, health-care, education, full employment to all the citizens through equitable distribution of national wealth; the capitalistic country on the other hand allows accumulation of wealth in few hands of its members and thus creates the situation of economic exploitation of some members by the others. A bourgeois class is created which captures political power as well and perpetuates huge economic inequality in the social system of the capitalistic state.

Bourgeois states are the creation of industrial revolution. Modern industry has established the world-market which has given immense development to commerce, to navigation and to road transport. This development has, in
turn, facilitated the extension of industry. In the same proportion, the bourgeois class has developed and increased its capital mainly through capturing the markets of the non-industrialized nations.²

Thus we find that there are two types of bourgeois states: the first category is the industrially developed countries who control the world-market and the second category is the industrially less developed that is dependent on the former. The countries of the First world or the western world belong to the first category and the Third World countries belong to the latter.

3.2: NATURE OF STATE: THE THIRD WORLD PERSPECTIVE

In the Third World, the state is the key agent in the industrialization process and the development of the bourgeois class. It sets up industries requiring large concentration of capital and advanced technology and provides capital on liberal terms, through public financial institutions to promote private industry.³ In this way it becomes the protector of the interests of the dominant classes (the bourgeoisie). These classes manipulate state power and state apparatus to perpetuate their economic and social domination over the rest of the population.⁴ In this endeavour they receive full patronage of the bourgeoisie of the western world. In other words, national and international capitalist forces, along with government policies, shape the local political economies in these
countries: the array of productive and distributive enterprises, patterns of ownership, prospects of business success, and relations within and between businesses. 5

It has been indicated earlier that the nature of bourgeois state in the Third World bear some significant difference from that of the industrialized states of the western world. Since the latter countries were industrially and militarily developed, some of the powerful of these states could capture most of the Third World countries as colonies and hold them as captive markets. As Rehman points out:

The hegemony of the metropolitan bourgeoisie over the economy of the colony was thus established not by the interplay of market forces but by coercion and the introduction of non-market factors in the direction of the colonial economy and the conduct of economic policy. 6

However, with the help and cooperation of the metropolitan bourgeoisie, a trading and artisan class had developed in these countries during the colonial period. After independence, this dependent indigenous trading bourgeoisie could create some industry with the help of metropolitan bourgeoisie and took over the economic and political control of the country later on. But because of the weak nature of the economic and political structure of the newly independent country, these indigenous bourgeoisie remain dependent on their metropolitan masters. Thus the metropolitan bourgeoisie could hold the markets in their grip through their allies, the indigenous bourgeoisie. The economy of the Third World countries is based on agriculture and an
genous landed elite class has developed which controls and monopolises the surplus generated by the rural economy. Consequently, this class exercises power and influence in rural society and becomes the natural partners of the aspirant urban bourgeoisie. Along with this, a class of government officials and professionals associated with the judicial system, education and public services, lops who constitutes the emergent ruling class of the colonial society with a value and aspiration to build a bourgeois state. 7

NATURE OF BANGLADESH STATE

The nature of Bangladesh state is quite similar to that of many Third World countries. It is a quasi-democratic bourgeois state with a religious bias at the present. The country is more dependent on metropolitan capital because of the indigenous bourgeoisie is less developed on the one hand and paucity of natural resources in comparison to her highly dense population on the other. Bangladesh’s heavy dependency on metropolitan capital is evident from the fact that the foreign aid it receives in every year ‘accounts for nearly 50 per cent of its total revenue budget, 80 per cent of its development budget and about 10 per cent of the Gross National Product’. 8 It is also a fact that the country had been exploited by a neo-colonial Pakistani bourgeoisie even after India was partitioned and liberated in 1947. The neo-colonial exploitation by the Pakistani bourgeoisie lasted till Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in 1971.
As a result of this, a bourgeois class with a sound economic infrastructure could not develop in Bangladesh. Instead, a petty bourgeois class along with civil and military bureaucrats, the middle class and the rural landed elite class took over the economic and political control and played vital role in the formation of this newly independent nation-state. It, therefore, appears that if we want to understand the nature of the state in Bangladesh we have to examine the evolution and role of dominant classes in this country. In doing so we are to look back to different historical periods and see the process of evolution of these classes.

3.3.1: Class Structure During the Pre-British Period

For thousands of years, land has been the key element of the means of production and agriculture was the principal sector of economy in the Indian sub-continent. During the pre-British period, the system of agriculture and economic life of the people of the region which is now called Bangladesh was to perform within the purview of the village community. The village communities were more or less self-sufficient in terms of their economic needs. They were like little republics capable of producing almost every things that the villagers needed. There was a hereditary division of labour based on Zazmani system. This means there were farmers and artisans of different kinds i.e. a potter, a black-smith, a goldsmith, a weaver, a carpenter, a barber, a cobbler etc. in the village economically dependent on each other who remained in the same occupations through generation
There was the individual right on land to possess and cultivate. But ultimately it belonged to the village community. If some one wanted to sell or transfer any land to any one, the approval of the village community was essential. However, all lands belonged to the state and in this sense, no private property in land existed during pre-British period.

It thus seems that state was the supreme owner of the soil. As Bornier notes,

The king as the proprietor of the land, makes over a certain quantity to military men, as an equivalent for their pay; and this grant is called jah-ghir, or as in Turkey, timar; the word jah-ghir signifies the spot from which to draw, or the place of salary. Similar grants are made to governors, also for the support of their troops, on condition that they pay certain sums annually to the king out of any surplus revenue that the land may yield.

It is evident from this that the state's domination over, and independence from, the social classes was ensured by its supreme landownership. 'The classes that grew were naturally subservient to the state'.

3.3.3.1: The Zamindars

During the Mughal period, the zamindars and mansabdars constituted the dominant classes in the sub-continent. These zamindars and mansabdars belonged to different stratum in terms of their economic and political powers. At the top of the hierarchy, there were autonomous chieftains or vassal zamindars loyal to the Mughal kings. In the second position
of the hierarchy, there were primary or proprietary zamindars who not only cultivated their lands themselves or by means of hired labourers but were also the proprietors of one or several villages. The third category were the intermediary zamindars. All these zamindars were like feudal lords with their domains and exercised wide administrative powers.  

3.3.1.2: The Raiyats, Tenants and Landless Proletariat

In the village community arena there were raiyats who were either peasant proprietors, or zamindars occupying the top social hierarchy. There were also peasant proprietors cultivating their own lands with the help of their family members. Then there were tenants who would possess some land and cultivate peasant proprietors' or zamindars' lands without any hereditary right. At the bottom, there existed the landless proletariat usually belonging to lower jatis or castes. They were a significant segment of the population who raised agrarian surplus for the landholders and whose condition of life were of clear servitude varying between slavery and serfdom. Besides, there were host of artisans who were called "village servants" and were expected to serve the entire village community. In general, they were paid in kind and catered to the interests of the higher echelon of the agrarian class structure.

3.3.1.3: Urban Centres and Dominant Classes

Unlike west, the state in India stood in the way of the development of towns that could have been the centres for
industry and commerce. In the West, feudal lords were autonomous who encouraged town development within their areas because it brought them increased revenue. In these towns the bourgeoisie soon became powerful enough to challenge the power of the feudal lords. But in India the zamindars were just revenue collectors and had no right on land. The state was the sole proprietor of land within the territory and as a result the mercantile or bourgeois class could not overcome the restraints imposed by the state, which remained powerful, even when it was disintegrating.

That is why the cities in India remained mostly as centres of pilgrimage and administration. According to D.R. Gadgil,

Most of the towns in India owned their existence to one of the three following reasons; (1) they were places of pilgrimage or sacred places of some sort; (2) they were the seat of a court or the capital of a province; or (3) they were commercial depots, owing their importance to the peculiar position along trade routes. Of these reasons, the first two were by far the most important.

However, this does not mean that there were no industries in the Indian towns. There were industries but those grew to satisfy the needs of the courts, the nobility, the fauzdars, subadars (governors) etc. who were the agents of the despotic state. To quote Sir Henry Maine in this regard, nearly all movable capital of the empire or kingdom was at once swept away to its temporary centre, which became the exclusive seat of skilled manufacture or decorative art. Every man who claimed to belong to the higher class or
Hence the merchants and artisans of the Indian cities could not acquire power by balancing the feudal lords against the emperor. They had to remain satisfied with playing a role subordinate to the courts, noble men, priests and soldiers. However, within this political framework there were few cities like Dhaka where some industry with merchant and artisan classes had been developing. But this process was reversed during the British rule.

3.3.2: Colonial Period: Nature of Urbanization

The British colonial rule in India in general and the area which is now called Bangladesh in particular that existed nearly 200 years has had a profound impact on industrialization and/or urbanization and class formation in this region.

The East India Company came to this region entirely for economic purpose. Now Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world. But it was one of the most prosperous lands during the ancient and medieval periods. During 7th century A.D. Bengal was as wealthy as the western European countries. Many European travellers who visited this land during 15th, 16th and 17th centuries A.D. portrayed it as one of the most prosperous regions in the world. As Berneir points out,
Egypt has been represented in every age as the finest and most fruitful country in the world, and even our modern writers deny that there is any other land so peculiarly favoured by nature; but the knowledge I have acquired of Bengal, during two visits paid to that kingdom, inclines me to believe that the pre-eminence ascribed to Egypt is rather due to Bengal. The latter country produces rice in such abundance that it supplies not only neighbouring but remote states.

Bernier also pointed out about the abundance of sweetmeats, fruits, geese and ducks, goats and sheep, pigs, ghee, species, sugar, cotton and silk etc. Many of these goods used to go to the European markets through the Arab merchants during the ancient and medieval periods. Since the sea route to India from Europe was not discovered, European merchants had to depend on Arab merchants who used to carry those goods from Bengal and some other parts of India till fifteenth century A.D. The Europeans were so eager for the Indian goods in general and of Bengal's in particular that so many East India Companies like Portuguese, Dutch, English, French etc. were established each independently trying to discover sea-route to India. However, after the discovery of sea-route to India by Vasco-da-Gama, a Portugues sea-farer, in 1498 the European merchants began to come to India. The East India Company, being patronized by the bourgeois state of England, became able to capture the state power of Bengal after the battle of Plassey in 1757.

3.3.2.1: Impact of Colonial Rule on Class Formation in Bengal

It has been pointed out earlier that the East India
Company that held Bangladesh as colony for about 200 years was part of a bourgeois state. The class formation in this region during this period was more determined by the metropolitan capitalist development and colonialism than the indigenous factors. Precisely for the same reason of external conditioning, the development of the capitalist class structure comprising the industrial bourgeoisie, the industrial proletariat, and the new middle class (teachers, lawyers, engineers, etc.) remained weak and restricted. During this period the most significant thing that happened was the undoing and arresting the growth of capitalist class relations that emerged in the Mughal India through large scale destruction and/or blockage of existing capitalist elements (merchants and artisans). In the later section we will show how colonial rule was responsible for the destruction of industries and shrinkage of urban centres in Bengal.

3.3.2.2: Shrinkage of Urban Centres

During the initial period of its rule the East India Company began to destroy and/or block the industries of Bengal and made it a market of their own. As Sen points out, 'The traders and manufacturers of Bengal which was transformed into organized plunder and the artisans were forced to accept whatever price the company and its agents paid them'.

As a result, industries of Bengal began to collapse which caused the beginning of shrinkage of urban centres.
Dhaka 'the metropolis' in 17th century Bengal and the biggest foreign trade centre was described by Clive in 1757 as "extensive, populous and rich as the city of London" became very poor and small town after declining its population from about 200,000 in 1800 to about 60,000 in 1838.

The 'plunder of Bengal', however helped capital formation in England on an unprecedented scale and ushered the Industrial Revolution. Once the Industrial Revolution was achieved the task before the British power was to transform India from being an exporter of different goods to being an importer and to make her a market for British industrial capital.

British colonial rule caused the destruction of industries and shrinkage of urban centres in Bengal that not only foiled the indigenous capitalist development and industrialization but also compelled those merchants and artisans to fall back on agriculture. Many of them became zamindars, landowners, money-lenders, and land speculators later on.

3.3.2.3: Land System and Landed Class in Bengal Under the British

The process of changing India into a market and supplier of primary products which could be exported to other countries necessitated the restructuring of her land relations on a commercial basis. In the West, the feudal
mode of production was replaced by the capitalist mode of production. But the British were not interested to do that in India. Their main motive was to increase the share of commodity extraction from agriculture without undermining the traditional concept of the state as the supreme landlord. As Sen points out,

The new land system superseded the traditional right of the village community. Under the village community system, land was not a commodity, and it could not be alienated without the approval of the village community. But under the new system land was transformed into a commodity which could be disposed of in the market like any other.

The permanent settlement was first introduced in Bengal by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 and a zamindar or feudal class was thus created who were brought into being by the fiat of the British state and had no independent power base. This means, a large class of parasitic landowners, moneylenders and land speculators came into existence. As has been pointed out earlier that a good number of these people came from the urban areas who fell back on agriculture because of the destruction of industries caused by the British policy. These new classes were the creation of the British state and naturally they became the ally of the colonial power.

3.3.2.4: Emergence of New Urban Centres and the Bourgeoisie

The British destroyed Bengal’s industries and as a result, old cities of this region lost their economic importance. However, they established new trading cities for their own commercial interest. These cities began to emerge
after the second half of the eighteenth century all over India. In Bengal in particular, Calcutta became the main business and commerce centre instead of Dhaka.

British capitalists, for the extraction of raw materials and commercial penetration had to invest in railways, tea, coffee, jute, coal, iron ore, and other mining industries. As a result of this, an Indian bourgeois class began to develop, who started their career as agents or businessmen to collect, transport and deliver raw materials to British manufacturers in the hinterland. There were three important industries in India by 1880, jute, coal and cotton. There were fifty six cotton mills and Indian entrepreneurship played an important role in the development of this industry. They marked their presence in other industries also.

Once started, Indian entrepreneurs expanded their activities into other fields. In fact, in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a bourgeois class could develop and Indian industry came into being.

Thus, with the direct collaboration and patronage of the British, dependent capitalism and a dependent capitalist class emerged in India. This was concomitant with what is called 'dependent capitalist urbanism'. For the very economic reasons some cities began to flourish. Among other things, the progressive aspects of capitalist urbanism consists in promoting individualism and freeing the
individual from coercive pre-capitalist social fetters of all kinds as the capitalist mode of production develops. 47

A new middle class also emerged as an accompaniment to the extension of the social division of labour under this system who provided the leadership for the nationalist movement of the sub-continent later on. 48

3.3.2.5: Emergence of Middle Class

After the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in educational institutes and state language in 1835 by William Bentinck, an English educated middle class emerged by mid nineteenth century. 49 This class was composed of many professionals like teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists, civil servants, businessmen and many others. 50 The main objective of the British to create a class like this is best explained by Macaulay who said in 1835:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and intellect. 51

Thus, along with the dependent bourgeois class, a middle class of different professions was created by the metropolitan bourgeoisie initially to serve their colonial interests. They could foresee that it would not be possible on their part to hold Bengal and other parts of India as colony for long. That is why they worked for creating a dependent bourgeoisie and collaborative middle class finally.
to give way to the emergence of a dependent capitalist state. However, the state remained as the central focus of struggles between different classes. From mid-18th century metropolitan bourgeoisie consolidated the state power, but from 1920 the indigenous classes i.e. bourgeoisie and middle class had become sufficiently strong to reverse that trend.

Though the indigenous bourgeoisie was found very progressive in terms of terminating the British rule and creating nationalism, the role of the middle class was very crucial in this respect because of its size and ability to mobilize the masses. This middle class, being actively supported by the indigenous bourgeoisie and the common masses (proletariat, peasants etc.) could provide the leadership for the nationalist movement which ultimately caused the British to quit from the sub-continent leaving the political power to their ally, the middle class and the indigenous bourgeoisie.

3.3.3: Partition of India and Hindu Muslim Contradictions

Bangladesh entered into a new colonial rule of Pakistan after the termination of the British rule and the partition of India in 1947. It became a province of the newly founded state called Pakistan being named as East Pakistan. The main reason behind the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan was the deeply rooted contradictions between the leading classes of the Hindu and Muslim communities that germinated during their struggle for dominance in the long historical periods. We may recall that 'Islam' came to this
sub-continent as the religion of the conquerors from the 11th century onward. The Muslim rulers started to establish their political authority in Bengal from the 13th century. Since there was caste system and the majority of the lower caste Hindus alienated themselves from the upper caste or dominant classes, the Muslim rulers could use this contradiction in their favour to capture political as well as socio-economic dominance. So far as East Bengal is concerned, there is a theory of mass conversion into Islam. According to this theory, Bengal where the Buddhists outnumbered others became a fertile ground for Islam. Sufism had a great impact on this. Such mass conversion changed the status quo of the Hindu dominant classes. There were also religious zeal that led to the destruction of some Hindu temples and construction of mosques. Muslim culture came to the forefront and the Hindu culture received less importance. All these provided the very basis for the Hindu dominant classes to be very hostile to the Muslim dominant classes. Though there had been efforts for reconciliation by writers, intellectuals and leaders from both the communities, the hostility did not die out. It took sometimes serious turn when some of the leaders of these communities took up some religious issues and asked the masses to fight against each other. However, the Muslim upper class in collaboration with many Hindu rulers and business classes, remained dominant in the socio-political arena of Bengal till the advent of the British colonial power.
When the East India Company took over political control after the battle of Plassy in 1757, the Muslims were divided into two classes, the aristocrats and the peasants. The aristocratic class was composed of administrators, revenue collectors, zamindars, judges, teachers, government servants etc. Within the first two decades of their rule the positions of administration came to be occupied by the British themselves. 57

Since the British captured state power from the Muslim dominant classes, naturally the latter were very much hostile to the former. They began to non-cooperate with the British in every respect. This left a good chance for the Hindu dominant classes to use this contradiction and to regain socio-political supremacy over the Muslims. They started to cooperate with the British. As a result of this, the Hindu merchant class could grow within a very short period of time and collaborated with the British Company in different business entrepreneurship particularly in the urban areas. The socio-political position of the Muslim aristocrats was shaken more by the introduction of Permanent Settlement Act in 1893 by Lord Cornwallis when many of them lost zamindari for the way it was introduced and many of the Hindu merchant class could become the new zamindars. Thus, within a short period of time this Hindu merchants and landed aristocrats became dominant in the socio-economic and political arena of Bengal. 58
Moreover, English was introduced instead of Persian as the official language and medium of instruction in 1835 by Lord William Bentinck. The Muslim professional community who were working in different government and other offices were adversely affected by this change. All on a sudden they had to lose jobs because they did not learn English. The leaders of this community instigated their members not to accept English education as it was a language of the Christians. It should be mentioned here that the members of Muslim aristocrat class were the heirs of those who migrated to Bengal from Western India. Their mother tongue was Persian. Naturally, they had a very strong feeling for Persian which was the official language till 1835. Being deprived of all the opportunities that they had been enjoying the Muslim aristocrats began an all out non-cooperation with the British. The result of all these was that more agony and deprivation had to be faced by this community from the British. 59

Contrary to this, the Hindu community came forward to learn English. To them both Persian and English were the foreign languages. Therefore, it was quite easy for them to react favourably to English. By mid 19th century an English educated Hindu middle class came into being in Bengal. They occupied the important social and administrative positions. The Muslims were observing all these with deep frustration. However, with the help of some of its leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and others, the Muslims were persuaded to learn
English and to cooperate with the British later on, all over India.

When the nationalist movement got momentum under the leadership of the Hindu middle class and bourgeoisie, the Muslim aristocracy had demanded a separate state for the Muslims where they would not have to compete with the Hindu bourgeoisie and the middle class. In such circumstances, Pakistan was created. Bengal was divided on the basis of Hindu Muslim majority. The Muslim dominated areas constituted the province of East Pakistan (subsequently Bangladesh). Majority of the Hindu bourgeoisie and middle class of East Pakistan gradually migrated to India and were replaced by West Pakistani and non-Bengali bourgeoisie and elites later on because there were no such well developed classes in East Pakistan. 60

3.3.3.1: Economy and Class in Bangladesh During Pakistani Rule

Bangladesh had been a part of Pakistan from August 1947 to December 1971. During this period it was politically ruled and economically exploited by the Pakistani ruling elite and bourgeoisie respectively. 61 We have seen in the previous sections that how the Bengali Muslims were alienated from the British economic and administrative structure. This led to the deterence of emergence of Muslim business and middle classes in Bengal during the British period. The Bengali Muslim upper class comprised of mainly small landlords or zamindars and a very few petty businessmen
and/or industrialists. However, they were very few in number. A middle class, small in size was also there.

After 1947 the well-to-do Bengali Muslims were enthusiastic to acquire higher education. They had been absorbed in different occupation like teaching, practice of law, clerical jobs and in government administration. Some of them became able to get class one jobs in public service and also in teaching in the universities. Since the business and industrial sectors were dominated by the non-Bengalis, the sons of the rich peasants and petty bourgeoisie of the Bengali Muslims concentrated in acquiring education and getting jobs in the urban centres. Thus an urban middle class grew substantially in Bangladesh within short period of Pakistani rule.

Though the Bengali landed aristocracy was powerful in the rural areas in Bangladesh there were no such Bengali Muslim classes who could demonstrate economic as well political influence in the urban areas during Pakistani rule. However, the Pakistani regime tried to create limited space for the Bengali bourgeoisie in the economy and some positions in the administration in East Pakistan at the later part of their rule, the exploitative nature of the regime was perpetuated. As a result of this, a small dependent bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie came into being. Though the Pakistani rulers thought that these classes (bureaucrats, petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie) would help them in perpetuating their economic and political control, their
economic dominance and exploitation was so obvious and the disparity between the two wings (East and West Pakistan) was so high in terms of economic development, per capita income, job facilities etc. the dissatisfied middle class and petty bourgeoisie became the natural leader of the nationalist movement.

3.3.3.2: Urbanization in Bangladesh During Pakistani Period

It has been pointed out earlier that the urban centres in India were mostly centres of pilgrimage and administration during pre-British period. The British, for administrative reasons, divided the whole country into Provinces and each Province into serval Districts. The Districts were again divided into sub-divisions each containing several Thanas. The province of Bengal was also divided in this way. The headquarters of each District, sub-division and Thanas were the places where the administrators would live. Residential buildings, office premises, metalled roads, schools and colleges, markets, recreational centres like park, cinema hall etc. were constructed in these headquarters for the government personnel. This way small urban centres grew in Bengal during British period. Some big cities like Dhaka and Calcutta were also there which were important for their economic and administrative functions. In 1947, Dhaka being the capital of East Pakistan, became the main centre for administration, education, business and commerce and cultural activities for this new province. Chittagong and Khulna, being sea-ports and centres for business, education and
administration began to develop as the second and third largest cities respectively. The district headquarters also gained greater importance for their administrative and educational purposes during Pakistani rule. The landed aristocrats began to move to these urban centres for educating their sons and these newly educated class began to settle there. The agents of non-Bengali bourgeoisie and the petty Bengali bourgeoisie had also been concentrating on these centres for economic purposes. All these made the urban centres as the nerve-centres of the socio-economic development of the province during Pakistani period.

3.3.3.3: Development of Bastees in the Cities of Bangladesh During Pakistani Period

As has been already pointed out, Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna were the only cities in Bangladesh during Pakistani period. Bastees began to grow mainly in these cities. The bastee dwellers were mainly uprooted rural immigrants.63

Since the dominant classes were concentrated in the urban areas and cultivable lands were in the hands of those few who were not directly related to agriculture, the agricultural sector received the least attention during Pakistani rule. As a result, growth rate in agriculture declined to 0.5 whereas the growth rate of population was 3.064 and Bangladesh became a food deficit area during this period. The natural consequence of this was more landlessness, unemployment and situation of famine in the rural areas. Natural disasters such as floods, cyclones,
river erosion etc. made the situation more acute. The state run by the bourgeoisie and middle class provided them no opportunity (employment) to survive in the place where they were born and brought up. They had to migrate to the city where some form of employment were available in the informal sector. The dominant classes of the city encouraged this sector because of the cheap labour and service they had received out of it. In such a situation bastees began to proliferate in the cities of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna during Pakistani rule. Therefore, the socio-economic policies and programmes of the then Pakistani state which were formulated and executed by the dominant classes had a direct effect on the proliferation of bastee in the above cities.

3.3.4: Liberation of Bangladesh and the Dominant Classes

The main dynamic force that worked behind the liberation struggle of Bangladesh was the contradiction between the frustrated Bengali Muslim petty bourgeoisie and middle class and the Pakistani ruling bourgeoisie and elites. The Pakistani rulers tried to impose minority Urdu language over the Bengali majority as state language, that led to the growth of Bengali nationalism was also important. The Bengali middle class played a vital role in propagating this nationalism. Above all, the Awami-League leaders who came of petty bourgeois and middle class background made it possible to politicize and mobilize the masses for the
liberation of the country. Bangladesh emerged in the world map as an independent country on 16th December, 1971 after a 9 month old bloodiest arms struggle.

Since the bourgeoisie was less developed, dominant classes had begun to take shape with the direct intervention of the state which emerged as the most powerful institution in controlling economy under the world economic system. In the absence of a developed bourgeoisie, the government had to nationalize most of the properties of industrial and/or urban sectors which had been left by the Pakistani bourgeoisie. For the same reason civil and military bureaucracy remained very influential in the state mechanism. The petty bourgeoisie who led the liberation struggle became the planner and director of the dominant public sector and the national economy. Though they formulated and introduced some socialistic measures, the total economy remained capitalistic in nature. Many of them misappropriated large amount of public money or property within a very short time of their assuming state power. There had been an inflow of huge amount of foreign aid from many countries of the world to help the impoverished economy caused by liberation war, a good percentage of which were also misappropriated by many of them. Thus a compradore bourgeoisie has developed in Bangladesh which is the direct outcome of the state policy. This class, with the help of civil and military bureaucracy, work as the agent of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. One can make a distinction between the policies and programmes of
Mujib regime and Zia regime and that of Ershad regime on different national issues, but so far the economic structure of the country is concerned, their policies and programmes varied little. This means that the dominant classes (the compradore bourgeoisie and the collaborating civil and military bureaucrats) that emerged after the liberation with the direct help of the state-power have been strengthened further after every successive regime as we have mentioned earlier. Since this compradore bourgeoisie is parasitic and unproductive in nature, Bangladesh became more dependent on metropolitan bourgeoisie for foreign aid and goods. This has made Bangladesh a monopoly market of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Parallel to this urban economic structure same type of economic structure has emerged in the rural areas. As Rehman notes,

the pattern of urban economy is paralleled in the rural areas where rich former use their access to state power to mobilize imported fertilizer, irrigation facilities, pesticides and aid-financed credit programmes. To this end, the growing influence of a section of the rural bourgeoisie has emerged as also another by-product of the aid regime.

3.3.4.1: Urbanization and the Development of Bastees in Bangladesh

No doubt, after 1947 considerable socio-economic as well as political administrative changes had taken place giving momentum to the urbanization process. But the more important phase is the recent one staring with liberation of Bangladesh. We have shown in the preceding sections that how the urbanization process is related to the growth of
urban economic and political structure where the dominant classes determine its pace through the functioning of the state. After the liberation, the urban centres have become the places of activities of the international and national bourgeoisie, the middle class and others with all sorts of facilities including greater employment opportunities.

On the other hand, lands have been monopolised by few hands and the landlessness is on the rise in the rural areas. Land, the single most important source of income in the rural areas is unevenly distributed (see table 3.1). If the farmers below the subsistence level are added to the landless households they constitute about 78 per cent of the rural households.

**Table 3.1**

**Size Distribution of Cultivable Land in Bangladesh**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Acres Owned</th>
<th>Percent of Households</th>
<th>Percent of Land Area</th>
<th>Percent of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Landless</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32.79</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Below subsistence farmers</td>
<td>0.01 - 1.00</td>
<td>29.10</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>26.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Subsistence farmers</td>
<td>1.01 - 2.00</td>
<td>15.78</td>
<td>15.54</td>
<td>16.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Surplus farmers</td>
<td>2.01 - 3.00</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>8.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Big farmers 10.00 &amp; above</td>
<td>3.01 - 4.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>11.56</td>
<td>6.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Surplus farmers</td>
<td>4.01 - 6.00</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>15.03</td>
<td>6.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Big farmers 10.00 &amp; above</td>
<td>6.01 - 10.00</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>16.34</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of rural poverty is alarmingly high and has been increasing very fast. In 1963-64 40 per cent of the people in rural Bangladesh lived below poverty line and 5 per cent below the extreme poverty line. The figures rose to 79 per cent and 42 per cent respectively in 1974-75. This means poverty and extreme poverty grew during the above mentioned decade at a rate of 25 per cent and 80 per cent respectively.70

The rapid urbanization and the development of bastees has direct relationship with the rural poverty. In fact, the development of bastees is but the manifestation of the transfer of rural poverty to an urban setting. The large urban centres (cities) receive the largest proportion of population from the rural areas because they can provide more jobs in their expanding informal sectors.

Since we have elaborately discussed the urbanization process and the situation of bastees in different cities of Bangladesh in general and that of Dhaka in particular in the preceding chapters, we need not intend to repeat them. In this section the main objective is to establish the fact that the urbanization process and the proliferation of bastees in Bangladesh have their roots in the bourgeoisie nature of the state that has been shaped by the dominant classes. On the basis of the foregoing discussion we can now say that the growth, existence and the proliferation of bastees in Bangladesh is due to the bourgeoisie nature of its economic and political organization. It should be pointed out here
that some of the socialist countries impose restrictions on the migration of people from one region to another and thus control urban-migration. Even then, many of these countries have sub-standard areas in the major cities. However, this does not negate the fact that the state has an important role to play in eliminating rural poverty, checking urban-migration and in formulating and implementing balanced socio-economic development plans.
Notes


7. Rehman, Sobhan, n. 3, pp. 3-5.


12. Ibid., p. 2.

13. This view was initially introduced by Magasthenes, the Greek ambassador who visited the court of Chandragupta Mauya, in about 320 B.C. For more details see A. T. Embree, "Orientalism: A Note on the History of an Idea", *Societas* I, 1971, pp. 261-62.


21. See Sen, A., n.15, pp.16-34.


28. Ibid., pp.438-442.


30. See Bhadra, B.K., n.17, p.336.


32. See Bhadra, B.K., n.17, p.337.

33. Sen, A. n.15., p.47.
34. See Bhadra, B.K., n.17, pp.337-38.
40. Marx, K., _India, New York Daily Tribune_, 5 August, 1853.
41. Sen, A., n.15, p.64.
42. See Sen, A., n.15, pp.65-69.
44. See Gadgil, D.R., n.22., pp.54-61.
45. See Sen, A., n.15, p.72.
48. See Bhadra, B.K., n.17, pp.355-367.
49. See Sen, A., n.11, pp.4-5.
50. See Bhadra, B.K., n.17, p.367.
53. See Bhadra, B.K., n.17, pp.390-91.
55. See Ahmed, K., _A Socio-Political History of Bengal_, Inside Library, Dacca, 1975, p.xxi.

57. See Sen, A., n.11, pp.3-4.

58. See Ibid.

59. See Ibid., pp.4-5.

60. See Rehman Sobhan, 'Growth and Contradictions Within the Bangladesh Bourgeoisie', Journal of Social Studies, Dhaka University, no.9, 1980, p.7.


62. The economic exploitation of Bangladesh by Pakistani rulers and the disparity between East and West wing is well documented. See Rounaq Zahan, Pakistan, Failure in National Integration, Oxford University Press, Bangladesh, 1973.


64. Sen, A., n.11, p.78.

65. For details about urban informal sector see our earlier discussion in chapter I.

66. See Rehman Sobhan, n.60.


68. Ibid., p.14.
