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Note from the Editor

We are really sorry that it took a few extra weeks to take out the second issue of the Journal. A number of factors conspired against our good intentions. Some were lapses on our part but the others, more debilitating ones, were beyond our control. Bangladesh is prone to natural disasters as well as plagued with man-made crises. We in Bangladesh have become used to such calamities as floods, cyclones and have come to terms with political turmoil. But as the saying goes, it never rains it pours in Bangladesh. For the past couple of months we have been inundated by flood, with Dhaka city going under water, lashed by cyclone, with waist deep water on city streets of Dhaka again and, amidst all these, political crises that have practically closed down the University of Dhaka for over two months now. And as I write these words, the students of the university are still on strike, with no end in sight.

Notwithstanding such catastrophes, life goes on in this unfortunate land and the tenacity of the Bangladeshis are such that we tend to perform better during such emergencies, as is evident from the articles that we are presenting in this issue. Keeping in line with our problems Mahbuba Nasreen presents a study of disasters in Bangladesh, advocating for a sociological approach. She also presents the findings of some disaster studies done previously and argues for a gender-based analysis of disasters focusing on the coping mechanism. She also refers to some of her previous studies and shows how women, more than men, become the saviors of the family in times of crisis.

It is also very encouraging to report that S.Aminul Islam and Mahbub Uddin Ahmed have come up with two penetrating analyses of poverty in Bangladesh. Bangladesh and poverty have become synonymous today but most studies of poverty have ended up as mere headcounts of poor people. Islam and Ahmed have defied these ‘run of the mill’ investigations of poverty looking primarily at income data and poverty lines and have gone a step beyond to propose sociological studies with sociological variables. Ahmed proposes a whole range of sociological and demographic variables and correlates these to offers a far greater insight into poverty than are available at present. Islam on the other hand challenges the very methodology of poverty studies, particularly the surveys, and seeks to understand poverty through qualitative analysis. Thus he succeeds in focusing on areas of poverty not addressed before. I am also happy to note that our next issue will be devoted entirely to exploring the sociological perspective on poverty.

Concerned as we are with our poverty and disasters, we also seek to understand what is going on in sociology elsewhere. Habibul Haque Khondker, a professor at the National University of Singapore, looks at the process of globalization and finds that “glocalization” may better explain the process of globalization as it unfolds in many parts of the world today. He traces the origin of the term “glocalization” to a Japanese concept and shows how it can be applied to specific cases like Singapore.

Nazrul Islam, on the other hand looks at the future of sociology as a discipline. He argues that Sociology, as an American discipline, is facing a dead end. The problem with the discipline is rooted in the very cultural setting of the US society, which remains isolated from other societies in time and space. As a result the sociology that developed in the US, different for the classical European sociology, fails to look at history and to other societies. Islam argues that sociology, to be a “science of society”, must deal with societies in time and space. Sociology, in its American version, has failed completely in this regard. Added to this are the inherent problems of administrative and organizational weaknesses of the discipline.
that have brought sociology, particularly its theory building process, to a standstill. Nor does the future, he argues, look any brighter.

We are also happy to note that we have received three books dealing with current research going on in Bangladesh. The first is by Kamal Siddiqui et al on Mega City Governance in South Asia and is reviewed here by S. Aminul Islam. The second is on Women Gender and Discrimination and presents a set of eleven papers read at two different seminars, “Women and Development” and “Gender Discrimination” held at Rajshahi and Dhaka respectively. The third, Does Approach Matter in Poverty Reduction? - An Empirical Study on Micro-Credit, Food Assistance and Employment Programmes in Rural Bangladesh focuses on three programmes on “micro-credit”, “food assistance” and “employment to the women” commissioned by NGOs like ASA, CARE and BRAC along with government assistance for the last two. An evaluation of these programmes with data from Mymensingh, Rangpur, Noakhali and Barisal is presented along with an extensive review of theoretical literature on the subjects.

We are very proud to report that we have been able to setup an Editorial Advisory Board comprising of eminent scholars from home and abroad. The Board includes a Professor Emeritus from Syracuse University (USA), the Vice Chancellor of the Independent University of Bangladesh, a senior professor from Marburg University (Germany), and senior professors from India and Bangladesh. All great sociologists in their own rights. With such a team we hope to offer you the quality Journal that we are striving to build.

From this issue onwards, we shall be circulating a hard copy of the journal to interested readers. If you wish to receive a copy please contact bejs@bangladeshsociology.org
Sociology in the 21st Century: Facing a Dead End

Nazrul Islam

This is a working paper, a part of a larger work on the future of sociology, titled "On the Wrong Road", itself a part of a larger issue that I have been pursuing for over a decade now. As a part of this quest I have already published other papers like "American Sociology: Crisis in Isolation" and the "End of Sociological Theory". Much of these deal with the paradigm problem that has affected sociology, particularly its theory building process, since its inception as a new discipline. Thus, this a metathoretical exercise in which I try to assess the future of the discipline. In these exercises I deal with the discipline as a whole and not its substantive areas or issues relating to any of these areas.

To an outsider, what follows might seem like an overly harsh criticism of the discipline and to the members of the discipline I might sound like a "prophet of doom". Neither need be true. When I talk of the "dead end" faced by the discipline in the 21st century, I merely claim this as the logical consequence of the growth pattern of the discipline and indeed, as the most probable eventuality. Although in a rather sketchy fashion, I present my arguments in relation to a) the history of the discipline, b) coverage of its subject mater and methodology, c) the administrative structure of the discipline, d) its financial position and e) its relation to other disciplines. In itself, no single factor would be strong enough to cause the downfall of a discipline but when all of these regress together the fall becomes inevitable.

Before I move further, a note on the domain of sociology is in order. Here sociology is treated as an American discipline. Most scholars would agree that at least since the 1920s sociology could be treated as purely an American discipline (Ritzer 1996). Gouldner (1968) defined sociology as an American discipline as opposed to socialism that became dominant in Russia and Eastern Europe. Although sociology had its origin in France, Britain and Germany its growth since the 1920s, mainly due to the rise of Fascism and the World War II in Europe, has been exclusively an American enterprise. Most European sociologists migrated to the US during this period and some stayed back after the war. Thus, the sociology that we get since the 1920s, and definitely since the 1930s, has been purely American.

However, I like to go further back in time to call the discipline as American. In the USA sociology originated in the works of Graham Sumner, Albion Small and a host of other scholars during the 1875-95 period in response to the works of the French founder of the discipline, Auguste Comte, and the English philosopher Herbert Spencer. Because his works were in English and easily available to the Americans, also because he was living at this time and was considered to be one of the greatest of the living philosophers, Spencer's influence was paramount in the development of the discipline (Hostadter 1962). A large part of the influence was in terms of the evolutionary principles and the organic analogies, which so influenced 19th century thought in general both in Europe and in America. Although the impact of these two concepts on sociology died out by the turn of the century (Hostadter 1962), Spencer's other concepts, as I shall show later, continued to have a lasting influence on sociology in the US.

However, even during these early times sociology in the US began to develop in ways that were quite distinct from those of its European counterpart. From the very first course taught by Sumner in 1875, sociology in the US, unlike in Europe, grew up in the university setting. The first US sociologists were either religious preachers or sons of preachers. This factor had a major impact on the guiding principles and sociology in the US turned out to be basically reform oriented, pursuing issues of social problems, maintenance of law and order and problems arising out of rapid urbanization, industrialization and migration.

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Sociology in the US was also blessed with huge donations from the church, philanthropic organizations and the state governments for research in these problem areas. While sociology in Europe had a difficult time getting established in an academic setting, the first department of sociology at the Chicago University was funded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. European sociology never enjoyed the luxury of such disposable funds.

The focus of European sociology was on nations and civilizations and macro level generalizations. But this sociology came to an abrupt end in the 1920s because of the growth of fascism and later the World War. Further developments in Europe took place from the 1950s onward but mostly as a reflection of the developments in America. So, when I refer to American sociology I refer to sociology quite different from the sociology the founding fathers in Europe intended to establish. All of such differences, however, turned out to be liabilities for American sociology and crippled the discipline from the start.

In this paper I take a look at some of these issues and try to show how sociology has gone down a wrong road that has lead the discipline to a dead end.

Although many of these issues noted above are very close to each other and connected in ways that defies separate treatment, for the sake of clarity, I shall treat some of these separately. First, the universities as site for the growth of the discipline. In Europe the "university revolution", which heralded in the rise of secular universities had already run its course in France, England and the much of Europe before the same began in the US (Collins 1994). USA had numerous colleges teaching religious ethics and philosophy. During the second half of the 19th century these colleges, mostly Protestant in origin, began to open up for secular education and graduate studies (Collins 1994). Sociology (in the US) was at the right time and the right place to take advantage of this opportunity and within a span of thirty years set itself up as a formidable discipline with a regular journal, the American Journal of Sociology, a professional organization, the “American Sociological Society” and a large number of departments teaching numerous courses.

All that was necessary to set up a department was a faculty member willing to teach a course and a group of graduate followers who together took care of the undergraduate teaching. Much of the Protestant enthusiasm for secular learning of a subject originating in the works of declared atheists came from their zeal to solve social problems. Both the students and teachers taking up sociology were fired by this zeal (Ritzer 1996). So department after department teaching sociology sprung up all over the country. Much of these became possible because of the liberal grants from various institutions, which were also interested in the amelioration of the social problems. So that, like today, much of the university education then also relied on student fees and research grants. Thus, from the very beginning sociology in the US became dependent on student enrolment and research grants.

These factors have led to two different but interrelated problems. First and the obvious one is that once the student enrollment declines or the research fund dries out sociology as a discipline would be in dire straits. That's exactly what has happened to the discipline from the 1970s on ward. In spite of some fluctuations now and then, the over all undergraduate student enrollment continued to increase from the beginning of the twentieth century and reached a peak of about 35,000 in 1976-77 and then it began to decline very rapidly and by the mid 1990s dropped to less than one third of that, to around 10,000 and continues to decline. I have explored some of the reasons elsewhere (Islam 1999).

The rise of enrollment all through the first half of the century was directly related to the numerous social problems, including those arising out of migration to the US and to the cities from the rural areas, rapid industrialization and the two World Wars. The social problems reached its peak in the 1960 and early 1970s in the form of Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam movements. Sociology and sociologists were in the greatest of demand then. But as society began to settle down the enrollment also began to drop. It has been noticed earlier that when US society is in a comparatively peaceful situation, student enrollment in sociology declines so that, it may be argued that, what is good for the society is bad for sociology.
Sociology in Europe was also born as the aftermath of the French revolution but its growth was arrested for a while until it picked up again in France with the Dreyfus affair, and in Germany and Italy with the industrialization and the unification process of these countries. So, when at the beginning of the 21st century US is enjoying great economic prosperity and a comparatively peaceful atmosphere at home, who needs a sociologist anymore?

The second part of the problem damages the very fabric of the discipline. As the student enrollment decreases universities tend to cut funds for the departmental activities, including jobs. The faculty, in order to retain jobs, tries to attract more students by offering ever-newer courses often, exotic ones. In an attempt to create new courses the teachers continue to invent new specialty areas, thereby dividing the discipline into ever-finer specialty areas often with little or no relation to the discipline in general. The discipline soon becomes an unrecognizable mess of courses with no visible core (more on this later).

Funds for sociological research began pouring in almost from the very inception of the discipline. I noted earlier that the very first department of sociology was established through such funds. Like the Rockefeller Foundation, most such donors were either various philanthropic organizations, including the church or the state and many corporations. Fund from the state sources, particularly federal funds, were poured into the discipline during and after the World War II. Such funds continued to increase to the end of 1970s.

Research conducted through such funds were obviously directed to the issues of law and order, solving social problems, offering community services and in general maintaining the status quo. These never added to the growth of the discipline in any coherent manner. Research moved into areas where there was research money. This may have developed research methodology but no theoretical breakthrough was even attempted with this money. The focus of all research remained with reform and the maintenance of status quo.

However, at the time when the need for law and order and the maintenance of status quo were at a premium, during the Civil Rights and the Anti-Vietnam movements, the sociologists unfortunately failed to deliver (the reasons of which I shall discuss shortly).

It was not only their failure to explain these problems, but as one commentator noted, behind every protest march, meeting or picket there was a sociologist, as sociologists also joined in the movements. Many sociology teachers and graduate students got involved in these protests. Naturally, neither the philanthropic organizations nor the corporations, and definitely not the state, took this calmly. The result was a gradual but definite drying out of the funds. Some of the faculty actually lost their jobs and others were transferred to safer departments. Of course, some research fund is still available but these, as those of the earlier times, do not add much to the growth of the discipline. This scarcity of fund has also affected the discipline in ways similar to the loss of student enrollment.

These issues are of course not unique to sociology. Any discipline in a similar predicament would face a similar future. What is unique to sociology is the problem with its subject matter, its crisis with theory building, the lack of a paradigm and the very organizational structure of the discipline, all of which complicate the situation further.

When it began as a discipline in the US, sociology did not have a clearly defined subject matter. It set out to work on topics that were normally "rejected or ignored" by established disciplines, like family, social problems, crime, urban and rural communities, ethnic groups etc. It was, what Robin Williams Jr. (1976) termed as, "rag-picking on the periphery of the intellectual market-place". C.W. Mills (1959) saw this as garbage collection. During its formative years such choice of subject matter helped sociology to survive because there was very little challenge from other disciplines (Ritzer 1996).
As sociology grew it continued to look for such exotic subjects not studied by other disciplines but at the same time, more for the sake of earning credibility on the intellectual market place, it began to encroach on other disciplines. The argument was made that since sociology deals with society, anything and everything that has to do with society is its legitimate subject matter. Thus, economics, politics, administration, and psychology were all included in its list of inquiry. Anthropology was seen virtually as sociology of the "tribal" peoples, often combined in one academic department.

More than anything else, this unrestrained growth has done the greatest damage to the discipline. The "rag-picking" continues unabated as is clearly seen in the immense interest with which sociology took to the study of the gay and sex life. And women studies have now been complemented by "Men Studies".

But it is the opposite trend of selecting everything under the sun as the topic of study that is at the root of much of the trouble. Neither the numerous departments of sociology nor the professional organizations within sociology ever set a boundary within which the discipline is to operate. Much of this has to do with the absence of an operative paradigm. However, this lack of control over its subject matter is endemic to American sociology. Although a few textbooks appeared quite early (Small's *Introduction to the Study of Society*, 1894; Giddings, *Principles of Sociology*, 1896), American sociology never quite got hold of its subject matter.

And in recent years, due mostly to the "survival instinct" noted earlier, sociology has divided and subdivided into numerous specialty areas. Sociologists, in their attempt to attract students to the classroom, have begun inventing ever-new areas of specialization. The academic departments have tacitly promoted such sub-divisions of the discipline. After all, the decline in enrolment affects the departments as much as it affects the individual faculty members. American Sociological Association today recognizes more than 60 specialty areas and many sub-sub-areas within each, and new ones are being proposed with increasing regularity. The process has deteriorated to such an extent that Jonathan Turner and Stephen P. Turner (1990) feel that this has allowed each sociologist to have his or her own "field of specialization!" American Sociological Association, which could and should have taken a lead to stop such unwarranted proliferation, has, on the contrary, encouraged the process by looking the other way (Islam 1999). So that, the discipline offers a free hand to the sociologists to pick their choice of area, and there are more than 200 specialty area journals which will publish these specialty area papers, thereby giving legitimacy to such works (Islam 1999).

Of course, in and of itself, such proliferation would not have mattered so much, except for the fact that there is nothing to unite such an endless array of specialty areas. Sociology has nothing comparable to paradigms of the natural sciences (Kuhn 1970). Nor are there any over-arching theoretical models to unite even a few of the specialty areas. For a while some so-called "schools of thought" (Martindale 1961) were identified to exist within the discipline. These schools, most importantly the "functionalist school", for a time, seemed to unite parts of the discipline with their own varieties of theories and methodologies.

But functionalism based on positivist philosophy faced numerous challenges and since the 1960s has lost all credibility and adherence. The other schools were small judged by the number of sociologists who identified themselves with each, and actually helped in furthering the division of the discipline. Thus, for a long time now, and definitely since the 1960s, sociology has been facing a "crisis" situation in terms of paradigms and theory building (Islam 1984). Such crisis scenario was prophesized by Mills in the 1950s (Mills 1959) and by Gouldner in the 1960s (Gouldner 1968) and is now a recognized fact (Udhen 1986; Mouzelis 1995; Turner, J. 1994; Turner, J. and Turner, S.P. 1990). In my recent work (Islam 1999) on my part, I have already declared the "End of Sociological Theory".

Jonathan Turner (1994) argues that the only way out of such a crisis situation is the building of "grand theories, the armchair variety" with which the discipline began in the works of the European grand masters. Unfortunately, sociology has moved too far away from such theories. American sociology started with the theories of Comte and Spencer. But for the next fifty years sociology in the US failed to develop
any major theory of its own. It was atheoretical if not outright anti-theory. American Sociological Society did not even have a session of theory in its deliberations till 1915. MacIver was the first President of the Association (in 1930s) with any background in theory. Although in later years Max Weber and Emile Durkheim became known to American sociology and Talcott Parsons tried to combine these works into a "grand theory" of his own, theory building and respect for theory never became the hallmark of the American scenario.

Some micro level theories, like exchange theory, ethnomethodology and phenomenology, were attempted by the Americans during the later part of the 20th century. Also based on the works of George H. Mead, a philosopher at the Chicago University, another brand of micro theory grew up as the "symbolic interaction" theory. However, except for the last all the rest remained at the periphery of the discipline. Symbolic interaction theory did acquire some respectability but its focus, like the others, on the micro level seriously limited its applicability to the broader questions and it never had a very large audience either.

The only theory that ever had a major impact on American sociology was Functionalism (often, Structural Functionalism), particularly through the works of Parsons and Merton and their followers. But this theory was so flawed and so much criticism was launched against it that by the 1970s the term "functionalist", almost amounted to an insult.

In any case, Functionalism never really went beyond the works of Comte and Spencer. All the ingredients of the theory were already present in the works of Comte, including those of "action" and "system", the key concepts of Parsons. The concepts of "structure" and "function" were fully developed in the works of Spencer. It required very little imagination to fill in the rest, as Merton did with his concepts of manifest, latent and dysfunctions. Thus, American sociology contributed very little by way of theory building. At least one critic, Andreski, correctly declared that Spencer was the last sociologist.

It is this lack of capacity to build theory and a general apathy towards theory that spells the real doom for American sociology. Without an overarching theory and concepts that have meaning across the numerous sub-sub-specialties, sociology can never have the control over its subject matter or any conceivable boundary. The organizational structure in the guise of associations and the academic departments have almost totally failed to organize sociology into a coherent discipline. For these reasons Jonathan Turner, and Stephen P. Turner (1990) defined sociology as an "impossible science". Thus, in spite of the promises with which the discipline started in Europe, it failed to "take off" in America as a fully functioning discipline and toady its future seems bleaker than it’s past.

But does it have to be so?

Yes!

In my opinion, American sociology never had a chance to develop into anything special. It started on the wrong road. American sociology never addressed the real issues. It never looked at other societies and other times, it never sought to understand social change, or look at the impact of politics and economy on society. All that sociology achieved from its limited studies of communities and social problems was a narrow, myopic view of the world. In this view of the world the (American) society was a wonderful place to live in except for one or two social problems, arising now and then, which can be taken care of easily. It is a very naïve view of the world with which sociologists in the US continue to live. In this world very little exists beyond the two oceans and the sociologists need not concern themselves with those and what happens within this boundary is all nice and tidy.

Thus, it is very interesting to note that, in spite of the various subjects it tried to tackle in the past sociology never looked at its most important concept. From "rag-picking" to being encyclopedic, sociology dealt with numerous issues and in its present form an endless list of topics has been included as specialty areas. Yet, American sociology never, never in its 125 years, sought to study society! Neither society as
an abstract concept nor real societies in time and space. (see also Collins 1994). Open an Introductory textbook, which is supposed to tell the beginning student what sociology is all about, you’ll find a few basic concepts like culture, or stratification and institutions like the family, religion etc. and community studies like the urban and rural communities and a few stray topics like environment or population. But not a single textbook has topics like “Chinese society”, “Indian Society”, “Inca Society”, “Ancient Greek Society” and not even “Modern European Society” or a chapter on “American Society” itself. With the exception of occasional references to industrial, pre-industrial or post-industrial societies, the subject society is simply not there in the American Sociology texts or anywhere in American sociology either.

The only society it ever studied is American society in the form of its communities and problems but not as a Society. Even Canada, its neighbour and similar in many ways, rarely figures in its deliberations. Also, that the only time, in the 1950s-60s, American sociology went out to study “other societies”, allegedly to help “modernize” the third world, it made a mess of the whole issue (see Frank, 1969). Thus, although introductory textbooks continue to define sociology “as the science of society”, sociology as a study of society, or of societies in time and space never existed. So that American sociology is a misnomer, there never was a sociology in America!!

I have noted elsewhere (Islam 1987) that the US is a unique society and very little about it, if at all, can be generalized from or will have parallel in other societies. Sociology is a generalizing science but one can never generalize from unique experiences, so that a science of society based on American life only is an impossibility. A handy example can be given from the various generalizations drawn from the urban studies in the US, like the “concentric zone theory”, which was built on the model of Chicago city, fell flat on its face when the “theory” was used to study Latin American cities.

A generalizing science like sociology, of necessity, must not only look at other societies, it must refer to societies in time as much as in space. It must study history. Failure of American sociology in this regard is criminal. American sociology modeled itself on Comte, who divided the subject matter into the study of “social static”, meaning the structure and function, and the study of “social dynamics”, meaning the study of change, development, and the comparative study of societies in time and space. Sociology got bogged down with its numerous studies of the structure and function but it never bothered to study change or social dynamics. Although some have claimed that the study of change is built-in in the functionalist theory, which dominated sociology for over thirty years, there is very little evidence of that. In any case, all that functionalism was concerned with was to maintain equilibrium in society and change was seen as deviance to be corrected and attain a new level of equilibrium.

It is this excessive concern with status quo, arising simply out of the demand for maintaining law and order that did away with the study of social change. Change is deviation from the normal and hence bad and undesirable. If change is taken off the menu, so is the study of history.

However, I feel that there is more to it than this. American society is composed of peoples coming from other societies and, in almost all cases, after a bitter experience with life in the previous society. By the third, if not the second, generation the painful reminder of the past society is obliterated from the mind. Thus, along with the past society, the past, which was bad even in the new society in the beginning, is also forgotten. Thus, there arises a general apathy towards things of the past and of other societies. These are best forgotten or left aside. So history or the study of history, particularly of other societies, is completely ignored. Other than a very few but notable exceptions like Barrington Moore, Smelser, Bendix, Lensky, Skocpol, Wallerstein and the world system wallahs, history, particularly of other societies, has never been a part and parcel of American sociology.

The cause of the failure of the modernization studies was this complete ignorance of the history of the third world (Frank 1969). Without the study of history of thousands of years and of thousands of societies beyond the two oceans, there can be no sociology. American sociology so far has proven to be totally incapable of dealing with either time or space and there is no reason to believe that it can do so in the
future. So that, there never was a sociology in America and there cannot be a sociology in America in the future. Not in the 21st century!!!

Fortunately for me, I am not the only one sounding the death-knell of sociology. If the postmodernists have a say in this, they have already nailed and buried sociology. Postmodernism does not allow for generalizations, or build theories and laws. It believes in individual experiences set as narratives. (Ritzer 1996; Turner, B. 1997). It deals with the unique. Sociology, the generalizing science, has no place in this scheme of analysis. Indeed, one postmodernist has put it most succinctly when he argued that sociology was a science of the modern era and in a postmodern era sociology is at best redundant.

So that in the 21st century there may not be any sociology. It may die a natural death because there may not be any students left to read the subject and there may not be enough funds to pursue research in the area. Or, it may give rise to more and more specialty areas so that we may have the largest department in the universities all teaching some variety of sociology. Or, it may develop into an entirely new discipline and we would not even know it, women studies is a case in point, because of a lack of a paradigm or proper theories. But the most likely scenario is that, unless sociology in the US begins to take account of other societies in time and space, it is going to stagnate as it has already reached a dead end.

Bibliography


Glocalization as Globalization: Evolution of a Sociological Concept

Habibul Haque Khondker

Abstract

This paper examines the evolution and transformation of the concept of globalization highlighting the tangled relationship between the discipline of sociology and globalization. The paper will also trace the history and the development of the concept of “glocalization”, which originated in Japan as a popular business strategy. Professor Roland Robertson, a sociologist at the University of Pittsburgh, introduced this concept to the Western social scientific discourse. Robertson was well aware of the changes of this concept in Japanese society. This paper will trace the roots of the Japanese concept and its use in sociological discussions. The paper will also examine in broad terms concepts, theories and paradigms in sociology. The paper will also touch on the problems of the application of the sociological concepts developed in the western sociological and social scientific discourses in the local contexts such as those of Singapore and Malaysia.

1. Introduction

In social sciences it is often difficult to trace the origin of concepts. Concepts, theories and ideas are often products of collective endeavors. It would be extremely difficult to identify who used the term “globalization” for the first time. According to Malcolm Waters (1995) whose book titled Globalization is a fine primer, Roland Robertson was one of the early users of the term. More recently, Roland Robertson and Kathleen White edited Globalization: Critical Concepts in 6 volumes is a tour de force which present some of the most important essays on this subject.

No matter who coined it first, at the dawn of the 21st century globalization as a concept, as a slogan, as a term is used more frequently than any other terms. In Singapore, from the inflow of foreign capital, technology, workers or “foreign talents”, music, movies, popular culture, almost everything has resonance with globalization. Globalization is a heroic process, globalization is a sinister process, depending on which side of the debate one stands. Some tend to see globalization as a brakeless train crushing everything in its path, others see benefit in getting on board the train towards economic growth and modernization.

2. Sociology and Globalization

Globalization as a concept in social science has a short history. Even in the revised version of Raymond Williams’ Key Words (1983) there is no entry on globalization. The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology (1991) has an entry on “globalization of production” but no entry on globalization as such. The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Sociology (1994) has an entry on globalization together with globalization theory. It says, “Globalization theory examines the emergence of a global cultural system. It suggests that global culture is brought about by a variety of social and cultural developments...”. The entry refers to the book edited by Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King (1990) Globalization, Knowledge and Society. The term globalization was probably first used as a book title in the Albrow and King edited book (1990) which was
published drawing on the essays published in various issues of *International Sociology* the journal of International Sociological Association (1986-1990) Some of the journal articles contained globalization as a phrase in the titles in the 1980s and even earlier (see Moore, 1966, Meyer, 1980; Robertson, 1983a, 1983b, 1985). One could even claim that the first social science text that dealt with the subject of globalization was *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). One could even argue that Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the author of *Prolegomenon to the Universal History* was the real claimant of the credit. Globalization as a social process is old and has a much longer history. Many writers have traced the early globalizing processes in the dissemination of religion and culture, interactions of people, groups, communities through trade and commerce from the ancient times.

Sociology has been traditionally defined as the study of society. And as the boundaries of society have expanded from local community, through states to global society, sociology has become the study of the global society. This is a good illustration of how ideas, knowledge and (social) sciences expand with the changes and expansion of realities.

Sociology, it is often said, deals with the social life. In fact, all social sciences deal with social life or its various aspects. It is difficult to conceptualize social as a category. In sociology, there are two meanings of social. Social used in the sense of Wallerstein or for that matter Marx, encompasses technology, economy, politics and culture. Sociology is interested in the understanding of these broad processes, especially at their interrelatedness.

There is, however, a narrow meaning of social, which is often equated with social system, or what some people call societal. Here society is an abstract system of social relations, a web or network of social relations. Following Talcott Parsons, (and before him, Durkheim) some social scientists sought to view sociology as the scientific study of society. I put the stress on scientific because one of the goals of science is to define one’s field narrowly so that specialized and predictable knowledge can be produced and accumulated. Sociologists with a positivistic bent of mind were quite happy with the narrow definition of sociology, hence the delimited conceptualization of society in the sense of social system. In this formulation, the field of study of economics is economic system; the field of political science is political system and so on. All social sciences could live happily in a world of segregated systems of knowledge!

However, a large number of sociologists having dissatisfied with this narrow conceptualization of society, sought to view society and the scope of sociology broadly. They also found the earlier compartmentalization unnecessary, unproductive and overly abstract. All these so-called subsystems interact. Albert Hirschman called for the need of trespassing into each other’s domains. The rise of macro-sociology is a clear response to the attempt to overcome a delimited view of sociology. Barrington Moore, Wallerstein, Tilly, Skocpol and others have looked at society in the broadest sense of the term, in that the inspiration came from Marx, Weber and later Braudel and other social historians.

Globalization, though it means many things to many people, is one of the master processes of our time. Globalization as a field in sociology is a legatee of the macro-sociological interests and development. Globalization study addresses itself to the connectivity of broad processes of technological, economic, political, cultural interrelationships. Whether one looks at the economic, cultural or media connectivity worldwide, one has to take a much broader understanding of society and social institutions. Sociology focuses its analytical lenses on the flows and processes in society whether at the local, national or global levels. In other words, sociology has a genuine claim over the field of globalization.

Some contemporary writers accuse sociology, an archetypical social science, as a prisoner of nation-state. Anthony Giddens and Immanuel Wallerstein have both lamented that sociology has been the study of modern nation states. The definitions as well as the boundaries of society, which sociology seeks to study, often overlap with those of nation-state. Since the interest taken by sociologists such as Roland Robertson of Pittsburgh and others since the late 1970s, sociology has redefined its scope and field as the social scientific study of the global processes. Ulrich Beck has explicitly called for the development of new concepts to capture the new realities of interconnectedness, plurality, multi-locality and multiplicity.
Sociology has established its claim over globalization as a field of study historically. A return to national society centered focus would be a major regressive step towards objectivist, scientistic sociology and a return to what C Wright Mills called “abstracted empiricism”. Or worse, sociology might become a residual discipline busy picking up areas left unattended by other social sciences. Sociology is not the only branch of social sciences that has a claim to study society because other branches of social sciences do study aspects of society. For example, institutional economists deal with social structure and cultural values to explain economic processes and market behaviors. Political scientists such as Robert Putnam have done important sociological studies of political processes. Such fields as political sociology illustrate the cross over of political science and sociology all the time. Social sciences are tasked to analyze society in all its various aspects and constellations.

The long-standing relationship between sociology and globalization, gives sociology as a discipline a unique position to study all aspects of the field of globalization, a master process in human society. This does not preclude the claims of other disciplines to the subject of globalization and it reminds us the importance of each field’s autonomy to venture out and explore using its own traditions and conceptual frames.

While globalization as a framework is naturally biased in favor of macro-sociological issues, questions were raised to the viability of using this framework to study social realities on the ground. This led to a rethink of macro-macro relationship. Glocalization as a concept arose to help alleviate the conceptual difficulties of macro-micro relationship.

Although it would be difficult to trace the first user of the term “glocalization” in its original Japanese usage, the first time the term was used in English can be attributed to Professor Roland Robertson, a British/American sociologist, who migrated from United Kingdom to the United States where he spent most of his academic career at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. Robertson’s original interests in sociology were in the areas of sociology of religion, sociological theories and cultural sociology. He also ventured into areas of comparative sociology and modernization studies. His interest and knowledge of Japanese society led him to find out the use of the term “glocalization” in Japan in Japanese language, a term the marketing experts were using by which they meant that products of Japanese origin should be localized – that is, they should be suited to local taste and interests – yet, the products are global in application and reach, hence a new term “glocalization” was coined. Robertson and other sociologists interested in the subject of global processes could not help noticing that many of the social categories and practices assume a local flavor or character despite the fact that these products were invented elsewhere. Dutch sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse has for some time used terms such as mélange, hybridity, syncretism to capture similar processes with regard to culture. According to Nederveen Pieterse, (2004) there are three views on the issue of globalization of cultures. The first view is the clash of cultures view expressed in terms of clash of the civilizations by writers like Samuel Huntington. The second notion is best expressed in the phrase of “McDonaldization” of the world (Ritzer, 2000). This view obviously suggests a homogenized world, a world dominated by a single culture that erases differences of local cultures. The third view is that of hybridization or synthesis. Much of human evolution of culture can be seen as exchanges, diffusion, etc. where cross-breeding, borrowing and adjusting to the local needs and so on were very common. I argue below that although glocalization belongs to the same genre or has resonance with those categories there are some important differences as well.

3. Evolution of the Concept Glocalization

According to the dictionary meaning, the term “glocal” and the process noun “glocalization” are “formed by telescoping global and local to make a blend” (The Oxford Dictionary of New Words, 1991:134 quoted in Robertson, 1995:28). The term was modeled on Japanese word dochakuka, which originally meant adapting farming technique to one’s own local condition. In the business world the idea was adopted to refer to global localization. The word as well as the idea came from Japan (Robertson, 1995:28).
According to Wordspy, glocalization means “the creation of products or services intended for the global market, but customized to suit the local cultures.” (http://www.wordspy.com/words/). Although the term glocalization has come to frequent use since the late 1980s, there were several related terms that social scientists used and continue to use. One such related word, which has been in use in social sciences and related fields for quite some time is, indigenization.

Some social scientists claimed that social sciences such as sociology and political science, even psychology were products of western social experiences therefore when these fields of inquiry were transported and transplanted to non-European or non-western contexts such as Latin America, Asia or Africa there was a need for indigenization of these subjects. The idea of indigenization has created quite a controversy among social scientists because it raises fundamental questions about the applicability of social scientific ideas and concepts. However, indigenization can be seen as similar to localization. In both these concepts, there is an assumption of an original or authentic “locality” or “indigenous system”. One of the consequences of globalization is that it opens up doubts about the originality and authenticity of cultures. If one takes a long-term view of globalization, “locality” or “local” itself is a consequence of globalization. There are hardly any sites or cultures that can be seen as isolated or unconnected from the global processes.

Robertson, one of the pioneers in the study of globalization, did not view globalization as a recent phenomenon nor did he see it as a consequence of modernization. The theories of modernization came under serious attack in sociology because of such assumptions as unilinearity and convergence. As our knowledge of the world increased, many writers pointed out that the cultural differences are not all that superficial and nonlinearity and multilinearity are better descriptions of global modernity. Besides divergence rather than convergence seems to have been the consequence of modernization. Yet the divergent cultures and societies can be studied with the help of a globalized social science and there was no need for diverse, indigenized social sciences. Social sciences to claim scientific status could not afford to forfeit its claim to universality and universal knowledge. Social sciences must be context sensitive but not context dependent. It is in this context that Robertson conceptualized globalization in the twentieth century as “the interpenetration of the universalization of particularization and the particularization of universalism” (Robertson, 1992:100 emphasis in the original). Khondker (1994) building on Robertson’s framework argued that globalization or glocalization should be seen as an interdependent process. “The problem of simultaneous globalization of the local and the localization of globality can be expressed as the twin processes of macro-localization and micro-globalization. Macro-localization involves expanding the boundaries locality as well as making some local ideas, practices, institutions global. The rise of world wide religious or ethnic revivalist movements can be seen as examples of macro-localization. Micro-globalization involves incorporating certain global processes into the local setting. Consider social movements such as the feminist movements or ecological movements or consider new production techniques or marketing strategies which emerge in a certain local context and over a period these practices spread far beyond that locality into a larger spatial and historical arena. Consider print industry or computer industry with a specific location of its emergence has now become a global phenomena. Overcoming space is globalization. In this view of globalization, globalization is glocalization. This view is somewhat different from the way Giddens conceptualizes the relationship between the global and the local. Globalization, for Giddens, “is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world” (Giddens, 2000:31). While in this view local is the provider of the response to the forces that are global, we argue that local itself is constituted globally. Ritzer in discussing glocalization has added another – should I say, redundant – convoluted term “grobalization” to refer to what he calls “growth imperatives [pushing] organizations and nations to expand globally and to impose themselves on the local” (2004:xiii). For Ritzer, globalization is the sum total of glocalization and “grobalization”.

Wong argues, following Wind (1998), that a global company does not mean that it has gone global all the way. There are companies that are part global, part regional or part local involving different domains such as portfolio, supply chain, research and development and business processes. In terms of mode of business practices, there could be independent operations, joint venture or alliances (Wong, 1998:156).
4. Key Propositions

The main propositions of global localization are not too different from the main arguments of a sophisticated version of globalization. 1. Diversity is the essence of social life; 2. Globalization does not erase all differences; 3. Autonomy of history and culture give a sense of uniqueness to the experiences of groups of people whether we define them as cultures, societies or nations; 4. Globalization is the notion that removes the fear from many that globalization is like a tidal wave erasing all the differences. A number of books and articles on the subject of globalization give the impression that it is a force that creates a uniform world, a world where barriers disappear and cultures become amalgamated into a global whole. The tensions and conflicts between cultures are nothing but the problems of a transitory phase. Ironically, the phase of transition has been around for a long period of time. And as we have entered the third millennia many of the age-old problems of differences of cultures and religion remain. 5. Globalization does not promise a world free from conflicts and tensions but a more historically grounded understanding of the complicated – yet, pragmatic view of the world.

5. Globalization is not Westernization

Some writers view globalization as the worldwide spread of “westernization”. This view is either erroneous or contains only partial truth. From a superficial point of view, various processes outwardly seem that the world is, indeed, becoming westernized. One could see the popularity of the western music, movies, and “McDonalds” as examples of westernization. More and more countries are seeing the opening of McDonalds. More and more countries playing the top chart of the pop list of USA and Hollywood movies and US-made television serials (such as, Friends and The Simpsons are becoming ubiquitous to the extent that some writers even use the term “Americanization” to describe these processes of cultural transmission. However, a closer look will reveal that these cultural goods have different meanings in different societal and cultural contexts with uneven impact on classes and age groups. Some of the products are consumed without any modification, others are modified and indigenized to suit the local contexts and there are exceptional situations where the intentions are completely inverted.

In the past, many writers found it necessary to distinguish modernization from westernization. Modernization was believed to be a set of cultural practices and social institutional features that historically evolved in Europe and North America, commonly referred to as the West. The need to separate westernization from modernization (in the past) was motivated more by nationalism than pure intellectual reasons, because historically speaking, most of the modern cultural traits began in the West, a historical fact which was difficult to accommodate in a nationalistic political culture. The Western scholars in the nineteenth century were also guilty of making exaggerated claims of western superiority. Max Weber, a German sociologist was correct to claim that the western rationality and science had become universal but his denigration of non-western cultures did not sit well among the larger intellectual community. Many Indian sociologists took pains to delineate the differences between modernization and westernization. Similar discussions exist with regard to so-called westernization of the Ottoman Empire, modernization of Japan since the Meiji restoration of 1868 or modernization of China in the early part of the 20th century such as the May 4th Movement of 1919. In the modernization process, many of the late modernizing societies were borrowing ideas and knowledge and technology most of which were generated in the early modernized societies in Europe. The geography of the West kept shifting. In the nineteenth century, when Germany was modernizing, the idea of the West was limited to Western Europe only (mainly Britain and France). In some post-colonial situations the demarcation was based more on political expediency than logical or intellectual merits. Good westernization came to be regarded as modernization and bad modernization was designated as westernization. The distancing from westernization can also be understood as a reaction to centuries of domination and exploitation of the colonies by the western (mainly European) powers. However, over time a more objective consideration of history indicate that many of the traits that spread worldwide originated in certain geographical regions yet as these traits were transplanted elsewhere, they became mutated and assumed different forms in different contexts. For example, parliamentary democracy evolved in England, with roots that go back to
Westernization as a term is not equivalent to globalization. Nevertheless, westernization can be seen as an aspect of globalization. Certain institutional features and cultural traits that originated in the west were put in place in many other geographical regions lock stock and barrel under the framework of global interconnections and diffusion or forced implantation under colonial age. Yet, over time these institutions and practices mutated and assumed new meanings. Therefore, westernization can be seen as the beginning of the process. The cultural features borrowed or imitated themselves mutate in the source countries. Thus, westernization as a category has limited conceptual value. One can associate certain literary forms, genres, and traits as part of the cultural zone we vaguely call “the west”, yet these are mere influences as one can see in artistic, literary, architectural styles. For example, the great Indian film maker late Satyajit Ray was influenced by Hollywood films and the art of film making, but he did not want to replicate Hollywood movies in Calcutta. His movies were modern capturing local themes which he projected with a modern art form and technology. Hence it was truly global, or more appropriately, glocal. Presently, Singapore is establishing linkages with both Bollywood and Indian film industries as well seeking to play the role of an outsourced location for hi-tech Hollywood productions. Globalization, like modernization, is often a fusion. Westernization as a concept has some value if used only as a descriptive rather than analytic category. As an analytic category it is rather limited.

Writers such as John Meyer have used the idea of isomorphism (a term borrowed from science, botany, in particular) which means replication of the same form yet separated from the main source. His research has shown that modern education – not western education though it was perhaps modified and institutionalized in the west – has spread worldwide and a similar set of values and practices have emerged in diverse settings. For example, college graduates command more social prestige and respect almost regardless of cultural contexts. Some cultures can give more rewards than others. Globalization shows tendencies towards isomorphism, yet some people may continue to mistake this process for westernization.

In the context of Singapore, the first generation leaders always emphasized the fact that although Singapore’s economic development was dependent on western technology and capital, and it was reliant on multinational corporations to foster economic growth, the state maintained a certain degree of autonomy and formulated broad social development strategy.
creating a knowledge-based economy since 1990s. Singapore’s economic growth since her emergence in 1965 as an independent state entailed heavy investment in education and development of human resource in science and technology. Singapore’s advancement in areas of knowledge and high technology is dependent to a large extent on international collaboration. Two aspects of Singapore’s growth are striking: linkage with global market and a highly rational approach to governance, which is often evidenced by a near-absence of corruption. These two aspects have direct bearing on the issues of technological developments in Singapore. An additional factor that one has to take into account is the cultural diversity of Singapore’s population. Singapore is both a multiethnic and multi-religious society, which provides an added dimension to the context of formulation of ethical standards. Its 4 million people (in 2004) comprise 76% Chinese, 14% Malay, 7% Indian, and 3% others. As many as one quarter of Singapore’s population is non-citizens which indicate Singapore’s reliance on foreign human resources both at working class jobs as well as high end knowledge workers. Multicultural population-base and the varying sensitivity of various groups have influenced policies concerning biotechnology.

According to Stephen Haggard, “Singapore had already broken away from the typical policy pattern of a developing country as early as 1970. By the 1980s Singaporean policymakers were identifying the country with small European economies such as Switzerland” (Haggard, 1999:355). It has been noted by a number of writers (Rodan, 1989; Wade, 1990 and Haggard, 1999) that Singapore’s economic development and social modernization did not take place following a pure free market model. Singapore state was very much involved in guiding the market forces. On the one hand Singapore has relied heavily for multinational corporations to launch economic growth but it also built a high rate of savings through central Provident Fund. Singapore’s development model showed certain mixed or hybrid quality.

Soon after Singapore’s independence, policymakers began to focus attention on development in sciences and technology. The strive for such development was aided in the process by close relationship with the Multinational Corporations who brought investments and employed technically qualified Singaporeans. Right from the early days of national development, Singapore was well integrated with not only the international economic system bit also with global knowledge systems. Singapore’s export-oriented economic development in the 1980s was dominated by IT and computer peripherals. In the 1990s emphasis on biotechnology followed an earlier emphasis on IT.

Singapore’s development since her independence in 1965 can be described as a transformation from a Third World society to a First World economy. Much of that development can be attributed to Singapore’s adoption of modern technology. Choices of technology were not always preceded by controversies and debates. Both the government and the general public showed a great deal of pragmatism in the choice of technology. Although in most instances, technology was adopted without much modification, the mode of use, and so on there were imprints of adaptation and glocalization. One such area is in the area of electronic road pricing system. The technology of monitoring cars from a scanner fitted in a gantry was not a Singaporean invention, but they way that technology was used was very Singaporean. Because of the drive to catch up, Singapore has always been ahead in adopting new technology. It is in recent years having achieved the developed status; some Singaporeans are showing concern with issues of privacy and so on because some of the new technology is intrusive. Singapore’s love affairs with technology is evident in the fact that Singapore ranks among the top three countries in the world in terms usage of personal computers as well as hand phones. The only country ahead of Singapore in the number of Short Messaging Service (SMS) is Hong Kong. Whenever a new technology is invented, Singapore would be one of the first places where that technology would show up. Singaporeans have a favorable attitude towards technology. Singapore International Airlines as well as Port Authority of Singapore (PSA) remain equipped with the state of the art technology. ATM machines in Singapore were introduced in the early 1980s. Singapore’s public transport system is another place where one would find a great many applications of new technology. However, all cases of adaptation technology may not be seen as examples of glocalization. In many instances, for example, computer technology in Singapore was implemented without any modifications. However as Singapore entered a new phase of research in the 1990s, namely in the area of biotechnology we fins evidence of
glocalization. Biotechnological research calls for a careful consideration of and orientation towards local cultural and ethical contexts. A good deal of attention has been given to these areas in Singapore.

Another area where examples of glocalization can be found in both Malaysia and Singapore is the area of architectural designs. In the post-socialist world, Singapore remains a unique society where 90% of the population lives in the houses built and then sold to the citizens. When Singapore was embarked on massive public housing program, it borrowed the so-called international style of very basic and practical designs, yet a new concept of public space – though limited to the residents of the housing blocs – evolved. These spaces known as void-decks were places for wedding, funeral or any such communal gatherings. New designs blending the western and local motifs emerged in Singapore.

Although the initial architectural thrust of Singapore can be viewed as “brutalism” driven by a sheer pragmatic consideration, over the years more attention has been given to the notions of fusion and hybridity, or in other words glocalization.

8. Conclusions

Singapore’s development experience, which was underpinned by appropriate science and technology policies, provides a convincing example of the effectiveness of glocalization as a conscious development strategy. Although the strategy was not always perfect and there were lapses from time to time but on the whole Singapore has shown that cultural fusion can be an asset if properly harnessed for the objective of attaining socioeconomic growth without creating gross inequality and social dislocation.

The sociological concepts of globalization in general and glocalization in particular can be of great value in understanding the dynamic social transformation in Southeast Asia, especially in Singapore and Malaysia. It is always possible to be carried away with “methodological nationalism”, a position that says each country or society should be examined in light of its own context through the devices of its own homegrown methodology. Such a position would lead to intellectual closure foreclosing dialogue and understanding between societies. In the globalized world such discourses have limited value. Yet, it is important to take the local context and variables and not to fall into the trap of blind imitation or aping of western ideas and concepts. However, in the end what is needed is a set of globally valid concepts that will help us examine processes of social transformation that is inextricably connected with global transformation.

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Disaster Research: Exploring Sociological Approach to Disaster in Bangladesh

Mahbuba Nasreen *

Introduction:

Disasters are annual events in Bangladesh. These disasters range from ravaging tornadoes to devastating floods. Of all the disasters the problem of flood has aggravated most from 1955 to 2004 and become one of the main concerns of people in Bangladesh. Abnormal floods submerge about 60 percent of the land, damage crops, property; disrupt economic activities and cause diseases and loss of life. Similarly, cyclones, which are sometimes accompanied by storm and tidal surge, pose multiple threats to human society along with erosion of soils, riverbank and coasts. Surge water creates salinity problem in the coastal belts. Consequently, cyclones are very destructive of property and people and disruptive of economic activities. Another hazard, drought, affects the standing crops, water supplies and plant growth leading to loss of productions, food shortages and famine. (Nasreen and Hossain, 2002). Arsenic, a toxic element and a silent disaster, is teaching a bitter lesson to humankind, particularly to those in Bangladesh who have been suffering from arsenicosis. The excessive level of the presence of arsenic in drinking water is redefining water from ‘life saver’ to a ‘threat’ to human survival. Because it takes 10 to 20 years, depending on the amount of arsenic accumulated in the body, to be identified as arsenic patient, people’s response to the disease is not so prompt. Because of its severity and frequent occurrence, floods have attracted wide attention and are well documented by the researchers. However, sociological research on disasters, even on flood, is scant in Bangladesh.

In this paper an attempt has been made to explore what research has been done to address disasters in Bangladesh and to what extent disasters are highlighted from social perspective? The paper, in the process, also tries to define disaster and identify approaches to disaster research. The paper looks at the major works completed on disaster from various approaches. It has been argued that application of sociological approach to disaster research is very limited.

Defining Disaster

‘Disaster’ is defined differently by different people: to some ‘disaster’ is a summative concept (Kreps, 1984) or a ‘sponge world’ (Qurantelli and Dynes, 1970). Some researchers mentioned disaster as a ‘collective stress situation’ (Barton, 1969) while others identified it with ‘social crisis period’ (Qurantelli and Dynes, 1977).

Britton (1986) argued that “disasters can be more easily recognized than they can be defined”. Disaster is a severe, relatively sudden and unexpected disruption of normal structural arrangements within a social system over which the system has no firm control (Barton, 1974). A disaster may also be viewed as “a significant departure from normal experience for a particular time and place”(Turner, 1978). Disaster is also viewed as a mental construct imposed upon experience. This is because to understand disaster knowing the number of deaths, the value of property destroyed or the decrease in per capita income is not sufficient. The symbolic component requires knowledge of the sense of vulnerability, the adequacy of available explanation and the society’s imagery of death and destruction (Barkun, 1977).

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Approaches to Sociology of Disaster

Although there is no coherent discussion in the sociological studies in the development of disaster research, attempts had been made to indicate some of the substantive trends in the development of sociology of disaster. Qurantelli and Dynes (1977) examined the sociological research of three decades on disaster and identified the following issues. (Box 1)

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<th>Box 1: Trends in Disaster Research</th>
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<td>Efforts at codification</td>
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<td>The development of a social organizational, rather than a social and psychological emphasis</td>
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<td>The emphasis on groups, rather than individuals, as the basic unit of analysis</td>
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<td>The increasing emphasis on the pre-impact period as the source of post-impact changes</td>
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<td>The developing focus on functional and dysfunctional long range consequences and the initial attempts at model building</td>
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Source: Qurantelli and Dynes (1977)

Because disasters bring disruptions in the normal social life, create chaos, destroy social structure and contribute to replace social order, disaster research may be viewed as the study of ‘social pathology’ (Dynes, et al, 1978). However, Fritz (1961) provided a sociological definition of disaster along with a rationale for which disaster should not be viewed as social pathology: “Disasters provide a realistic laboratory for testing the integration, stamina, and recuperative powers of large scale social systems. They provide the social scientists with advantages that cannot be matched in the study of human behavior in more normal or stable conditions”.

Figure 1: Approaches to disaster research
After surveying the general literature on disaster, Alexander (1993) identified six schools of thought on natural hazards and disaster studies: the geographical approach, the anthropological approach, the sociological approach, the development studies approach, the disaster medicine approach and the technical approach. (Figure 1).

The geographical approach (pioneered by Barrows, 1923 and White, 1945) deals with the human ecological adaptation to the environment with special emphasis on the 'spatio-temporal' distribution of hazard impacts, vulnerability and people's choice and adjustment to natural hazards. Social science methods are widely used in this approach.

The anthropological approach (Oliver-Smith, 1979, 1986; Hansen and Oliver-Smith, 1982) emphasizes the role of disasters in guiding the socio-economic evolution of populations. Anthropologists adopting this approach search for reasons why communities in the 'Third World' fail to provide basic requirements for their people's survival. They also discuss the 'marginalization syndrome' caused by impoverishment of disadvantaged groups in 'Third World' countries. The sociological approach (Dynes, 1970; Quarantelli, 1978; Mileti, Drabek and Haas, 1975; Drabek and Boggs, 1968; Drabek, 1986) discusses vulnerability and the impact of disaster upon patterns of human behaviour and the effects of disaster upon community functions and organization. Oliver-Smith (1996) developed three general themes as the major trends in anthropological research in disaster: behavioural response approach, social change approach, and political economic/ environmental approach. Oliver-Smith argues that disaster in developing world occur at the interface of society, technology and environment and is fundamentally the outcomes of the interactions of these characteristics. He has also reported that although occurrence of disaster is frequent, theoretical work in disaster research is limited.

The development studies approach (Davis, 1978; Knott, 1987) discusses the problems of distributing aid and relief to 'Third World' countries and focuses on refugee management, health care and the avoidance of starvation. The disaster medicine and epidemiology approach (Beinin, 1985) focuses on the management of mass casualties. It also includes the treatment of severe physical trauma and other diseases which may occur after a disaster.

The technical approach (Bolt et al. 1977; El-Sabh and Murty, 1988) focuses on geophysical approaches to disaster such as studied in seismology, geomorphology and volcanology and seeks engineering solutions.

Among these approaches two disciplines, geography and sociology, have dominated the field of disaster research since the 1950s and have emphasised the environmental and behavioural aspects of disaster. Drabek's (1986) findings on existing sociological literature are the significant contributions to the conceptual typology of sociological disaster research. He identified different areas of concern in disaster research such as planning, warning, evacuation, emergency, restoration, reconstruction, perceptions and adjustments. He discussed sociology of disaster under four major headings: preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. However, most of the approaches and sociological research on disaster have been formulated and conducted for the developed world (especially the USA). Their application to developing areas is problematic and very limited, as in the Bangladeshi cultural context. Moreover, there is almost no discussion of the gender response to disaster under any theoretical approach. In fact, only recently sociologists turned their attentions to the larger questions of social change related to disaster or the pre-impact conditions in disaster areas as sources of post-impact changes (Oliver-Smith, 1986).

**Disaster research in Bangladesh**

Disaster research in Bangladesh is conducted from six major approaches: geographical approach, behavioural approach, structural approach, historico-structural approach, sociological approach and anthropological approach. Although geographical and sociological approaches have dominated the field of disaster research in developed societies, disaster research in Bangladesh mainly followed the
geographical approach. It can be said that disaster research from sociological approach in Bangladesh is done only in rare occasions.

Past research on natural disasters (such as, famine, river bank erosion, floods or cyclones) in Bangladesh has followed the geographical approach of the Chicago-Colorado-Clark-Toronto School of Natural Hazard Studies associated with Kates, 1962, 1971, White, 1964, 1974 and Burton et al., 1978. Disaster response studies (Islam, 1974; Paul, 1984; Alam, 1990, 1991) deal with people's behaviour, such as their perception, attitudes, beliefs, values, response and personalities. These studies fall in the first school of thought (i.e. geographical approach) described by Alexander. They are concerned with discovering people's choices, behaviour and adjustments to disaster, for example, how people viewed the hazard and how they perceived alternative opportunities available to them in coping with the hazardous events. However, social impact of disaster is also mentioned in some of these studies.

A recent publication, following geographical approach (Ahsan and Khatun, eds., 2004) in disaster focused on gender aspects during disasters. Various disasters such as flood, cyclone, riverbank erosion, earthquake, arsenicosis, famine and others have been discussed from geographical perspective. However, although in some of the writings in the study impact of disasters on people and coping with disasters have been emphasized, majority of them have only a geographical perspective.

Hossain et al (1987) examined, from behavioural approach, whether rural people in flood-free and flood-prone areas adopted different survival strategies or not and also focused on the responses of rural people in general, but not on women's responses. Shaw (1989) highlighted the problems of poor women in a relief camp in Dhaka city. She noted how women bore the social burden of shame when living with strangers and drew attention to the difficulties women faced when trying to maintain parda during floods. In his study on riverbank erosion and floods Rahman (1988) argued that people's ability to adjust to hazards should be viewed as an extension of social and natural systems already existing in society. He also pointed out that there are differences in people's reaction to riverbank erosion and flooding according to their socio-economic location. Alam (1991) study focused on the survival strategies of rural people on the flood-prone and relatively flood-free villages. The author observed that some middle and poor income households sold or mortgaged their lands and other assets to avert hunger during floods.

Research conducted following geographical and behavioural approaches are significant in relation to disaster studies but some of their interpretations regarding people's problems and behaviour are misleading (see for example, Islam, 1974). They see Bangladeshi people as 'traditionally fatalist'. This mistaken idea came from certain answers given by rural people in response to questions such as, "What do you do when flood hits your homestead?" and from the response, "Pray to God". The reasons for such responses were not studied carefully (Rahman, 1988). Zaman (1989; 1986) points out that behaviouralists fail to understand the socio-cultural background of adjustment for Bangladeshi people. Alam's (1991) study, however, discusses human behavioural factors in the context of existing social relations. He sees flood-prone people in relation to vulnerability and argues that people's behaviour differs by gender, age, ethnic group and economic status.

There are also structural (Brammer, 1975; Currey, 1978; Alexander, 1993) and historico-structural (Zaman, 1986) approaches to natural disasters. The structural approach sees disaster as a consequence of administrative or institutional weakness. This approach makes a valuable contribution regarding structural remedial measures to cope with disasters but lacks an understanding of people's own initiatives to cope with disaster. According to the historico-structuralist approach individual responses to disasters in Bangladesh should be viewed in a broad socio-cultural and historical context (Haque and Zaman, 1989). Some of the researchers (Latif, 1989; Custers, 1993) have pointed out that any steps to control disasters, e.g. floods, should emphasise both the structural (i.e. building of embankments) and non-structural (i.e. people's initiatives) approach. They have discussed the problems and the negative consequences of floods and flood control projects for the environment, fisheries and many other aspects of life (Adnan, 1990; Boyce, 1990; Rogers et al., 1989; Pearce, 1991; Custers, 1993, Khalequzzaman, 1994).
Very recently (Hussain, 2001) anthropological approach to disaster has been discussed with only a few relevant ethnographic examples. The theoretical viewpoints of anthropological approach can be divided into four perspectives: human behavioural perspective, eco-feminist perspective, theories of vulnerability, and theories on women's oppression. The Flood Action Plan 14's (FAP-14) study (1992) on peoples' responses to floods was conducted under the auspices of the Bangladesh Flood Action Plan. Findings of ‘The Gender Study’ were included in FAP 14’s draft final report (Hanchett and Nasreen, 1992). Using the case study method this study dealt with the experiences of a few women in female-headed households. It contributed significantly to the understanding of gender issues in floods through highlighting some of the major problems faced by women during floods.

Ahmed (1993) emphasizes the importance of kinship during disasters. The author conducted the anthropological study on the survivors of riverbank erosion and found that kinship, especially patriarchal, bonds are very strong in Bangladesh. In most of the cases the whole patrilineage becomes affected by riverbank erosion due to their proximity. The author argues that under such circumstances, it becomes difficult to seek support from patrilineage and many people depend on matrilineage for their family sustenance.

Like flood, cyclone is also a regular phenomenon, especially in the coastal areas and in offshore islands. In the Ain-E-Akbori of the 16th century cyclone is mentioned as a disaster in this belt. During the last three decades almost all of the coastal areas and offshore islands faced cyclones. Detail and in depth sociological study on cyclone is also limited in Bangladesh. Hossain et al (1992) conducted a research after the devastating cyclone of 1991. The cyclone extended from Teknaf in the southeastern seaboard to Barguna – a coast line of 644 kilometers. The study dealt with peoples’ immediate responses to disaster in the context of providing support to the survivors, governments’ relief operation, problems and contributions of women during disaster, warning system, support from NGOs, health, conditions of children and others. Although the researchers emphasized on some of the coping mechanisms adopted by the cyclone affected people and some of the social aspects related to disaster, they were not based on sociological approach and lack proper methods in social research.

Though useful, past studies did not take sociological approach into account. Although some of the above-mentioned studies have considered socio-economic and cultural variables in assessing human responses to cyclones, riverbank erosion and floods, they have failed to provide a theoretical basis.

The pioneering disaster research (Nasreen, 1995) based on sociological approach portrait a detailed picture of a disaster experienced by rural households. It focused on the pre, during and post disaster activities performed by men and women during floods. The author argues that disaster affect both women and men but the burden of flood coping falls heavily on women. During floods men in rural areas lose their place of work while women shoulder the responsibilities to maintain households' sustenance. Nasreen (1995, 1999) argued that although poor rural women have very few options open to them to overcome their problems, their roles in disasters are obviously not simple: they relate to a complete range of socio-economic activities. During floods women continue to be bearers of children and responsible for their socialization, collectors and providers of food, fuel, water, fodder, building materials and keepers of household belongings: they also represent a productive potential which was not recognised earlier. The study argues that it is women's strategies, developed over the last few years, those are vital in enabling the rural people to cope with disaster. Government and many other bodies dealing with disaster management mainly communicate with wealthier, influential landowners who do not represent or serve the interest of the poor or of women. Nor does it seem to have occurred to policy makers that women might be involved in activities different from men or experience disasters differently than men.

Vast majority of the rural people is inextricably linked with the arsenic contaminated water for their daily survival. It is reported that most of these people neither had the idea of arsenic contamination, or the future impact of the catastrophe of arsenicosis. However, there has been very limited discussion on the socio-economic impact of arsenicosis in Bangladesh.
A sociological research (Nasreen, 2002) has been conducted on the problem of arsenicosis from a new environmental paradigm. It has been argued in the study that arsenic contamination in Bangladesh ground water is a widely recognized fact and that is causing suffering to millions. The author identified some of the social consequences related to arsenicosis such as social instability, superstition, ostracism, diminishing of working ability, increase of poverty, impact on women, disruption of social network and marital ties and causing death.

Hanchett (2003) argued that there is a gender side to the arsenic problem because women and men are affected in different ways. “Women who do know about the problem and wish to do something about it are faced with new demands on their time as they search for safer drinking/cooking water sources. Poor women also face insults – a problem they were able to avoid once they no longer needed to ask more affluent neighbors to share their safer wells”.

Conclusion

Disasters are frequent events in Bangladesh. Disaster research in Bangladesh has been dominated by geographical approach probably because disasters are mainly considered as physical phenomena. However, although many disasters are related to physical phenomena, they mostly affect society, community, people, institutions and the overall environment. In this paper it is argued that less attention has been given to conducting in-depth research on disasters, especially from sociological perspective. In times of disasters government and other organizations pay attention to identify causes of disasters, mechanisms to control disasters and disaster mitigation instead of focusing on coping strategies. There is a need for timely and well-focused policy to solve disaster related problems. Raising of awareness regarding the coping mechanisms of disaster should be given priority. Sensitization of community people, law enforcement authority and policy makers to manage disasters and support to survivors are also necessary. Rehabilitation programme for disaster victims/survivors should be taken by all. Adopting Sociological approach is necessary to exhilarate any programme to manage disasters.

Sociological research is very much relevant to identify what attempts should be made to grasp the different issues relating to disasters, such as the problems, coping with the wounds and gender based differential impact of disasters on the survivors. It has been argued by the disaster research that women are the major victims of disasters due to their lower status than men in society. Thus attention should be given to special groups such as women and children. Programmes on disaster management will be most effective if they are backed by strong policy support and guidance. This paper lends support to the policy that a sociological perspective is necessary to involve disaster survivors in planning, that takes into account the disadvantageous position, especially of poor and of women and give priority to them.

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Overcoming Poverty in Bangladesh: Search for a New Paradigm

S. Aminul Islam *

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has been stereotyped as the archetypical theatre of poverty. It is the only country categorized as the least developed country with a population over 75 million. There is a great deal of suspicion about prospect for rapid poverty reduction in the country without which accelerated growth is impossible. The objectives of this paper are to examine the poverty trends in the country critically, reflect upon the author’s recent experience of rapid poverty reduction in the countryside, flesh out the process of such reduction and suggest a more grounded strategy of poverty reduction in Bangladesh.

POVERTY DISCOURSE IN BANGLADESH

Although poverty of this region was a subject of interest during the British colonial period (Jack, 1916; Siddqui, 1982), there was only one research on this issue during the Pakistan period 1947–71, (Siddqui, 1982). Poverty began to attract the attention of researchers after the famine of 1974 and the decade saw a number of studies mainly devoted to counting up the poor. Only Alamgir (1978) and Griffin (1977) tried to provide macro level analysis of the poverty process in the country. Alamgir had adumbrated a Marxist analysis of poverty. Griffin sought to understand the problem in terms of a high level of inequality and the dominance of the rich on the state machinery. Two ethnographic studies, however, were significant in exploring rural poverty. In Jhagrapur, Arens and Beurden (1977) provided a graphic account of the livelihoods of the poor and the process of exploitation in a village of Kushtia with special focus on women from a Marxist perspective. In 1977 Siddiqui (1982) mounted a meticulous study of poverty in a village of Narail again from a Marxist perspective, which tried to link micro level poverty with macro societal processes. Hartman and Boyce (1979; 1983) undertook an ethnographic study of a Rangpur village and underscored patron-clientelism and parochialism as the key instrument that kept the poor dependent, fearful and voiceless.

A particularly speculative but influential study on poverty of 1980s was undertaken by Maloney (1986) who sought to explore deep behavioural and cultural contours in Bangladesh that led to the perpetuation of poverty in the country. Central to his analysis is the fact that the ‘overall socio-economic texture’ of Bangladesh society was traditional. A particular drawback of this traditional society was his notion of atomistic individualism characteristic of the Gangetic delta that impedes crystallization of collective efforts and durable organizations and thus prevents modernization from taking place. The negative behavioural traits of Bangladeshis that he found as obstacles to development include: reliance on patronage and indulgence, personalization of authority, which causes weak institutions and policies, authoritarian administration, opportunistic individualism, low commitment to abstract ideologies, weak socialization that leads to low self-discipline and a lack of trust in modern institutions. The political institutions were not able to lift the country out of poverty. Politics was a mere contest for power without commitment to ideologies. Maloney did not rule out the possibility for development, but he clearly pointed out that the task of poverty alleviation was not easy either given the enormous burden of a traditional social structure embedded in an inhospitable ecological niche. Maloney did have some disclaimers, but there is no doubt that his analysis is highly dated and represented a crude form of orientalism.

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More detailed studies of poverty have become available from 1990s onwards. While there are five key data sources for understanding poverty in the country, the most important is the household expenditure survey (HES), which started in 1973-74, and so far 13 rounds of these surveys have been conducted (BBS, 2002). But HES data have been generally reliable from 1990s (Rahman, 2002). The second major data source is the Analysis of Poverty Trends (APT) undertaken by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies and later on Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) since 1989. Under this programme four comprehensive surveys of poverty in 62 villages have been conducted in an attempt to capture the multi-dimensional nature deprivation of rural Bangladesh. The unique feature of this study is the use of panel data (Rahman, 2002). A third source is the information on the nutritional status of children collected by Helen Keller International from 1990. A fourth source is the nutritional data provided irregularly by the Institute of Nutrition and Food Sciences (Rahman, 2002). A fifth source is the survey of 32 villages conducted by IRRI in 1987-88 and 2000. Apart from these a number of specific surveys and qualitative studies have been carried out with a view to understanding poverty in specific circumstances and greater depth. One product of this type of study is 19 reports published by PROSHIKA under its The Livelihoods of the Extreme Poor Study.

Although most of these studies have been preoccupied with counting the poor, Rahman and Sen (Rahman, 1996; Sen, 1996; Sen and Rahman, 1999; Sen, 2003) have particularly moved towards an analysis of the dynamics of poverty – the process through which poverty is created and the social mechanism that generates upward mobility out of poverty and downward mobility into it.

POVERTY TRENDS IN BANGLADESH

There is considerable disagreement about the extent of income poverty in Bangladesh for the earlier period between 1960s and 1980s. As Table 1 in Appendix shows the estimated level of rural poverty of the country after its independence varied from 55.7 percent to as high as 82.9 percent, the latter being the official figure. According to one estimate, the period between 1963-64 and 1976-77 saw a major surge in poverty. During this period the number of hard core poor increased from a negligible figure to 45 million or 60 percent of the rural population. The hard-core poor made up over 40 percent of the urban population in the middle of 1970s, although they were rarely found in early 1960s. (I.B.R.D. cited in Vylder, 1982).
In 1980s there was greater consensus among various studies. But discrepancies among different estimates persisted. Wodon’s figure was 13 percent higher than the official estimate of BBS. Figure 1 (Table2: Appendix), shows that there has been a slow reduction in income poverty, which could be as high as 83 percent, but most probably 74 percent (Sen, 2003) in 1973-74. The rural poverty, according to Sen (2003), appears to have declined more rapidly during 1970s and early 1980s when it went down to about 54 percent. There was a slight decrease of rural poverty during the second half of 1980s. But it went up to about 53 percent in 1991-92 – to the level of the first half of earlier decade. But BBS charts a steady decline of rural poverty from 61.2 percent in 1991-92 to 53 percent in 2000. The urban poverty fell from 44.9 percent to 29.4 percent in 1995-96 and then registered a slight increase to 36.6 percent at the dawn of a new millennium. The hard-core or extreme poverty showed a similarly slow decrease – it went down by only 3.4 percent over a decade from 1985-86. In 2000 it stood at 25 percent of the population (BBS, 2002).
The Figure 2 (Table3: Appendix) shows decline in rural poverty in terms of poverty gap and squared gap. Over the 1990s the poverty gap in the countryside declined by 2.8 percent, which was higher than urban areas. In the similar way the squared poverty gap also declined over the same period by 3.8 percent (GOB, 2002).

Figure 3: Rural Poverty Trends 1987 – 94 BIDS 62 Village survey
Source: Based on Rahman 2002.
The APT survey as shown in Figure 3 (Table 4, Appendix) found that 57.5 percent of rural population in 1987 was poor and the figure fell to 51.7 percent in 1994.

Trend in Nutritional Status of Rural Children 6-59 Months 1990-96

Source: Based on Rahman, 2002: 55.

The Figure 4 (Table 5, Appendix) highlights the sharp decline in stunting and low weight among rural children in Bangladesh. This decline has been particularly sharp from early 1990s.

The Figures 5 and 6 (Table 6 and 7, Appendix) show the magnitude of poverty in terms of techniques of calculation deployed by the same agency-BBS. The differences are quite pronounced when different techniques like direct calorie intake and cost of basic need techniques. The BBS explains this anomaly by indicating better data quality for income sources in 2000 HIES.
Figure 5: Comparison of Poverty Measurement (Upper Poverty Line)
Source: Based on BBS 2002

Figure 6: Comparison of Poverty Measurements (Lower Poverty Line)
Source: Based on BBS 2002
CHARACTERISTICS OF POVERTY IN BANGLADESH

From these studies several broad characteristics of poverty have been identified (Rahman, 2002; BBS, 2001; BBS, 2002; Sen, 2003; Mujeri, 1997).

- Whatever is the correct figure it is clear that poverty in Bangladesh has declined about one percent per year (Rahman, 2002) or at best 1.8 percent (GoB, 2002) during the 1990s, which is an extremely slow improvement. The decrease has been equally slow in the case of hard-core poverty.
- It also documents that extreme manifestations of poverty, such as, lack of minimum clothing or basic shelter or starvation have declined.
- There has been a faster reduction of poverty in urban areas.
- There has been an increasing concentration of poverty among the female–headed households. The incidence of female-headed households may be as high as 15 percent with a heavy concentration of poverty among them (Mannan, 2000). HIES data, however, provides a more complex scenario. The female-headed households were subject to extreme poverty much more than the male-headed households. But there was little difference in terms of absolute poverty among male and female-headed households. The absolute poverty was slightly higher among the male-headed households in rural areas while the opposite prevailed in urban areas (BBS, 2002).
- There are significant regional variations of poverty. Rajshahi has the highest rate of poverty – 61 percent in contrast to Barisal, which has 40 percent only (Sen, 2003). Poverty is more pronounced in some areas and regions of the country, which suffer from flooding, river erosion, mono cropping and similar disadvantages.
- The decline in absolute poverty has been accompanied by an increase in relative poverty. The BBS data show that inequality rose during 1990s, but at a higher rate in urban areas than the countryside.
- The non-economic dimensions of poverty have registered a dramatic change in contrast to slow reduction in income poverty. The human poverty index fell from 61.3 percent in 1981-83 to 34.8 percent in 1998-2000. The human development index had nearly doubled in three decades between 1960 and 1992. It increased from 0.166 to 0.309. The frontier of human development has expanded faster in 1990s. During 1992 and 1998/99 it increased by 8.8 percent per year. There has been significant progress in child nutrition since the independence of the country. The rate of stunting has been on decline from the middle of 1980s. One survey found that the rate of stunting fell from 54.6 in 1996/97 to 44.8 percent in 1999/2000. The literacy crossed 60 percent in 1999. The gross enrollment at primary level increased from 59 percent in 1982 to 96 percent in 1999. There has been impressive progress in the reduction of infant and child mortality. The life expectancy has increased. (BIDS, 2001).

POVERTY CORRELATES

It is needless to reiterate that poverty is negatively correlated with land ownership in rural society. Poverty – both absolute and extreme were heavily concentrated among the landless and functionally landless. The HIES data show that the incidence of absolute poverty was twice among the illiterates and the figure increased to nearly threefold in case of extreme poverty. There was very little poverty among school graduates or people with higher education. Poverty was most concentrated among people with agriculture, forestry and fisheries mainly in rural areas.
DYNAMICS OF POVERTY

Rahman (1996; 2002;) and Sen (1996; 2003;Sen and Rahaman, 1999a) have made particular contribution in understanding the dynamics of rural poverty in Bangladesh. The study of 62 villages by BIDS and later Power and Participation Research Centre undertaken periodically have yielded panel data which have been particularly valuable in mapping out the dynamics of poverty over time. This research has found that the poor does not constitute a simple homogenous population that can be neatly categorized into one or two groups. There are considerable variations and mobility among the poor. The poor and the vulnerable non-poor are subject to periodic shocks that propel them towards more miserable livelihoods and greater poverty. There are also factors that help them move out of poverty. Rahman (1996) particularly underscored the notion of crisis and vulnerability that continuously plague the rural livelihoods, such as natural disasters, illness and insecurity. The rural households deploy a variety of mechanisms to cope with life course crises and other shock events. Downward mobility occurs as dialectic between the impact of life course events, structural factors and crisis factors, and the failure of coping mechanisms.


Tomorrow’s poor: This group is mostly marginal peasants owning up to 1.5 decimals of land and an annual income of Taka 8368. They comprised 21 percent of the rural population.

The moderate poor: This group more or less corresponds with the upper poverty line of BBS. It made up 29.2 percent of villagers.

The extreme poor: It corresponds to the lower poverty line of BBS. This category made up 22.7 percent of rural people.

There is considerable upward and downward mobility among these groups. The group called tomorrow’s poor are quite vulnerable and slips down the poverty line as a consequence of different crises that underlie peasant livelihoods in Bangladesh.

Sen (2003) has similarly made an attempt to explore the dynamics of poverty in terms of the panel data of 21 villages, which were part of the IRRI research. The study confirmed that mobility among the poor was considerable, although nearly one-third of the households were entrenched in chronic poverty. In analyzing the upward mobility of the poor Sen has particularly looked in to the increase in asset position of the households or favorable natural conditions or random factors. Thus the analysis is only partial and incomplete.

INTERROGATING POVERTY DATA

This discourse of poverty has grown mainly on the basis of survey data. Even though it has been claimed that recent survey data on poverty are more refined and reliable, it merits deeper examination than mere technical aspects of it. It merits questioning of the epistemological basis of survey data.

Platt (1981) has shown that social scientists often use faulty data or data of dubious quality. Official data are not always reliable. Official statistics are rarely collected with the interests of science as their primary concern (Hindess, 1973:47). Often the data generated through survey methods – the so-called hard data are of questionable/doubtful quality.

The assault against survey methods has been launched again and again. In 1960s Blumer had mounted scathing attack against what he called variable analysis. It “was nothing more than a
snapshot taken from a misleading angle and frozen in time" (Silverman, 1972:185). The criticism was repeated in early 1970s. Silverman (1972) pointed out that most often data were collected mechanically from a sample through pre-coded questionnaires or interview schedules. Often the tedious task of coding was left to the graduate students. The task of the researcher was just to verify his hypotheses. But the statistical analysis itself is not value-free and tends to overpower sociological analysis (Philipson, 1972). But it was being increasingly felt that such an approach "yielded little" and had become bankrupt (Holbrook, 1977).

One study found that there is widespread skepticism among the public about surveys even in USA. “Almost half of Americans, for example, feel surveys are often too personal. Even more serious, it is still strongly believed that surveys are used to disguise a sales pitch” (O’Neill, 1998:26). In recent years there is a growing realization that survey is essentially an interactional process (Shaeffer, 1991).

In fact the criticism against survey method has been part of an increasingly broader attack against positivism. On the one hand this attack has been the demolition of the epistemological foundation of positivism brought about by Feyerabend (Ravetz, 1990). It has been claimed, on the other hand, that the certainty of all quantitative information is wrong and analysis must be able to represent both unreliability and uncertainty (Ravretz, 1990).

Year after year economic theorists continue to produce scores of mathematical models and to explore in great detail their formal properties; and the econometricians fit algebraic functions of all possible shapes to essentially the same sets of data without being able to advance, in any perceptible way, a systematic understanding of the structure and the operations of a real economic system (Leontief, cited in Lawson, 1996:4).

Again it has been pointed out that the certainty of a bus timetable may not be the most relevant thing for theoretical understanding. The more important thing may be to understand the “mechanisms and processes that keep the bus running” (Maki, 2000:386).

The use of survey method in poverty studies has been subject to similar criticism. Ravallion (1996: 200) has shown that often poverty data are faulty. Yet, “[S]urprisingly little effort has gone into assessing the performance of routine tools of poverty analysis”. There are, according to him, three generic problems with poverty data. First, the survey can be faulty. The questionnaire may be wrong or the sample biased and so on. Secondly, the existing surveys may be inadequate or incompatible for longitudinal analysis. Thirdly, the data set may lack many complementary data, which are required for a robust analysis of data. Thus the task of fighting poverty is undertaken without adequate information. “Little more than blind faith guides the policy maker’s interpretation of results” (Ravallion, 1996:216).

The current debate on the issue has led to three outcomes. First, there is preoccupation with technical problems of making the interview more adequate through refinement of the technique itself. Secondly, there is total emphasis on the interactional character of the interview and complete rejection of the survey methods in favour of capturing the depth of subjective meaning that the interaction of the interview represents (Hester and Francis, 1994). Thirdly, there is increasing emphasis on the use of mixed methods. The broad sweep of the survey method is coupled with qualitative techniques that probe the complex terrains of structuration – the dynamic interface of structure and agency (UNDP, 1998; Rahman and Islam, 2002).

**LIMITATION OF SURVEY METHOD IN BANGLADESH: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS**

From my recent experience of both large-scale surveys and qualitative studies in rural Bangladesh, I have realized that survey technique has severe limitations in the context of the rural population of a transitional society. In the context of the rural society the interview is more interactional. It is opposite to the Western notion of interview as a simple encounter between an interviewer or a questionnaire with a single respondent. It is an interaction between two autonomous individuals. But in the rural society of Bangladesh it is an encounter between an
interviewer and a social group. The interview is most often conducted in the courtyard or verandah and mostly in the presence of other men or women. The response is almost always a group response.

The respondent has no interest in the interview. Often there is the protest that interview does not bring any good to interviewer – or relief or dole. So what is the use of the interview anyway! Thus it is a half-hearted effort of the respondent to pass through the uncomfortable ritual as well as he/she can.

Thus respondents use a variety of coping mechanisms to cope with the stressful situation of interview. The most difficult situation for the respondent is the kind of accuracy, which is demanded from him in terms of income, expenditure, and other items of personal economic history. The problem also emerges from attitudinal items, which lie beyond his/her mental horizon – the issues which have no relevance for the respondent. It finally leads to the situation in which the ill-trained field worker imposes his or her own interpretation of the facts and attitudes on the interview schedules, even if he/she does not resort to downright deception. The informal practice is two days of training with the questionnaire along with one or two days of preparation for going into the field.

In the larger survey it becomes very difficult to monitor and supervise the survey. The field team takes great freedom in conducting or not conducting the survey. It becomes difficult to know whose responses the interview schedules contain. The larger the sample, the larger becomes the non-sampling error. A lot of information is lost or gets modified in the process of data entry and data editing. The surveys thus inundate us with the volume of statistics that we distrust (Timberg, 2004).

In Bangladesh the major source of poverty data is the Household Expenditure Survey. Serious objections can be raised about the quality of HIES data. Just imagine interviewers descending upon poor people with 60 page questionnaire which the HIES 2000 used. It admits that some people were reluctant to give sufficient time for the interview. It also admits that there was some confusion over recall of expenditures as different reference periods were used for different items. Qualitative and in-depth studies can provide us with alternate data and greater insight. But the country has very few ethnographic studies of poverty as such.

Siddqui (1982; 2000) has provided a valuable and quantitative account of poverty over time in a village in Narail that merits an extended discussion.

**THE STATE OF THE POOR IN JAGATPUR**

- Siddqui's meticulous ethnographic re-study of a village in Narail shows that the poor have significantly improved their nutritional status.
- The landless households had increased calorie intake from 1848 in 1977 to 2232 in 1997.
- The near landless also increased their calorie intake from 1934 in 1977 to 2260 in 1997.
- The lower middle category and middle category households which were below poverty line moved over the poverty line.
- Eggs are eaten more commonly by all classes in the village.
- There has been significant improvement in the access of the poor to apparels.
- Gender discrimination has largely disappeared in food intake.
- There has been greater access of health services to the poor.
- Access to sanitary latrines and safe drinking water increased significantly.
- There was significant increase in enrolment and literacy.
- But in terms of income there was still 44.7 percent poor people in the village.

Another scholar of Bangladesh society (Timberg, 2004) in the course of his review of this book observes:
The book confirms, at least for one village, the common sense impression that Bangladesh including the rural areas and the poor is better off. People are certainly better dressed, living a little longer, getting around a little bit more easily in rural areas, and a little more linked by communications. I have just finished a couple of months on an assignment involving the rural areas of north Bangladesh for the first time in eight years and can see the difference.

Some village studies of earlier period also point towards a lesser incidence of poverty. Arens and Beurden (1977) found that in their Kushtia village 54.5 percent of the peasants belonged to the poor category in 1974-5.

My recent experiences is that poverty reduction has been much more rapid than the macro level data show. Although subjective experiences and qualitative studies are no substitute for quantitative data, it may be source for critical reassessment of the dominant consensus. The section below reports in nutshell my experiences of four villages.

RAPID APPRAISAL OF POVERTY IN RURAL BANGLADESH

A rapid appraisal study was carried out in early 2001 with a team of highly experienced researchers in four villages in four different regions of the country. Table 1 below shows the key characteristics of the research sites which spread over four agro-ecological zones of the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Haorpur</th>
<th>Sunamgonj</th>
<th>Maniknagar</th>
<th>Nawabgonj</th>
<th>Ratanpur</th>
<th>Shariatpur</th>
<th>La 1 ma i Comilla</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Very remote</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>Remote with good river communication</td>
<td>Close to main road</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>Haor basin</td>
<td>Low fertility area</td>
<td>Flood plain</td>
<td>High land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Mono crop with fish</td>
<td>Double-crop with mangos</td>
<td>Mono-crop</td>
<td>Green revolution wheat land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>High flash flood</td>
<td>High monsoon flood</td>
<td>Very high river bank erosion flood</td>
<td>Very little</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>Some international migration Some internal migration</td>
<td>Internal migration</td>
<td>High international/internal migration</td>
<td>High international/no internal migration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key findings

This study found that rapid change was occurring in the rural economy and more rapid reduction of income poverty than normally acknowledged.

- There has been significant decrease of income poverty much more than reported by the evidence available from the Household expenditure survey.
- Poverty was concentrated mainly among women-headed households, old, handicapped and the sick.
- Agriculture within its constraints was thriving. There was a high degree of mechanization. People were dynamic and enterprising.
- Labour mobility was very high. People went to distance places in search of work. The remarkable development of the infrastructure was crucial in increasing labour mobility and prices of local goods for sale.
- Non-farm sector had developed significantly absorbing much of surplus rural labour.
- Remittance was playing a vital role in rural economy. Although it did not go into productive activities in any significant way, it created employment and led to the growth of non-farm activities.
- Traditional occupations were disappearing.
- Community support to the poor varied from village to village. But some community support was available.
- Three of the villages suffered from a great deal of risk and vulnerability.
- Thus poverty reduction should not be seen as unilinear process.
- Two of the villages did not have significant NGO penetration. Poverty reduction took place in spite of it.
- In one village community-based initiatives emerged that undertook the role of a micro-finance and development organization.
- The four villages showed four different modes of local governance that had significant impact upon poverty situation.
- Popular perception of poverty was not limited to income poverty.
- Direct calorie intake or cost of basic needs may not be adequate measure of poverty in Bangladesh anymore.
- The findings indicate the importance of a theory of poverty that is different from imposing western discourses and that treats poverty as a social process within the heterogeneity of the local.
- Such a theory should integrate causes, processes of poverty and poverty reduction not in the form of meta narratives, but in a way which is sensitive to the local situation.

The changing profiles of poverty in four villages

The nature of poverty varied in four villages. But the common pattern, which was visible, was reduction of poverty. The description provided here is partial and selective.
Maniknagar

Poverty

In Maniknagar the perception of poverty is high. The focus group discussion identified about 40 percent of the villagers as poor. But most people seem to get basic nutritional requirements most of the time of the year, although intake of fish/animal protein is low.

The Story of an Old Man

Sarat Karmaker is a paralysed man of 75 years. He was a blacksmith. He lives with his wife and widowed daughter who has a son and a daughter. The wife and the daughter beg in the village. Both Sarat Karmaker and his daughter have received CI sheets for housing. His daughter gets 28 kg of wheat per month from the government. They do not have to go without food. But they enjoy less nutritious, low quality food and have fewer clothes than the minimum required.

Extreme Poverty

Extreme poverty has increased. Over the last 5 years the number of extreme poor families have increased from 5 to 8. All the extreme poor families live upon government support or charities.

Vulnerable Groups:

There are 16 families of oil-processing communities who are losing out; 5 families cannot even afford animals for pressing oil; they use their own labour. But many of the moderate income poor are probably poorer in the off-peak season when wage rate is low. Immunization is widespread. Medical services have expanded through chemists and paramedics.

Haorpur

The focus group discussion in Haorpur identified extreme poor as those without land, without home or with dilapidated house, sick or handicapped, who are not hired in for work, without savings, who do not receive minimum healthcare, who do not have sufficient clothes, and who have no secure supply of food. In terms of the above criteria there are 40 families who are extremely poor.

The Profile of a Beggar

Abu Molla was a carpenter. He used to earn Taka 125.00 to 150.00 per day. His 4 sons had set up separate households after marriage. During late 1980s he began to lose his eyesight. From 1991 he began to beg. Now he cannot beg more than 12-13 days a month due to sickness. He gets about 3 kg of rice and a few Takas by begging. His wife works as a maidservant. She gets 3 meals and half kg of rice per day. She gets sari from jakat and some money from fitra and charity. They do not suffer from hunger or go without meals. But Abu Molla does not get any medicine for his sickness.

- There is high international migration.
- Internal seasonal migration is high

Ratanpur

- In Ratanpur non-farm activities are very high. A majority of households are engaged in non-farm activities. Petty trade, small businesses, and wage labour are the main forms of non-farm activities.
- International migration is very high.
- There is seasonal inmigration in the village.
During 1960s the agricultural labourers had to work from 8 AM to evening. The wage rate was Taka 3.0 plus lunch. From 1996 the wage rate has increased very slowly and now stands also Taka 50.0 plus supplements.

In Ratanpur Focus Group Discussion identified 55 per cent as poor. The high incidence of poverty in the village is due to riverbank erosion, which has affected 40 per cent of the houses in the village. About 25 per cent of the families are now living in common land, other people's land or rented land. But it was also recognized that with 2 able-bodied people could support a family of 7-8 people with wage work.

Lalmai
Non-farm Activities

- In Lalmai non-farm activities are quite developed in the form of mainly small business and in transport sector. Some people work in the brickfields.
- Lalmai provides a fascinating example of the interface of financial and social capital. The village has 14 informal credit societies. One of these credit societies has emerged as major civic institutions of the village. Led by a dynamic leader, it was established in 1985. It provides micro credit with an extremely good repayment rate. It has paid Taka one lakh towards the establishment of a high school in the village.
- It has provided interest free credit to buy ring slabs for the toilet to 100 people and another 25 trees of cost to poor people.
- It assists about 5 families every year towards the marriage expenses of their female members. It also assists the poor to meet their medical expenses.
- It is now trying to bring gas to the village.

Similar community spirit has been shown in setting up a kindergarten school which charges between Taka 60.0 and 75.0 as fee and provides high quality education.

- There is no unemployment in the village
- Nobody starves in the village. Even the 70-year-old beggar can eat three meals a day with occasional fish and feels proud for his old age pension. The worst meal is plain rice fenbhat, the extreme poor have to live on it occasionally.

THE PROCESS OF POVERTY REDUCTION

The figure below describes the factors that have led to the accelerated reduction of poverty. It shows that the remarkable built-up of infrastructure in 1980s and 1990s have played critical role in poverty reduction as it has made labor mobility easy. It has led to an increase of agricultural wages. Remittances from abroad have been quite important in many villages and have led to greater work opportunity in rural society. The growth in agriculture, remittances in some cases and micro-finance have led to the growth of non-farm/off-farm sector within the rural economy expanding a little further the horizon of opportunity. Safety nets have helped cushion extreme poverty to a limited extent. in some areas, specially in villages of high foreign remittances community support to the poor has increased.

But it is to be emphasized that the process of poverty reduction is always fragile. The livelihoods of rural Bangladesh are fraught with vulnerability that stems from a variety of factors ranging from natural to social arenas and macro to micro levels. Floods, economic shocks, death and illness in the household, insecurity of life and property—all these and other factors can offset the gains in the poverty frontier(Islam,2002).
NEW PARADIGM OF POVERTY REDUCTION

The arguments and empirical examples point towards a new paradigm of poverty reduction. The discourse on poverty reduction strategy has most often been animated by a comprehensive wish list. The global agenda for poverty reduction was set by the World Bank in its report of 1990...
(World Bank, 1990). It consisted of two elements. The first was productive use of labour through better market incentives and reforms in social institutions. A decade later the Bank devised a three-pronged strategy that focused on the creation of opportunity, empowerment and security (World Bank, 2000). The official poverty reduction strategy of each South Asian country has been more or less dictated by the Bank (Sen and Rahaman, 1999). This is ironically the ground reality, in spite of the fact that the Bank has emphasized for PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) to be driven and owned by each country (World Bank, 2000c). The Bank has in recent years particularly stressed on the social protection of the poor in South Asia in the face of vulnerability caused by globalization (World Bank, 2002a; World Bank, 2002b). This is again a wish list that does not take in to account the context of institutional weakness and policy failures that plague many developing countries.

GoB (2002), following largely the Bank policy, has outlined an anti-poverty strategy consisting of five core components.

- Pro-poor economic growth policy aimed at increasing income and employment opportunity of the poor.
- Human development targeted for enhancing the capabilities of the poor by providing them with more education, better health services and other necessary services.
- Focus on gender-sensitive development with a view to closing gender gaps between men and women.
- Provision and expansion of safety nets to the poor
- Expansion of participatory governance aimed at empowering the poor and reforming the service agencies and institutions.

**Challenges Of poverty reduction**

There is no doubt that GoB has mounted a multi-faceted policy of poverty reduction. Yet it does not explain why poverty reduction has been so slow (even if we take the optimistic view taken in this paper) in the country in spite of the fact that it devoted 30 to 50 percent of its development expenditure directly or indirectly to poverty reduction between early 1980s and early 1990s (Sen and Rahman, 1999).

The missing link needs to be understood, as Rahman (2002) argues, in terms of the sociology of poverty agenda. Within the electoral politics of the country the poor has no representation and voice. The poor figures only in the elite’s agenda of crisis management. The poor has to be courted because it is an electoral constituency. The agenda of poverty is an instrument for generating legitimacy for the state. In concrete practice it is averted so far as it does not threaten the state.

The most critical factor here, as underscored by the UNDP (2000), is effective governance the absence of which has created a hiatus between anti-poverty policy and poverty reduction in many countries. But more broadly the greatest barrier to poverty reduction is politics – both national and international. What O’Connor (1992:232) writes about USA is equally valid for Bangladesh.” But to think more expansively about policy requires facing up to another lesson gleaned from historical experience: the real barriers to meeting our antipoverty goals are not economic or cultural but political, and they are the hardest of all to break down.”

There are three elements of the political barrier. Firstly, the neo-patrimonial state and dysfunctional political culture have serious negative consequences on economic growth and poverty reduction (Islam, 2004). It subverts the forces of democracy and representation of the poor. Secondly, the barrier consists of what, following Hood (2000), may be called fatalist syndrome of governance in which there is no effective checks on public officials and thus no incentive for public officials to be honest and efficient. As a consequence, people have great distrust of public officials and they reject participation in public sphere and do not engage in collective action. The poor is mostly denied access to public services. The state turns into an anti-
poor state. Thirdly, it entails surrender of policy making by the elite to the ever-changing fads of international experts (Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999).

Thus an appropriate policy for poverty reduction in Bangladesh has to be designed in the context of the existing neo-patrimonial political system, dysfunctional political culture and bureaucracy which are likely to be in place for quite some to come.

It must also take into account the ground reality of the poverty reduction process. This process as has been mentioned before suggests that faster or even further reduction of poverty may not be possible as a consequence of agricultural growth. The growth of the non-farm sector may have reached a plateau and greater impetus is necessary for its faster development.

This situation calls for a new paradigm for poverty reduction, which can both overcome macrostructural dysfunctionality, agro-ecological limit and relative lack of donor fund. It entails a critical strategy that can build upon the gains at the micro level and signal new possibilities and rules of the game for the macro level.

The question of space and agency

What the existing paradigm needs is an appropriate entry point that can build thrust in the anti-poverty policy and an agency that can promote the agenda. It is not possible even for an efficient central government to administer anti-poverty programmes. The failure of anti-poverty programme in USA was that it was not possible for the federal state to deal with a programme that involved 30 million people (Rivlin, 1971). Thus the most effective entry point for poverty reduction is the meso level – district or upazila level and the development of meso economy (Rahman). The effort to focus on the meso economy should bring together new actors and groups. The local government should play a pivotal role here. The growth of the meso economy is likely to forge greater rural-urban linkage and faster growth of the rural economy. The local government can be a local model of good governance and effective in reaching out to the poor easily and quickly. More importantly it can signal a change in the rules of the game by providing an alternative example to rent seeking. It can demonstrate that both individual and collective gains can be achieved through the pursuit of efficiency and competitiveness. Thus the local government can be a critical partner and innovative agency in poverty reduction.

There is considerable research evidence and specially examples from China and the rest of East Asia that the growth of small townships has instrumental in development of the rural economy. This situation has been described as the virtuous circle of rural-urban growth. The growth of small industries in towns has triggered better linkage with non-farm sector in rural areas and faster growth of both urban and rural areas. It has been a particular feature of development in China. It has been called a strategy of a dragon with its head in the town and body in the village. In this strategy the high-skill productive activities are carried out in the town. But the components of a product, such as, washing machine are outsourced to rural enterprises (Ahmed, 1995). Otsuka (2002) notes that garments, metal products and machinery industries have flourished in rural areas of East Asia. The new productive activities have taken advantage of social capital of rural society and has forged relational contracting or sub-contracting that leads to supply of capital, technology or materials to rural areas and results in cost cutting and greater competitiveness.

China’s rapid industrial growth has been spearheaded by mangers of public firms and, to some extent, even by local government officials acting as “market oriented agents” who compete fiercely on the regional, national, and even international product markets. While private industry grew at the much higher rate of 64.9%, it still constituted only 6.8% of output in 1992 and was not therefore a major force in industrial expansion....(Walder,1995:267-68).
Initially the strategy can be developed in Bangladesh as an experimental model to be tried out in several locations through best practice local governments and networking with other towns, donors and local NGOs. There is a need to be extremely cautious about existing meso level targeting in the form of social funds such as the National Development Trust Fund of Sri Lanka, which most often gets politicized, and suffer from the inertia of political malaise (Hewavitharana, 1999).

Tapping the local potential through Interventions based on local knowledge

The rapid appraisal also found that rapid poverty alleviation could be achieved if specific local obstacles to development are removed through local knowledge. In many areas there are local resources that can be tapped for agro-industries. Canning of fruits, fish processing, metal works and even small scale garments can be started in many places. Even small things like timely repair of an embankment or setting up a small bridge can do a great deal in enhancing the income earning opportunities of the poor. In many villages there are remittances and return migrants capable of running small industries or even medium sized industries.

Social Protection of the poor

The World Bank (2000b) has laudably blueprinted the vision of the social protection of the poor or vulnerable so that they can manage risks better mainly through the mechanism of safety nets. But the fiscal crisis of the state and the absence of donor support undermine the realism of such vision. In fact Jeffery Sachs (2001) recently held that IMF and the World Bank were accomplices in “grossly under funded and insufficient strategies”(Sachs, 2001:44) of poverty reduction. But even under the existing constraints there are scopes for new and innovative programmes such as health insurance and disaster insurance for NGO clients, which can be funded from the savings of the poor themselves. There can be GO-NGO collaboration in protecting the poorest of the poor.

CONCLUSION

This paper has called for a move towards a new direction, a new paradigm of poverty reduction, both on the basis of the author’s personal experiences in rural Bangladesh and from an analysis of the current poverty discourse. It has been argued that in order to devise a better strategy for poverty reduction we need to focus on a sociological understanding of poverty as a process and the poverty agenda. The elite addresses the poverty agenda in terms of crisis management and for scaling up the fragile legitimacy of the state. It has a vested interest in poverty agenda. The question of agency is extremely important for poverty reduction in the context of the neo-patrimonial or predatory state, a dysfunctional bureaucracy and a predominantly rent-seeking elite in Bangladesh. More meaningful poverty reduction must search for appropriate agency, which can signal a change in the rules of the game- -a transformation of attitudes and values conducive to increasing human capability and efficiency. The poor have great resilience in Bangladesh, which sheer, even faulty headcounts do not show up. In scaling up the fight against poverty we need to harness the partial interests of many agents, gain more in-depth knowledge and dream up new ideas.

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Griffin, K. 1979. “Growth and Impoverishment in Rural Areas.” World Development 7(4 and 6).


APPENDIX

Table 1
Rural Poverty Measures in Bangladesh: Head-Count Ratios in Various Studies. (%)

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>50.0</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>63.0</td>
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</tr>
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<td>53.8</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>45.9</td>
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<td>1991/92</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>52.9</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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Source: Sen and Rahman 1999: Appendix 2

Table 2 : Poverty Trends in Bangladesh: 1993-2000

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1983-84</td>
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<td>1995-96</td>
<td>53.1</td>
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<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>36.6</td>
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Source: Sen 2003 & BBS 2000
Table 3: Rural Poverty Trends 1983-2000

<table>
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<th>Years</th>
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<th>Poverty gap</th>
<th>Squared poverty gap</th>
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<td>1983-84</td>
<td>53.8</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
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<td>1988-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>13.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
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Source: Sen, 2003: 514; BBS, 2002:

Table 4: Rural Poverty Trends 1987-84: BIDS 62 Village Survey.

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<td>Extreme Poor</td>
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<td>Poverty Gap Ratio (%)</td>
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Source: Sen 2003

Table 5: Trends in Nutritional Status of Rural Children 6-59 Months 1990-96

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stunting</td>
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<td>70.3</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>62.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>71.3</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>68.5</td>
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Source: Rahman 2002: 55

Table 6: Comparison poverty measurement (Upper (212k.cal) Poverty Line)

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<tr>
<td></td>
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Source: BBS 2002

Table 7: Comparison poverty measurement (Lower (1805k.cal) Poverty Line)

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Source: BBS 2002
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES OF RURAL POVERTY IN BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY OF GAIBANDHA SADAR AND TANORE UPAZILAS

- A. I. Mahbub Uddin Ahmed

Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between poverty variables and eight socio-demographic correlates like location, gender, age, household size, marital status, occupation, land ownership and house ownership in one of the poorest regions of Bangladesh. Poverty is defined and measured by ten indicators, which incorporate multi-dimensionality of poverty - food, income, assets, consumption, capability and well-being. Data for this study come from an UNDP-assisted survey of two Upazilas of Bangladesh, Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore in Gaibandha and Rajshahi districts respectively, carried during April-May 2002 by Bangladesh Rural Development Board under Community Empowerment Project-2. A total of 5,180 heads of household, 3,158 in Gaibandha Sadar and 2,022 in Tanore, are surveyed through a multi-stage stratified sampling. Chi-square measure of association and Pearson’s correlation is used to ascertain the degree and direction of relationship between poverty variables and factors of poverty. It is found that the incidence of rural poverty ranges between 46 per cent to 67 per cent and that income, capacity and well-being poverty is greater than food poverty. Furthermore, it is found that land ownership and occupation are the crucial correlates of poverty followed by marital status, age, geographic location and gender. Most of them are significantly related to multi-dimensionality of poverty at the significance level of $\alpha = .01$.

1 Introduction

Bangladesh is described as one of the poorest countries in the world with a GDP par capita of US$1,602 per annum; and a Human Development Index (HDI) rank of 145th out of 173 countries in 2002 (UNDP, 2002:151). Based on poverty line constructed as less than US$1 per day per person, 29 per cent of the population are found as income-poor, whereas the percentage increases to 78 if the poverty line is raised to less then US$2 per day per person (UNDP, 2003:158). Based on poverty line measured by direct calorie intake (DCI) method as less than 2,122 kcal per person per day, it is found that that 44.3 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh or 55.9 million are “absolute” poor in 2002; the corresponding figure for rural areas is 42.3 per cent or 42.6 million (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.2:38). Similarly, cost of basic needs (CBN) method constructs “upper poverty line” (a generous allowance for non-food items), and “lower poverty line” (a minimal allowance for non-food good for those who could just afford the food requirement). The upper poverty line is constructed at Tk.690 in 2000 for rural areas of Rajshahi region, whereas lower poverty line is estimated as Tk.586 for the same (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-A1:122). The upper poverty line shows that 49.8 per cent of the total population and 53.1 per cent of the rural population are income poor (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.7:43). Thus more than half of the rural population in Bangladesh is consumption poor. It is understandable why poverty research, especially the rural one, has become the focal point in Bangladesh social sciences.

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1 I express my thanks to my former students, Ms. Fahmida Farah Islam, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Shah Jalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet and Mr. Omar Faruque, Junior Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies, Dhaka for data collection and processing.
There is also a regional variation in the incidence of poverty measured by the CBN method. Rajshahi division shows the highest incidence of upper poverty line poor in 2002, 61 per cent as against 39.8 per cent in Barisal division. In the rural areas of Rajshahi, the figure is higher, 62.8 per cent (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.7:43). This is also reflected in the poverty gap and squared poverty gap for rural areas of Rajshahi division, 18.1 and 7 respectively (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.9:45).

Thus, serious researchers are mostly engaged in the fancy stuff like measurement of poverty, especially the poverty line. The trend of poverty based on head-count ratio is the key point of discussion. Studies concerned on the correlates of poverty, i.e., the major factors contributing to poverty situation, are neglected in Bangladesh poverty studies. At the backdrop of this research context, the present study focuses on socio-demographic correlates of poverty in the poorest region of Bangladesh, Rajshahi division. Specifically, the study explores the relationship between poverty and eight socio-demographic variables like location, gender, age, household size, marital status, occupation, land ownership, and house ownership in two Upazilas, Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore in Gaibandha and Rajshahi districts respectively.

2 Poverty Correlates

In his classical work on poverty at York, Rowntree (1902) distinguishes two types of poverty, primary poverty and secondary poverty, which later came to be known as absolute poverty and relative poverty respectively (Townsend, 1979). He attributes six causes for primary poverty: (1) death of chief wage-earner; (2) incapacity of chief wage-earner through accident, illness, or old age; (3) chief wage-earner out of work; (4) chronic irregularity of work; (5) largeness of family and (6) lowness of wage (Rowntree, 1902:119-20). He assigns two causes for secondary poverty: (1) habit -- drink, betting, and gambling and (2) careless housekeeping or improvident expenditure (Rowntree, 1902:142). In his famous notion of ‘culture of poverty’, Lewis (1965:xxiv; 1968:50) identifies a few cultural traits that are related to poverty: (a) unemployment and underemployment, (b) low wages, (c) unskilled labor, (d) child labor, (e) absence of savings, (f) chronic shortage of cash, (g) absence of food reserve, (h) the pawning of personal goods and (i) borrowing from local money lenders at usurious rates of interest and etc. His work is a good example of exploring poverty from a sociological perspective. Though a clear identification of poverty determinants is lacking in his work, it is possible to discern two important causes of poverty, unemployment and low income. Other major correlates of poverty in the western literature include gender (Millar and Glendinnings, 1989; Graham, 1987; Dex, 1985; Beechey, 1987; Lewis and Piachaud, 1992), race and ethnicity (Moore and Wallace, 1975; Cohen and Tarpey, 1988; Brown, 1984; Amin and Oppenheim, 1992), old age (Walker, 1986; Baldwin and Cooke, 1984; Falkingham and Victor, 1991) and disability (Oliver, 1991; Dalley, 1991; Groves, 1988; Topliss, 1979).

In spite of the abundance of poverty literature in Bangladesh, such studies are lacking. One of the reasons is the sponsorship of the research. In a climate of donor-driven poverty studies, rigorous empirical research has become a far cry. The macro level data analysis of poverty trends indicates the association of socio-demographic variables with poverty. Using household data from five successive national surveys, Wodon (1999) analyzes the micro-determinants of poverty in Bangladesh from 1983 to 1996 and finds education, household size, land ownership, occupation, and geographic location affecting poverty. The official survey on household income and expenditure in 2002 finds several factors related to poverty--household size, structure of dwelling unit, land ownership, age, gender, marital status, religion, education, occupation and geographic location (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002). In this background, the present paper attempts to relate eight such variables to poverty characteristics in Bangladesh.

3 Methodology
3.1 Definition and Measurement

It is observed that the extent of poverty varies according to the definition and measurement of poverty. As stated earlier, there is a 5.5 and 10.8 percentage point difference in the incidence of national and rural poverty respectively due to measurement difference; CBN method yields more poverty than DCI method. As a result, it is important that caution is exercised in the measurement of poverty. However, poverty in Bangladesh is basically defined and measured by four indicators, food intake, income, capability and consumption. Khan (1976) measures poverty in terms of food intake and distinguishes two poverty lines, absolute poor (2,122 kcal per person per day) and hardcore poor (1,805 kcal per person per day). The profile of human deprivation for Bangladesh (UNDP, 1996) distinguishes two types of poverty, income (less than US$1.00 per day) and capability (lack of access to minimum health, reproduction and education). Based on the CBN method, both food and non-food bundles, Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2000 constructs both income and consumption poverty lines. Income poverty has two lines, upper and lower. The upper income poverty line refers to Tk.690 for rural Rajshahi. On the other hand, the lower income poverty line refers to Tk.586 for rural Rajshahi (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-A1:122). Similarly, consumption poverty also has two lines, upper and lower, though these lines are not precisely constructed. However, a rough estimate can be made from the per capita expenditure of the “poor.” Thus, the upper consumption poverty line stands for Tk.487 for rural Rajshahi. On the other hand, lower consumption poverty line refers to Tk.438 for rural Rajshahi (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.16:51-52).

In this study, the dependent variable poverty is defined and measured by ten indicators, which incorporate food, income, consumption and capability. In addition, in the light of the recent shift of the meaning of poverty, the notion of well-being is also included. Thus food is measured by the calorie intake, income includes monthly income of the head of the household. Related to income, the concept of assets is also introduced and incorporates value of the total assets of the household. Consumption refers to the annual household expenditure on basic needs. Capability is measured by health status, educational level and reproductive control by women. The notion of well-being includes variables like use of electricity, access to safe water and access to sanitation. Thus, poverty is measured by ten variables: (i) food, (ii) income, (iii) assets, (iv) expenditure, (v) health status, (vi) education, (vii) reproductive control by women, (viii) access to electricity, (ix) access to safe water and (x) access to sanitary latrine. On the other hand, eight independent variables are used as socio-demographic correlates of poverty. They are: (1) geographic location, (2) gender, (3) age, (4) household size, (5) marital status, (6) occupation, (7) ownership of land and (8) ownership of house.

3.2 Data Source:

Data for this study come from an UNDP-assisted survey of two Upazilas of Bangladesh, Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore in Gaibandha and Rajshahi districts respectively, carried during April-May 2002 by Bangladesh Rural Development Board under Community Empowerment Project-2. A total of 5,180 heads of household, 3,158 in Gaibandha Sadar and 2,022 in Tanore, are surveyed through a multi-stage stratified sampling. In these two Upazilas, all 334 villages, 127 under Gaibandha Sadar and 207 under Tanore, are classified into developed, moderately developed and underdeveloped, based on available 8 developmental criteria like (i) sex ratio, (ii) dependency ratio, (iii) access to safe drinking water, (iv) access to sanitary toilet, (v) unemployment rate, (vi) literacy rate, (vii) incidence of landlessness, and (viii) access to electricity as reported in Bangladesh Population Census 1991, Community Series, Zilla Gaibandha (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1992a) and in Bangladesh Population Census 1991, Community Series, Zilla Rajshahi (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1992b).

In the second phase, by using simple random sampling (SRS) technique, 25 per cent or 84 villages, 32 in Gaibandha Sadar and 52 in Tanore Upazilas, are selected from the total list of 334 villages. In terms of developmental status, these 84 villages, which constitute our Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) for household survey, are spread as follows: 5 developed, 35 moderately
developed and 44 underdeveloped. From PSUs of 84 villages, 25 per cent or 21 villages, 8 in Gaibandha Sadar and 13 in Tanore, are finally selected for the household survey. These 21 villages constitute our Secondary Sampling Units (SSUs). The SSUs are selected based on a principle of ratio of 1:2:5. The proportion used is: (a) 10 per cent of developed villages, (b) 20 per cent of moderately developed villages and (c) 70 per cent of underdeveloped villages. Once SSUs are selected, the sampling problem for selecting households or Ultimate Sampling Units (USUs) for survey is minimized by covering all households within the villages. This gives us a figure of 5,180 households, which are surveyed during the summer of 2000.

The survey data are processed and analyzed by using SPSS software and chi-square measure of association and Pearson’s correlation is used to ascertain the degree and direction of relationship between poverty variables and factors of poverty.

4 Characteristics of the Respondents

Most respondents are males though a substantial proportion, 34 per cent, are females. The gender ratio is almost equal in Gaibandha Sadar, whereas in Tanore only 9 per cent of the respondents are females. The majority of the respondents are in their middle age, 30-49, and have a household size having less than five members. Only 2 per cent of the respondents have a big household consisting of members ranging from 9 to 11. The overwhelming majority (92%) of them are married though 7 per cent respondents are found divorced and widowed, who are more numerous in Gaibandha Sadar (9.5%) than Tanore (3.2%). However, there is no unmarried respondent in Gaibandha Sadar.

It is found that the incidence of unemployment is greater in the study area, 36 per cent, and there is a significant locational difference, Gaibandha Sadar (50.9%) has far more unemployed compared to Tanore (13.5%). The occupational structure of the respondents show that the most of them, 27 per cent, are wage labor; Tanore has proportionately more of them, 43 per cent as against 17 per cent of Gaibandha Sadar. Next to wage labor is farming, which is the occupation of 21 per cent respondents. Again, Tanore has proportionately more of them, 32 per cent as against 14 per cent of Gaibandha Sadar. Among respondents, there are some self-employed (6.5%), petty-businessmen (6.4%) and service holders (3%). The regional difference is less striking with respect to these occupations.

The pattern of land ownership has a similarity with occupational structure, 40 per cent landless and another 45 per cent functionally landless (owning less than 50 decimals of land) with Gaibandha Sadar having an edge of 7 per cent. Thus an overwhelming 85 per cent are found to be de facto landless with little regional variation. This is also reflected in other categories; nearly 12 per cent respondents are marginal and small farmers (owning land between 0.5 acre to 2.5 acres), whereas only 3 per cent own land more than 2.5 acres.

Another indicator of landlessness is the ownership of shelter and homestead land. This creates a separate category of landless, and in the case of urban poor, is a crucial poverty indicator. In the rural situation, this may be one of the determinants of poverty. Broadly speaking, it is related to one’s notion of entitlement (Sen, 1981). In the survey area, there are fewer respondents, a little more than 5 per cent, who are without rural shelter. This trend is prevalent across regions.

5 Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore Upazilas

5.1 Food Poverty

The study area is officially identified as the poorest region of Bangladesh with rural poor in that region numbering nearly 63 per cent and 49 per cent, when upper and lower poverty lines by CBN method is used respectively (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.7:43). As given in Table-2, data on DCI method used by official HIES 2000 show that the rural poor constitute more than 46 per cent of the rural population. However, due to lack of regional data by DCI method,
HIES data are not strictly comparable with our survey data. The level of nutrition data collected from Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore Upazilas in our survey of 2000 also strengthen HIES data on the incidence of poverty. Our survey data report more poverty, 6.6 per cent for hardcore poor and 4.1 per cent for absolute poor compared to HIES data. But as said earlier, this is due to lack of regional data in HIES, otherwise, the difference would have been minimum. Thus, in the survey area nearly half of the population are food-poor, Gaibandha Sadar have more poor than Tanore both in terms of hardcore (+8%) and absolute (+15%) poverty. The recent agricultural intervention, Barind Irrigation Project, has probable impact on lowering the food poverty in Tanore, as plenty of fish at cheap price is available.

Table-1 Incidence of Food Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calorie intake</th>
<th>Number Gaibandha</th>
<th>Number Tanore</th>
<th>Number Total</th>
<th>Percent Gaibandha</th>
<th>Percent Tanore</th>
<th>Percent Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1805 kcal/hardcore poor</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1805-2121 kcal/Absolute poor</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2122 kcal/Non-poor</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>1,269</td>
<td>2,773</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>2,022</td>
<td>5,180</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-2 Comparison Between Survey Data and Government Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calorie intake</th>
<th>Survey Data 2002</th>
<th>Government Data 2000</th>
<th>Variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>Tanore</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1805 kcal/hardcore poor</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2122 kcal/Absolute poor</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5.2 Income Poverty

The CBN measure of HIES is more comparable to income poverty than food poverty as indicated in Table-3. It is found that at least 36 per cent of the heads of household have no income and it increases to a staggering 50 per cent in the case of Gaibandha Sadar. A quarter of the respondents have monthly income below Tk.1,000 (which is approximately less than US$20). Thus together, nearly 62 per cent of the survey population, 48 per cent of Tanore and 70 per cent of Gaibandha Sadar, can be termed as income poor. This is close to 63 per cent upper poverty line poor by CBN method as reported in HIES. Moreover, it reports average per capita income of poor in rural Rajshahi region as TK.465 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.16:51), which is far less than our survey findings. Furthermore, HIES reports average per capita rural income as TK.928 and that of per earner as Tk.3,368 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-4.1:19). If this guideline is used, then the cumulative percentage for respondents earning even less than Tk.3,000 is 94 per cent. The relatively income rich (having monthly income of Tk.4,000 and more) are approximately 3 per cent only.
Table-3 Incidence of Income Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income (in Taka)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>Tanore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>1,593</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Tk.1,000</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.1,000-Tk.1,999</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.2,000-Tk.2,999</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.3,000-Tk.3,999</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.4,000/+</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>2,022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Source: Field Survey)

5.3 Assets Poverty

The income poverty is also corroborated by assets poverty. Table-4 shows that approximately 23 per cent of respondents have assets valued at less than Tk.1,000. The difference between two locations is striking; Gaibandha Sadar (28%) has almost double the percentage of assets-poor than Tanore (15%). Next, another 24 per cent have total assets valued at between Tk.1,000 and less than Tk.3,000. Together, small assets holders, who can be termed as poor, are nearly 47 per cent. It is interesting to note that there is more inequality in terms of assets than income, nearly a quarter of the respondents have assets valued at Tk.11,000 and more, thus around 24 per cent are assets rich compared to 3 per cent income rich. Again the difference between Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore is conspicuous, the former has only 15 per cent assets-rich respondents compared to 36 per cent of the latter.

Table-4 Incidence of Assets Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value of total assets (in Taka)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>Tanore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;Tk1,000</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.1,000-Tk.2,999</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.3,000-Tk.4,999</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.5,000-Tk.10,999</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.11000/+</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>2,022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Source: Field Survey)

5.4 Consumption Poverty

Table-5, which gives the incidence of consumption poverty, indicates how poorly the poor live. Nearly 53 per cent of the households in both locations, spend on an average, less than Tk.250 per month or less than Tk.3,000 per annum. If the monthly expenditure is raised to Tk.416 (or less than Tk.5,000 per annum), 75 per cent of the respondents appear to be consumption poor. The HIES reports Tk.487 as an average monthly per capita expenditure of the poor in rural areas of Rajshahi region (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-6.17:52). This would further raise the incidence of consumption poor in the survey area. Moreover, the HIES reports Tk.4,257 as an average monthly household expenditure for rural areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2002:T-4.4:23). If non-basic expenditure were subtracted from Tk.4,257, the expenditure on basic needs would be far above Tk.416, pushing the consumption poor as high as 92 per cent.
Table-5 Incidence of Consumption Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yearly household expenditure</th>
<th>Monthly household expenditure</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>Tanore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk1,000</td>
<td>&lt;Tk.83.00</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.1,000-Tk.2,999</td>
<td>Tk.83.00-Tk.249.91</td>
<td>1,233</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.3,000-Tk.4,999</td>
<td>Tk.250.00-Tk.416.58</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.5,000-Tk.10,999</td>
<td>Tk.416.66-Tk.916.58</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk.11000/+</td>
<td>Tk.916.66/+</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>2,022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Field Survey)

However, a caution must be exercised here as less money is spent by the rural poor on foods grown in fields and kitchen gardens. Therefore, consumption data may belie the poverty status unless rigorous monetization of the non-purchased food items is done. It is interesting to note that both Upazilas appear similar in this respect.

5.5 Capacity Poverty

The incidence of capacity poverty as measured by health status, education and reproductive control by women is given in Table-6. It shows that the health status of the majority of the respondents is normal. However, educational level of the respondents is low, 67 per cent of them are functionally illiterate, of which 43 per cent are totally illiterate. The gender situation is encouraging; nearly 50 per cent women in the respondents’ household can exercise reproductive control, especially in the matter of adopting family planning device. However, except for health, respondents in survey area appear to be capacity poor.

5.6 Well-being Poverty

The well-being criteria given in Table-7 shows that access to safe water can not be used effectively as a criterion of poverty in rural Bangladesh as the use of tube-well is wide spread, only 5 per cent respondents have no access to safe water. Even though sanitary latrine has become more accessible now a day, still the majority of the respondents, 62 per cent, use open space for defecation. This could be more of a cultural construct than of a poverty function. However, access to electricity can be a solid well-being criterion. Given the rural electrification intervention by the government, the access to electricity would make life both cheaper and comfortable. The Table shows that only 94 per cent of the respondents have no access to electricity both in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore. Though inconsistency exists among different criteria, respondents appear to be well being poor.

Table-6 Incidence of Capacity Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gaibandha</th>
<th>Tanore</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Health Status:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-sick</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=</td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>2,022</td>
<td>5,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Educational level:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table-7 Incidence of Well-being Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore (in per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well-being criterion</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Access to electricity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanore</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>94.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Access to safe water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanore</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Access to sanitary latrine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanore</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 3,158 2,022 5,180

(Source: Field Survey)

### 6 Socio-Demographic Correlates of Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore

Table-8, which gives ranking of factors of poverty at chi-square and Pearson’s correlation, shows that among all 8 independent variables, occupation and land ownership are the most stable factor of poverty, influencing all 10 poverty variables each both at chi-square test and Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The Table further shows that in some cases, the significant relationships found at Chi-square test disappear at Pearson’s correlation, for example, income by household size, reproduction by location, reproduction by gender, reproduction by age and toilet by marital status. Moreover, three new significant relationships are established such as calorie by marital status, electricity by age and toilet by age. Thus ranking of poverty factors varies from chi-square to Pearson’s correlation, except for marital status; the rank usually diminishes at Pearson’s correlation coefficient. From Tables 9-10, which give summary of significant chi-square values and Pearson’s correlation coefficients respectively, it is to be noted that at chi-square test, most relationships are found significant at the level of $\chi^2=.001$, whereas at Pearson’s correlation coefficient, most relationships are found significant at the level of $r=.01$.

Table-8 Ranking of Factors of Poverty at Chi-square and Pearson Correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS OF POVERTY</th>
<th>POVERTY VARIABLES</th>
<th>Rank at Chi-Square</th>
<th>Rank at Pearson’s Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calorie</td>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Expend</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Field Survey)
Table-9 Summary Table of Chi-Square Values of Selected Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Chi-square value</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calorie by Location</td>
<td></td>
<td>113.913</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calorie by Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>93.114</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calorie by Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.607</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calorie by Household size</td>
<td></td>
<td>95.058</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calorie by Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>96.588</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by Location</td>
<td></td>
<td>708.701</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>1756.923</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>72.258</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by Household size</td>
<td></td>
<td>86.895</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td>135.914</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>5803.555</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by Land ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td>188.469</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income by House ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.847</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by Location</td>
<td></td>
<td>379.663</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>218.000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>66.531</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by Household size</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.927</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td>119.626</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>351.540</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by Land ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td>582.859</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset by House ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td>39.041</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure by Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.214</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure by Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>110.637</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure by Household size</td>
<td></td>
<td>189.970</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure by Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td>86.368</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure by Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>267.812</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure by Land ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td>508.958</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure by House ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td>52.206</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health by Location</td>
<td></td>
<td>253.507</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health by Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>90.501</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>=.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health by Household size</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.322</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>=.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table-9, which gives significant chi-square values, shows that food poverty is associated with six independent variables, geographic location, gender, age, household size, occupation and land ownership. On the other hand, income poverty and assets poverty are influenced by all independent variables. Except for geographic location, consumption poverty is affected by all other factors. All three components of capacity poverty, health, education and reproductive control, are commonly influenced by four variables, geographic location, gender, occupation and land ownership. Education and reproductive control are further affected by age and marital status, which are common to both variables. Health is separately affected by household size. All three components of well-being poverty, access to electricity, access to safe water and access to sanitary latrine, are commonly influenced by occupation and land ownership. For water and latrine, location and marital status are common, whereas household size is singularly related to toilet.

Table-10 Summary of Pearson’s Correlation on Selected Poverty Variables by Selected Socio-demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor of poverty</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Consumption</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Well-being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calorie</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health by Occupation</td>
<td>94.586</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health by Land ownership</td>
<td>14.942</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education by Location</td>
<td>151.182</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education by Gender</td>
<td>169.27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education by Age</td>
<td>43.509</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education by Marital Status</td>
<td>82.97</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education by Occupation</td>
<td>818.733</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education by Land ownership</td>
<td>266.974</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction by Location</td>
<td>43.992</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction by Gender</td>
<td>38.772</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction by Age</td>
<td>166.489</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction by Marital Status</td>
<td>170.141</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction by Occupation</td>
<td>80.781</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction by Land ownership</td>
<td>86.929</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity by Occupation</td>
<td>124.849</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity by Land ownership</td>
<td>94.415</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe water by Location</td>
<td>26.846</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe water by Marital Status</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe water by Occupation</td>
<td>77.816</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe water by Land ownership</td>
<td>45.901</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet by Location</td>
<td>106.302</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet by Household size</td>
<td>64.129</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet by Marital Status</td>
<td>22.601</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet by Occupation</td>
<td>281.888</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet by Land ownership</td>
<td>194.046</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Field Survey)
6.1 Occupation and Land Ownership and Poverty

Table 10 above shows that though occupation and land ownership are significantly related to all poverty variables at the level of $\alpha=.01$, their relationships with health status is inverse, relatively weak and appear significant at a lower level of significance, $\alpha=.05$. Occupation has comparatively a strong coefficient with income ($r=0.670; \alpha=.01$), education ($r=0.267; \alpha=.01$) and assets ($r=0.215; \alpha=.01$), whereas land ownership is strongly related to assets ($r=0.268; \alpha=.01$) and consumption ($r=0.257; \alpha=.01$). The coefficient with other poverty variables is not robust, though significantly related. Both occupation and land ownership has an inverse relationship with reproductive control ($r=-0.060; \alpha=.01$ and $r=-0.099; \alpha=.01$ respectively) and electricity ($r=-0.127; \alpha=.01$ respectively). Thus,

- Poverty is more prevalent among unemployed or low status occupation: they tend to be food poor, income poor, assets poor, consumption poor and partially capacity poor and well-being poor (except for electricity). Because of NGO interventions among poor women, their health statuses have substantially improved and they are not health poor. This is reflected in the inverse relationship of occupational status with health and reproductive control. In the case of reproductive control, the patriarchal cultural construct is more jealously guarded by the non-poor, and the NGO conscientization programs contributed to some extent in the empowerment of poor women rather than rich women. This is why they are less capacity poor than the high occupational status respondents in rural areas. Because of the NGO assistance, poor tend to have more access to rural electricity. This could be due to their concentration in periurban areas where they search for employment.

- Poverty is more prevalent among landless and marginal farmers: they tend to be food poor, income poor, assets poor, consumption poor and partially capacity poor and well-being poor. Except for health status, their situation is exactly like the unemployed and wage labor.

6.2 Marital Status and Poverty

Next in significance is marital status, which is significantly related to 8 poverty variables, consumption ($r=0.086; \alpha=.01$), assets ($r=0.085; \alpha=.01$), income ($r=0.082; \alpha=.01$), education ($r=0.059; \alpha=.01$), calorie intake ($r=-0.035; \alpha=.05$), reproduction ($r=-0.035; \alpha=.05$), water ($r=0.034; \alpha=.05$) and electricity ($r=-0.030; \alpha=.05$). As apparent, the coefficient with other poverty variables is not robust. Thus,
Poverty is more prevalent among singles, either unmarried or divorced/widowed: they tend to be income poor, assets poor, consumption poor and partially capacity poor (education) and well-being poor (water). Moreover, married respondents tend to be food poor and partially capacity poor (reproductive control). The inverse relationship of marital status with reproductive control and calorie intake implies that among married respondents, the patriarchal values and other considerations prevent women to eat sufficiently and take decisions for themselves.

6.3 Geographic Location and Age and Poverty

Both geographic location and age are significantly related to 7 poverty variables. The coefficient of geographic location is stronger than age. Location is significantly related to income ($r=0.261$; $p=.01$), assets ($r=0.253$; $p=.01$), health ($r=-0.221$; $p=.01$), calorie intake ($r=0.132$; $p=.01$), toilet ($r=0.088$; $p=.01$), water ($r=0.072$; $p=.01$), education ($r=0.064$; $p=.01$). Likewise, age is significantly related to consumption ($r=0.104$; $p=.01$), assets ($r=0.074$; $p=.01$), calorie intake ($r=0.059$; $p=.01$), income ($r=0.058$; $p=.01$), toilet ($r=0.044$; $p=.01$), education ($r=-0.042$; $p=.01$) and electricity ($r=-0.034$; $p=.05$). Thus,

Poverty is more prevalent among respondents of Gaibandha Sadar than Tanore: they tend to be food poor, income poor, assets poor, partially capacity poor (education) and well-being poor (water). Whereas respondents of Tanore tend to be partially capacity poor (health) and well-being poor (toilet). The more prevalence of open defecation in Tanore could be due to cultural practice (because of the notion of purity-pollution) and lack of NGO intervention (because of prevalence of indigenous Santal community).

Poverty is more prevalent among young adults: they tend to be food poor, income poor, assets poor, consumption poor and partially well-being poor (toilet). Old adults tend to be more partially capacity poor (education) and well-being poor (electricity). This appears to be consistent with married having less access to electricity. The prevalence of illiteracy among old adults is normal in the society.

6.4 Gender and Poverty

Gender ranks fourth as a factor of poverty and is significantly related to 6 poverty variables, income ($r=0.463$; $p=.01$), assets ($r=0.200$; $p=.01$), education ($r=-0.164$; $p=.01$), calorie intake ($r=0.133$; $p=.01$), health ($r=-0.132$; $p=.01$) and consumption ($r=0.067$; $p=.01$). Thus,

Poverty is more prevalent among women than men: they tend to be food poor, assets poor and consumption poor. On the other hand, males appear to be income poor and capacity poor (health and education). Though strange, the reason for males having less cash income could be the access of women to micro-credit offered by streams of NGOs under poverty alleviation program. The association of gender with poverty is well-documented in the literature and the notion of “feminization of poverty” is conceptualized. But the empirical relationship is inconsistent and incongruent because of several factors. The decomposition of middle class both in urban and rural areas, and the NGO intervention for the poor, has complicated the gendered poverty relationships.

6.5 Household Size and Poverty

Next, household size is significantly related to 5 poverty variables, consumption ($r=0.164$; $p=.01$), calorie intake ($r=-0.127$; $p=.01$), toilet ($r=0.107$; $p=.01$), assets ($r=0.064$; $p=.01$) and health ($r=0.040$; $p=.01$). Thus,
Contrary to popular expectation, poverty is more prevalent among small size households: they tend to be assets poor, consumption poor, capacity poor (health) and well-being poor (toilet). On the other hand, large households appear to be food poor. The small-size households consist of mostly singles, and therefore, tend to be poor as divorced and widowed respondents, especially women, inflate that category.

### 6.6 House Ownership and Poverty

House ownership is least related, and its coefficient is not robust. It is found to be significantly related to 3 poverty variables, assets ($r=0.082; \alpha=.01$), consumption ($r=0.076; \alpha=.01$) and income ($r=0.032; \alpha=.05$). Thus,

- Poverty is more prevalent among non-owners of house: they tend to be income poor, assets poor and consumption poor. It is obvious that the ownership of house relates to income, assets and consumption. Furthermore, in the agrarian society, ownership of house is also related to ownership of land ($r=0.112; \alpha=.01$) as the inter-item correlation matrix in Table-12 shows.

Therefore, consistent with the global findings and emerging social structure of Bangladesh, both social and demographic variables are found significant explanatory variables of poverty.

### 7 Multi-Dimensionality of Poverty

Table-11 clearly shows the multi-dimensionality of poverty and the variation in the incidence of different types of poverty. It is found that 46 per cent respondents of the survey area are in food poverty as against 62 per cent in income poverty, 67 per cent in capacity poverty, especially education and 62 per cent in well-being poverty, especially access to sanitary latrine. The decline of food-poverty is important. The comparative south Asian poverty statistics inflate Bangladesh food-poverty by arbitrarily setting a higher caloric requirement for the country. Otherwise, the food-poverty would have been much less. Apart from income, which is still the solid poverty measurement, other non-economic factors also play crucial roles in shaping the human dimension of poverty. Obviously, capacity poverty and well-being poverty require more attention in the conceptualization and measurement of poverty in Bangladesh. The incongruence and inconsistencies within among indicators of poverty can only be understood within the general context of Bangladesh society and economy, evolving in the wake of predatory capitalistic development.

#### Table-11 Incidence of Different Type of Poverty in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore (in Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Poverty</th>
<th>Gaibandha</th>
<th>Tanore</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Food Poor</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Income Poor</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assets Poor</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Consumption Poor</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Capacity Poor:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Health</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Education</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Reproductive control</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Well-being Poor:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Access to electricity</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Access to safe water</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Access to sanitary latrine</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Hierarchy of Poverty Correlates

Table-12 which gives the inter-item correlation matrix of the factors of poverty, indicates the hierarchy within among independent variables. It shows that ownership of land is the most important variable not only for dependent variables (poverty variables) but also for independent variables (factors of poverty). It is interesting to note that four demographic variables are significantly related to each other, indicating multi-correlation. Next in importance is occupation followed by ownership of house.

Table-12 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of Socio-Demographic Correlates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Land owned</th>
<th>House owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.432**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.241**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.155**</td>
<td>-0.081**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.114**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.137**</td>
<td>-0.067**</td>
<td>0.097**</td>
<td>0.144**</td>
<td>0.053**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household size</td>
<td>-0.241**</td>
<td>-0.081**</td>
<td>0.137**</td>
<td>-0.081**</td>
<td>0.094**</td>
<td>0.404**</td>
<td>0.046**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>0.094**</td>
<td>-0.067**</td>
<td>0.045**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.070**</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
<td>0.071**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>0.155**</td>
<td>0.404**</td>
<td>0.097**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.070**</td>
<td>0.164**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land owned</td>
<td>-0.081**</td>
<td>0.046**</td>
<td>0.144**</td>
<td>0.130**</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
<td>0.164**</td>
<td>0.112**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House owned</td>
<td>0.053**</td>
<td>0.032*</td>
<td>0.071**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=5180 ** α=.01  * α=.05

(= Source: Field Survey)

Ownership of land is significantly related to all other 7 independent variables. Thus, ownership of land is found to be significantly related to location (r= -0.081; α=.01), gender (r=0.046; α=.01), age (r=0.144; α=.01), household size (r=0.130; α=.01), marital status (r=0.029; α=.01), occupation (r=0.164; α=.01) and house ownership (r=0.112; α=.01). Thus,

- Big and medium owners of land are more numerous in Gaibandha Sadar. They tend to be more males, mature adults, and married than landless and marginal peasants. They also have bigger household, high status occupation and own more houses. Thus, land ownership influences all other independent variables that are related to poverty. It yields direct and indirect influences in the poverty status and becomes the most significant correlate of poverty.

The demographic variables like gender, age, household size and marital status show strong network of relationship among independent variables. All of them are significantly related to 6 independent variables each. Gender is found to be related to location (r= 0.432; α=.01), age (r=0.144; α=.01), household size (r= -0.081; α=.01), marital status (r=0.094; α=.01), occupation (r=0.404; α=.01) and land ownership (r=0.046; α=.01). Thus,

- Males tend to be more numerous in Tanore than females. They tend to be more aged and married than women. They also have bigger household, high status occupation and more land. By influencing other independent variables that are related to poverty, i.e., occupation and land ownership, gender appears to exert both direct and indirect influences in the poverty situation and becomes a significant correlate of poverty.

Similarly, age is found to be related to gender (r= 0.114; α=.01), household size (r= 0.137; α=.01), marital status (r=0.067; α=.01), occupation (r=0.097; α=.01), land ownership (r=0.144; α=.01) and ownership of house (r=0.053; α=.01). Thus,
Mature adults tend to be males and married than young adults. They also have bigger household, high status occupation and more ownership of house. Thus, age also influence other independent variables that are related to poverty, i.e., occupation and house ownership.

Related to gender and age, household size also affects poverty determinants and poverty itself. Household size is found to be related to location ($r = -0.241; p = .01$), gender ($r = -0.081; p = .01$), age ($r = 0.137; p = .01$), marital status ($r = 0.045; p = .01$), land ownership ($r = 0.130; p = .01$) and ownership of house ($r = 0.032; p = .05$). Thus,

- Large households tend to be more numerous in Gaibandha Sadar than small-size households. Respondents of large household tend to be more males, mature adults and married than respondents from small-size households. The large households also tend to be large landowners and owners of house. Through these influences, household size also become an important independent variable.

Marital status is found to be related to gender ($r = 0.094; p = .01$), age ($r = -0.067; p = .01$), household size ($r = 0.045; p = .01$), occupation ($r = 0.070; p = .01$), land ownership ($r = 0.029; p = .05$) and ownership of house ($r = 0.071; p = .01$). Thus,

- Married respondents tend to be more males and young adults than single respondents. They also have bigger household, high status occupation, more land and houses. Thus, marital status also influences other independent variables that are related to poverty, i.e., occupation, land ownership and ownership of house.

Next, occupational status is found to be significantly related to 5 independent variables, location ($r = -0.155; p = .01$), gender ($r = 0.404; p = .01$), age ($r = 0.097; p = .01$), marital status ($r = 0.070; p = .01$) and land ownership ($r = 0.164; p = .01$). Its structural influence in a status-bound traditional society is paramount. Moreover, it is market-driven too and reflects the structural adjustment that is taking place in the agrarian sector of Bangladesh.

- High status occupation tend to be located more in Gaibandha Sadar than unemployed and low status occupation. Respondents from high status occupation tend to be more males, mature adults and married. They also have more land. Thus, occupation appears to influence other independent variables that are related to poverty.

Ownership of house is least important independent variable having inter-item correlation. It is found to be significantly related to 4 independent variables, age ($r = 0.053; p = .01$), household size ($r = 0.032; p = .05$), marital status ($r = 0.071; p = .01$), and land ownership ($r = 0.112; p = .01$).

- Owners of house tend to be more mature adults and married than non-owners of house. They also have bigger household and more land. Thus, ownership of house also influences other independent variables.

The inter-item correlation matrix of the independent variables shows how intractably socio-demographic variables are related and how the influence of one variable on another is mediated by other related variables. The significance of socio-economic and demographic factors for poverty characteristics can be empirically demonstrated at the micro level research. And these variables can be considered as important explanatory variables for Bangladesh poverty.

**Conclusion**

Unless there is a radical departure in the concept and measurement of poverty, the Bangladesh rural poverty ranges from 46 per cent to 62 per cent across different dimensions. Except for few indicators like health status, access to safe water and access to electricity, which produce wide
divergence, the survey findings are more or less similar to other surveys and official statistics. It is found that food poverty is far less than other types of poverty -- income, capacity, especially education and well-being, especially access to sanitary latrine.

The findings on factors of poverty are more or less consistent with the global findings. Moreover, they are reflective of Bangladesh agrarian socio-economic context, which is embedded with land ownership and occupational status as a continuation of traditional status-bound society. At the macro level, poverty in rural Bangladesh is related to gendered social stratification, rather than to a sudden fall from grace. Thus in Gaibandha Sadar and Tanore, landless and marginal farmers, unemployed and underemployed rural wage labor, women and people from backward regions would tend to be more poor. This is clearly evident from the inter-item correlation matrix as given in Table-12, which shows the relationship among factors of poverty. The lack of empirical rigour in the poverty analysis, which would translate the macro reality in micro-level research, is pervasive. This calls for the need for the paradigmatic shift in the poverty analysis. At the least, a definitional shift of poverty, from economic dimension to sociological dimension, is urgently required. This appears to be a starting point for the Bangladesh sociological research.

The foregoing analysis points to two important conclusions at the research and policy levels. First of all, there is a clear need for rigorous empirical studies to explore sociological causes of poverty and shift the attention of poverty researchers from pure economic analysis of poverty to sociological ones. Secondly, there is a need for policy change concerning poverty reduction by the poverty stakeholders -- government, donors and NGOs. This would call for shift of poverty reduction strategies from present NGO-driven income generation activities through micro-credit to state-sponsored employment generation. In addition, the most effective means to poverty reduction would be entitlement, i.e., access to land, if not ownership. This can be implemented by redistributing the reclaimed (char) land from sea and river. This would require good governance where politically motivated power brokers would be prevented in having illegal access to char land. In fine, Bangladesh state should fulfill its constitutional obligation and change its role from being a minimal state to a welfare state.

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Exploring Governance in South Asian Mega Cities: A Review Essay

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The term megalopolis was first used in 1940 by Lewis Mumford to refer to the great ‘metropolis growing uncontrollably.’ Manuel Castells (1996), a leading urban sociologist has called the rise of these mega cities of 8 million or more people as the specific feature of the third millennium urbanization. In another ten years there will be 26 of these giant cities in the world. These mega cities “leapfrogs in all directions” (Stren, 2001:2) bridging towns and villages and creating what McGee calls desakota zones (Stren, 2001).

South Asia is undergoing a rapid process of urbanization. In India alone there has been an 11 fold increase of urban population in the last century. What is more important is the rise of mega cities in South Asia. In 1950 there was only one large city-Kolkata, which was among the top ten cities in the world. In 2000 four of the largest 15 cities of the world were situated in South Asia. By 2015 five of the largest cities will be from this region. Mumbai will be the second largest city of the world with about 23 million people. Delhi will move to the third position with 21 million. Dhaka will rank 7th with 18 million people. Kolkata will be the 10th largest city surging with 17 million souls. Karachi will be in the 11th position with a population of about 16 million. These five cities together will contain nearly 100 million people. These cities have swollen up through migration from the countryside and many of these migrants are poor. In the backdrop of massive wealth of these cities the poor lead a subhuman life in slums or squatters, in its informal economy and in its underworld without shelter, safe water or medicare and often jobs.

This is Siddiqui’s 30th book and the third on South Asia. This book follows from two of his earlier books – *Local Government in South Asia* and *Social Formation in Dhaka City*. The *Local Government in South Asia* has been an authoritative work in this field. In the *Mega City Governance in South Asia* Siddiqui and his co-authors from three SARC countries unveils the more complex problems of governance of mega cities in an increasingly globalized world.

The book sets out to understand the problems of local governance in five mega cities of South Asia in terms of the actual structure of governance – their organizations and functions and how they fared in terms of good governance – efficiency, transparency, lack of corruption, devolution, social capital and so on. It also looks into the relationship between existing urban governance and overall power relationships. The larger context that has guided the enquiry is the issue of poverty alleviation.

This is a long book over 500 pages. It contains 7 chapters and a valuable 17 pages long bibliography. It provides an overview of the local government system of each city and perceptions of governance by key stakeholders within a larger institutional and political setting.

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The data of the book come from two sources. First, the book has used a variety of documents regarding these five mega cities. Secondly, it has undertaken survey of three categories of respondents – local government functionaries – elected and/or officials, intelligentsia and the poor. The sample size appears to have been more than 100 from each category.

Although there is increasingly a rise of giant cities all over the globe, they are becoming more and more difficult to govern. In the US the fiscal crisis of the cities and the advocacy of the public choice theorists for a segmented approach to efficiency and the resulting fragmentation of urban government have led to serious negative consequences for the poor. The poor face increasing exclusion from urban life and urban services and remain trapped in the zones of poverty and decay (Davis, 1990).

In South Asia as well as in developing countries the urban local governments suffer both from fiscal crisis and poor governance. The fiscal crisis stems from the inability of elected representatives to increase local taxation. The poor governance partly results from the fact that most third world states are soft, neo-patrimonial or predatory states, which are unable to blueprint efficient policies and implement them, and from the weakness of the local governments themselves. As a result the citizens suffer from poor urban services and the poor from multiple deprivations. It is in this context that Siddiqui and his team has focused upon the structure of urban governments in five mega cities of South Asia with specific attention to the urban poor.

But the book is also important for another reason. It has been increasingly felt by sociologists like Ulbrich Beck (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1990) that modernity produces a risk society. Modernity produces unpredictable catastrophic events like nuclear accidents or environmental crisis that have massive consequences for thousands or even millions of people. The mega cities are likely sites for such catastrophes. The absence of good governance in these cities may seriously threaten governance at national level as well as the emerging global order around the network of mega cities. For South Asian cities AIDS is a major threat and many apprehend that these cities may be AIDS capitals of the future unless governance is improved.

The tales of five cities are fascinating. Two of these cities date from pre-colonial times-Delhi and Dhaka. Three others- Kolkata, Mumbai and Karachi began their life as colonial trading outposts. The institutional form of municipal governance in five-mega cities show some variations. The form of Kolkata can be described as Mayor-in-Council system. Only the councillors are directly elected. The councillors and even councillors from the opposition parties or groups have considerable power in running the municipality. There is a great deal of decentralization through borough and ward committees. The KMC has enjoyed considerable autonomy and freedom from interference by the state. Dhaka represents the opposite pole. Here both the mayor and the ward commissioners are directly elected. The mayor runs the show along with his powerless cast of commissioners. There is little decentralization in the form of zonal or ward committees. The state wields significant control over DMC. Delhi and Mumbai are examples of strong commissioner system in which councillors elect mayors and the bureaucracy plays a strong role in running the routine administration.

Siddqui and his co-authors found that the cities suffered from a high level of corruption and it was on the increase. In Mumbai and Kolkata large scale corruption was more visible. In Delhi and Karachi petty corruption was more pronounced. Dhaka had a high level of both these types of corruption.

Accountability was poor in all the cities except Kolkata. Corruption, trade union activism and increasing role of money and muscle in the elections are significant factors behind low level of accountability. There was also little transparency within local governments. This was partly due to public apathy. Efficiency was low. Interdepartmental coordination was satisfactory in Kolkata, but average to low in other cities. The coordination with other service providers was quite satisfactory in Kolkata and average in Mumbai. It was unsatisfactory in Dhaka.
The authors took into account four factors that hindered or fostered good governance. These four factors were social capital-based informal governance, power structure, advocacy and internal resistance to change within the city government. Social capital was highest in Kolkata and was on the increase due to greater awareness and community initiatives. It was declining in Karachi as a consequence of ethnic conflicts. The low level of social capital was visible in Delhi, Mumbai and Dhaka. The poor had the lowest amount of social capital.

The power structure of Karachi was complex due to the presence of ethnic dimension in the class structure and ethnic conflicts. The poor and women were negatively affected. In Delhi the bureaucracy has a pre-eminent position. Politicians and businessmen influence the decision making process through them. The poor are without voice. In Mumbai the economic power has shifted from Gujaratis to Marathis. Politically the city has turned into the stronghold of Shiv Sena and its fascist ideology. The city has also a powerful under world that has connections with the local government. It is a major constraint on improving governance of the city. Dhaka suffers from an intense factional conflict within the ruling class. Kolkata has better prospects for governance reforms.

The advocacy for pro-poor reform is led by elites in Delhi, as there is little civil society initiative. Civil society organizations are both numerous and active in Mumbai. Advocacy has increased in Karachi, but it is yet to make any significant impact. In Dhaka advocacy is more confined to NGOs, press and intra-elite communication. Internal resistance against reforms is strongest in Dhaka, Karachi, and Mumbai.

Siddiqui’s narratives can be read also in a different way. Karachi and Mumbai provides examples of two different paradigms of governance crisis that has engulfed the urban space in the South. Karachi provides an extreme example of institutional instability. The Karachi Municipal Corporation was dissolved one year after the birth of Pakistan in 1947. It was revived in 1953 and again dissolved in 1958. It was given a new shape in 1960 under the Basic Democracy System. It died with the fall of Ayub regime in 1969. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto gave it a populist look in 1972. It underwent another round of change in 1979 under President Ziaul Haq. It was dismissed in 1987. A new system came into existence a year later, which was dismissed, in 1992. In 1996 an older arrangement of two-tier KMC was restored. But until 2001 civil or military administrators ran it. In that year the structure of KMC was radically altered. It was renamed as the City District Government of Karachi. It has now three tiers – union councils, town councils and the city district council. There is direct election only at the lowest level. It is now headed by Nazim and among its vast range of functions are law and order and revenue collection! It is no wonder that Karachi suffers from the worst form of governance.

Siddiqui and his team encapsulates the historical pattern of political anarchy of Karachi along side this institutional instability. Karachi became an ethnic flashpoint when the Pathan labour force was ascendnt and it became a part of the underworld mafia. During 1980s the Urdu-speaking refugees became armed and violence became more pronounced among different communities, among linguistic and religious and other ethnic groups. The role of the central government was to control it through intelligence agencies. Its impact was quite obvious. There was little efficiency, hardly any accountability and transparency was particularly missing in sharing of strategic information and award of contracts and licenses. Corruption was widespread. Perception of governance however varied among three groups of respondents. The officials had a more positive view of governance and the intelligentsia a very negative attitude. But whatever the attitude of the respondents the urban services were not simply there. Karachi remains a city of dirt, clogged drains and congested roads and a landscape of violence. The poor had no place in the mental horizon of the city officials. The two top problems of the poor were lack of jobs and the lack of security. The poor obviously suffered from the endemic violence of an overgrown city.

Mumbai offers a different history and nearly a parallel outcome. Siddiqui shows urban governance of Mumbai can be divided into four phases from 1793. The basic framework of municipal administration was fleshed out through the act of 1888 and in spite of some
amendments this framework has remained in place for over a century. Thus Mumbai enjoys great institutional stability. But when one looks into the functioning of the corporation, it appears there is an increasing erosion of civic virtues. The political parties and corrupt politicians have taken it over. As Thakkar (1995) has shown, meetings of the corporation often end in pandemonium. Events such as smashing a microphone during meeting or pointing shoes at a member have made the corporation ‘a joke house’ or a ‘circus’. In 1980s about a dozen corporators were facing serious criminal charges for murder and extortion. Thus Mumbai is a dream city of high finance – ‘the engine of the economy’ (Sivaramakrishnan, 2001:14) and tough mafia governed poorly. The tales of these two cities show two divergent patterns of governance crisis.

A key objective of the research was to get feedback from concerned stakeholders about how to find a pathway out of this crisis and improve the governance of these mega cities. The authors have prepared a thought-provoking and wide-ranging set of recommendations for reforms in governance spanning 22 pages on the basis of this feedback. The authors remind us that only alternative to reforms is the fate of Surat.

The only weakness of this admirable book is the lack of an analytical framework showing why poor governance is the common feature of these five mega cities and how it is related to the livelihoods of the poor. As Pendse (1995:4) shows for Mumbai, the fate of the poor and the women have hardly been explored. “The most populous classes in the city, the toilers, remain unrepresented, largely unknown and mostly ignored.” Siddiqui has made special efforts to hear the voices of the poor but without any reference to the cultural fabric of their life. It is not clear from the narrative how the poor construct their individual and collective identities, articulate their anger and crystallize their protest against their deprivation in an alien universe and against the powerful other.

Every good book opens a new horizon of research or policy agenda. This book clearly and strongly demonstrates once again that there is no alternative to powerful and vibrant local government. Secondly, this pioneering work shows clearly that the structure of urban government in these mega cities exemplifies what sociologists and political scientists call machine politics – the structure of patron–client relationships, which underpin the formal governance. This calls for more qualitative research on the actual functioning of local government in these mega cities.

Thirdly, we need further information for useful entry point for effective policy intervention. One difficulty of a comprehensive policy package is that it is often difficult or impossible to implement. Although there is need for synergy among different policies, a comprehensive wish list may not be very helpful. The choice of entry point and agency may be decisive in the success or failure of any policy. One interesting possibility is the international municipal cooperation. The example of city-to-city cooperation between Guangzhou of China and Fukuoda of Japan provides a good example of such cooperation. There are possibilities that require more innovative research strategies for exploring the institutional terrains and dynamics of collective action in the arena of urban governance. Fourthly, some of the policy measures have to be tuned to the local situation. The global solution of high modernism may not be appropriate for the cities of the south (Friedman, 2001). Again the policy agenda in the context of institutional instability demands a different strategy than the one within a stable institutional space. The challenge here is how to overcome the pervasive patron-client relationships that underlie these cities (Pacione, 2000).

Meanwhile this work will remain a milestone in the study of mega city governance of South Asia and the authors are to be congratulated for accomplishing this difficult journey across five cities. The book will be of interest to scholars engaged in the study of city and governance, policy makers, students and enlightened readers. The UPL has maintained a high standard in the production of this book.
References

Books Received


The book presents the results of a comparative study of the effects of three very significant poverty reduction programmes in rural Bangladesh. The selected programmes include, “micro-credit”, “food assistance” and the “employment to the women” commissioned by ASA, CARE-GOB and the BRAC-GOB respectively through the local body of Union Parishad. The latter two programmes are popularly known as the RMP and the IGVGD programmes.

The study focused on a number of issues including, economic change, health impact, and women’s empowerment as well as on reducing social exclusion of the poor. In order to shed light on some important assumptions regarding the characteristics of the participants, an elaborate examination of the profile of the beneficiaries was also attempted. This approach allowed the review of some vital questions like who was actually served by such programmes. The effect of other programmes, apart from the selected ones, was tangentially touched upon to make the study a more rigorous one. Readers will find a brief but succinct review of the relevant programmes undertaken in the course of the past few years, especially their sequential history. In order to provide greater support, the book also referred extensively to the relevant theoretical issues. The empirical research, reinforced with a qualitative approach, was carried out in four districts of Bangladesh, namely, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Noakhali and Barisal, which represent the varying socioeconomic features of the people.


The volume provides an understanding of the dimensions of gender discrimination as well as women’s development issues. This compilation brings to the readers issues ranging from female migration, women’s participation in agriculture, micro-credit and female solidarity, commercial sex work to the need for sociological research on gender discrimination in Bangladesh.

Of the eleven topics discussed in the volume, Nazmunnessa Mahtab writes on gender inequality while Mahbuba Nasreen looks at gender and development. Two migration studies are authored by Tasneed Siddiqui who deals with “State as Agent of Patriarchy” and Muhammad Mizanuddin and Nazneen Sultana who cover female migration in Rajshahi. Shanti Rozario looks at micro-credit and dowry while Sadeka Halim looks into women’s involvement in shrimp cultivation (reported on this website). Wardatul Akram examines the level of women’s participation in the white-collar professions in Bangladesh while Faizar Rahman deals with women in agriculture. Of the two problem areas, female child labour is covered by M. Zulfiqar Ali Islam and Shah Ehsan Habib deals with female sex workers. The final essay is on a sociological perspective on gender discrimination by Muhammad Hassan Imam.

The volume seeks to highlight how women lack the benefits and how gender discrimination leads to uneven division of resources and power within society.