

The Rural Political Elite in Bangladesh: A Study of Leadership Pattern in Six
Union Parishads of Rangpur District



By
Muhammad Abdul Wahhab

A Thesis Submitted to Rajshahi University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

October, 1980

Institute of Bangladesh Studies
University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

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**THE RURAL POLITICAL ELITE IN BANGLADESH:
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ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with the patterns of leadership in six Union Parishads of Rangpur district of Bangladesh. The data of the research were collected by examining certain characteristics of the chairmen and members of Union Parishads of two successive elections.

The study reveals that the chairmen and members of Union Parishads are, by and large, rich and influential persons in the villages who organise election propaganda and mobilize the people using mostly traditional group sentiment to win the election. It has, also been found that being the local leaders, the chairmen and members of Union Parishads are more interested in local issues than national ones. This does not mean that they are indifferent to national issues. Majority of them are members of the national political parties. But their membership is greatly influenced by the party in power, since they are closely linked with it.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION : SETTING OF THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

After the Second World War, an intellectual revolution has taken place in the study of political science. Two reasons are primarily responsible for this. First, there has been a slow penetration into the study by sociological, anthropological and psychological methods and theories. Second, after the Second World War, many new independent states, with variety of cultures, emerged. With the emergence of these new states, the prevailing study of political science, popularly known as traditional approach, failed to satisfy the demand of the time; because it was limited to the western political systems only with their formal institutions. Thus, the traditional approach neglected not only the non-western political systems, but also the western political systems in their informal aspects which are assumed to be the real dynamics of politics¹. However, the penetration of allied disciplines into the study of political science, on the one hand, and the desire for understanding

¹ For a detailed discussion of the limitations of traditional approach, see G. A. Almond and G. B. Powell, Comparative Politics (Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1966), Chapter I; and N. C. Macridis, "A Survey of the Field of Comparative Government", Harry Eckstein & David E. Apter, eds., Comparative Politics (New York : The Free Press, 1962), Pp. 43 - 51.

of non-western political systems as well as the informal aspects of politics, on the other, inspired the political scientists to adopt new approaches to the study of political science. It is claimed that the new approaches have generated a 'new orientation' in the study of political science². Of the new approaches, the elite approach seems to be more significant in the study of politics of underdeveloped countries. In this connection, Rustow has suggested that "research on the social background of political elites holds particular promise in the study of Asian, African and Latin American politics, where the institutional approach tends to mislead and functionalist approach to confuse³".

In Bangladesh, there have been some efforts to study elites both at the national and the local levels. The local level elite study may be conducted either at rural level or at urban level. The present study, however, is concerned with the elites at rural level. The study analyses the nature of the elites who control rural politics by holding formal position in the Union Parishads, the lowest tier of local self-government in Bangladesh.

²For a brief account of the new approaches, see Talukdar Maniruzzaman, "Recent Approaches to the Study of Politics", Administrative Science Review, Vol. I, No. 1, March, 1967, pp. 59 - 67.

³Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Study of Elites : Who's Who, When and How", World Politics, Vol. 18, No. 4, July, 1966, P. 711.

A Brief History of Local Self-Government

There are two categories of local self-government in Bangladesh. One category is meant for rural areas and the other for urban areas. Here I shall give a brief account of the growth and development of the local self-government institutions in rural areas of Bangladesh with an emphasis on Union Parishad.

(a) Local Self-Government in Pre-Pakistan Period

"Village self-government in Bengal was given a start in 1870 with the passing of the Chowkidari Act in that year"⁴. This, however, does not mean that Bengal had no village government before this. The villages in the old days had Panchayats or the bodies of elders who were responsible to run village affairs⁵. Actually before 1870, the British Government took no initiative to organise the self-governing institutions in the villages. But when the problem of law and order took an acute turn in the villages, the government passed Chowkidari Act in 1870. The Act established a primary unit of self-government called a union, which was composed of a collection of villages. This was presided over by a five man

⁴ N. C. Roy, Rural Self-Government in Bengal, Calcutta University, 1936, P. 131.

⁵ M. A. Chaudhury, Rural Government in East Pakistan, Dacca : Puthighar Ltd., 1969, P. 3.

committee, called Panchayat⁶. The Panchayat was not an elected body by the villagers, but appointed by the District Magistrate (now called Deputy Commissioner) or officer subordinate to him. The District Magistrate was also empowered to remove the members of the Panchayat. The Panchayat was responsible only for maintaining law and order in the villages and the Chowkidars were its instruments. To meet the expenditure of maintaining the Chowkidars, the Panchayat was empowered to collect taxes from the villagers. One serious flaw of the Act was that the membership of Panchayat was obligatory and on refusal one could be fined upto Rs.50/00⁷.

In 1882, Lord Ripon, the then Viceroy of India, proposed to introduce certain reforms in the local self-government. He suggested that a network of local self-government should be established throughout the country. In order to give effect to his reforms, the Bengal Local Self-Government Act of 1885 was passed. The Act created three tiers of local bodies in Bengal. These were: Union Committee for a union, Local Board for a sub-division and District Board for a district⁸. According to the Act a Union

⁶ Rehman Sobhan, Basic Democracies, Workers Programmes and Rural Development in East Pakistan, Dacca : Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 74.

⁷ N. C. Roy, op. cit., p. 133.

⁸ About district and sub-division, see section 'Phulbari at the National Setting' in the Second Chapter.

Committee was to be constituted by an election of informal character. The Local Board at the sub-divisional level was simply a co-ordinating body for the Union Committees. The District Board was given wider executive and financial powers. The Union Committees were given only the powers with regard to local municipal functions, such as, sanitation, communication and education; and the management of village police continued with the Panchayats created in 1870⁹. Thus, since 1885 there were two local authorities at the union level; namely, the Panchayats and the Union Committees. One of the lacunas of this system was that, though Union Committees were given the powers of municipal functions, they had no financial powers; and they were made dependant on the charity of District Boards.

The Bengal Village Self- Government Act of 1919 made an effort to improve the local self-government in Bengal. Under this Act, the Union Committees were converted into Union Boards, and the Local Boards and District Boards remained unchanged. But in the face of District Board, which was the real authority in the rural areas, the Local Board seemed to be a superfluous organ. It was, therefore, abolished in 1936. According to the Act of 1919, a Union Board was to consist of 6 to 9 members. Of them, one-third was to be nominated by the District Magistrate and two-thirds elected by the people through open votes. The system of nomination continued till 1946 when it was abolished on the recommendation of the Bengal

⁹ N. C. Roy, op. cit., P. 14.

Administrative Enquiry Committee, 1944 - 45¹⁰. Each Union Board had a president and a vice-president elected by the Board from among its own members. The Act provided the Union Board with broad scope and authority. The office of the Circle Officer was created to supervise the works of the Union Boards. One main shortcoming of the Act was that the women were not enfranchised. Moreover, the franchise was limited to those male persons of twenty-one years and over, who paid one rupee as tax or cess¹¹.

(b) Local Self-Government in the Post Independence Period of
Former Pakistan

"During the years from 1947 to 1958, the administrative pattern of the local self-government in this area was more or less the same as was during the later part of the British Rule"¹². But the significant development of this period was the democratisation of the local self-government institutions, "through the extension

¹⁰ M. Rashiduzzaman, Politics and Administration in Local Councils, (Dacca : Oxford University Press, 1968), P. 5.

¹¹ E. C. Roy, op. cit., P. 149.

¹² Ali Ahmed, Administration of Local Self-Government for Rural Areas in Bangladesh, Dacca : Local Government Institute, 1979, P. 47.

of the franchise to universal adult suffrage for the Union Board elections in 1956. Introduction of secret ballots and direct election of the Union Board Presidents and Vice-Presidents marked further advances¹³. The same privilege was also extended to the District Board, but its chairman continued to be elected by the members.

(c) Basic Democracies System

The system of Basic Democracies, introduced in 1959, made a significant change in the whole structure of local self-government. It covered both rural and urban areas of the country. It was pyramidal in structure and had four tiers¹⁴. The lowest tier consisted of Union Councils (formerly Union Boards) in the rural areas (Union and Town Committees in the urban areas). The members of this lowest tier were known as Basic Democrats. Originally it was provided that one third of the members from the councils would be nominated. But the procedure of nomination was abolished soon after the introduction of the 1962 constitution. The election was held on the basis

¹³ Rehman Sobhan, op.cit., pp. 76 - 77.

¹⁴ Originally it was five tier system, but the highest tier, the Provincial Development Advisory Council was abolished when Provincial Legislative Assembly reconstituted in 1962.

of universal adult franchise. The number of the members of Union Councils varied from 10 to 15. The members elected a chairman (formerly president) from amongst them. Above the Union Council, the other tiers, such as, Thana Council for the thana or police station. District Council for the district and Divisional Council for the division were mostly non-elected bodies¹⁵.

(d) Local Self-Government in Bangladesh

Immediately after the liberation of Bangladesh, the new government instead of reconstituting the local bodies through elections, decided to introduce an interim arrangement; and accordingly for the administration of relief goods, Relief and Rehabilitation Committees were formed both at union and thana levels. The members of these committees were elected from among the members of the ruling party. Shortly after this, the government issued an order, known as Bangladesh Local Councils and Municipal Committees (Dissolution and Administration) Order, 1972¹⁶, to organise the local bodies in Bangladesh. The Order abolished Basic Democracies system and renamed Union Council as Union Panchayat, Town Committee as Shahr Committee, Municipality as Pourashava and District Council

¹⁵ About thana and division, see section 'Thana' at the National Setting in the Second Chapter.

¹⁶ Bangladesh Local Councils and Municipal Committees (Dissolution and Administration) Order, 1972 (P. O. No. 7 of 1972).

as District Board. The appointment of the Panchayats at the unions was like that of Relief and Rehabilitation Committees, but very soon the plan of such appointment was abolished and the Tahsildars or Union Agriculture Assistants were appointed administrators of the Panchayats. Since there was no provision in this Order for the defunct Union Committee, Thana Council and Divisional Council, it was amended by another Order¹⁷, which introduced Thana Development Committee and Nagar Panchayat respectively in places of Thana Council and Union Committee.

The constitution of Bangladesh was promulgated in December, 1972. It made provision for local bodies¹⁸. In accordance with the provision of the constitution, the government issued an Order, known as Bangladesh Local Government (Union Parishad and Pourashava) Order, 1973¹⁹. The Order changed the name of Union Panchayat and it was named as Union Parishad. According to the Order, each Union was divided into three wards and provision was made for three members from each ward. A Union Parishad was to be constituted with one chairman, one vice-chairman and nine members. The chairman and the vice-chairman were to be elected by the voters of entire union and

¹⁷ Bangladesh Local Councils and Municipal Committees (Dissolution and Administration) (Amendment) Order, 1972 (P. O. No.17 of 1972).

¹⁸ ^{the} Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972, Article 59(1).

¹⁹ Bangladesh Local Government (Union Parishad and Pourashava) Order, 1973 (P. O. No.22 of 1973).

the members were to be elected by the voters of their respective wards and, accordingly, every voter was entitled to cast three votes for electing three members. The elections of the chairman, vice-chairman and members were held simultaneously. The election of the Union Parishad under this system was held at the end of 1973.

After the political change in 1975²⁰, the new regime promulgated an Ordinance, known as the Local Government Ordinance, 1976²¹. The Ordinance introduced three tier system in the country. These were : (a) Union Parishad for a union, (b) Thana Parishad for a police station²², and (c) District Parishad for a district. With regard to the Union Parishad, the Ordinance did not abolish previous provisions such as, three wards in the union, three members from each ward and three votes enjoyed by a voter for electing three members. It, however, abolished the seat of vice-chairman and made provision for two nominated women members in the Union Parishad. Thus, a Union Parishad, according to the new system, consists of one chairman,

²⁰For a detailed discussion of the political change in 1975, see Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1975 : The Fall of the Mujib Regime and its Aftermath", Asian Survey, Vol. XVI, No.2, February, 1976, Pp. 119 - 129.

²¹The Local Government Ordinance, 1976, Ordinance No. XC of 1976.

²²Though the present system introduced Thana Parishad, it did not abolish the Thana Development Committee created by Bangladesh Local Councils and Municipal Committee (Dissolution and Administration) (Amendment) Order, 1972 (P. O. No.17 of 1972).

who is directly elected by the voters of entire union; nine members who are directly elected by the voters of their respective wards; and two women members who are nominated by the sub-divisional officer concerned. The official term of a Union Parishad is five years. The election of the Union Parishads under this system was held in January, 1977.

According to the Ordinance of 1976, the Thana Parishad consists of representative members and official members²³. All Union Parishad chairmen within the thana are the ex-officio representative members of the Thana Parishad. The sub-divisional officer within whose jurisdiction the thana lies, the Circle Officer (Development) of the thana concerned and other thana level officials, as may be specified by the government, are its official members. The sub-divisional officer is the chairman of the Thana Parishad and the circle officer is its vice-chairman. The Zilla Parishad consists of such elected members, official members and women members, as may be fixed by the government, provided that the total number of elected members shall not be less than the total number of official members and women members. The women members are nominated by the prescribed authority, i.e., by the Commissioner from among the women of the district. The Parishad elects a chairman and vice-chairman from among its non-official members²⁴.

²³The Ordinance, op. cit., Article 6.

²⁴It may be noted that, the election of Zilla Parishad has not yet been held, though various provisions of it have been incorporated in the Ordinance, 1976.

The Rural Political Elite Defined

In the context of the present study any person either elected or nominated to any of the Union Parishads, constituted in 1973 and 1977, is considered to be a member of the rural political elite. Now a question arises why the chairmen and members of the Union Parishads shall be called rural political elite? In answering this question it is necessary to define political elite first.

Although the term 'political elite' is a recent one, the basic idea goes back to Mosca and Pareto. They pointed out that, in any society there is always a group that rules, and another group that is ruled; and that the former ^{is} numerically smaller than the latter. Mosca called the ruling group a 'ruling class' or 'political class', but Pareto called it 'governing elite' distinguishing from non-governing elite²⁵. Bottomore defined political elite as consisting of those persons "who actually exercise political power in a society,"²⁶. Mills talked about power elite and defined it as comprising of "those who decide whatever is decided of major consequences"²⁷. As for the definition of Bottomore, the persons who actually exercise political power in a society can not be identified before studying that society; and also the category of

²⁵ G. Mosca, The Ruling Class, (1896) New York; McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1939 edition, P. 50; and V. Pareto, The Mind and Society, (1916) 4 Vols, New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 1963 edition, Sections 2031 - 2034.

²⁶ T. B. Bottomore, Elites and Society; London; C. A. Watts & Co. Ltd., 1964, P. 14.

²⁷ C. W. Mills, The Power Elite; New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, Pp. 3 - 4.

persons who exercise political power may vary from one society to another. Similarly, the major or big decisions of Mills are "by no means easy to discern"²⁸. So for avoiding definitional complexity or ambiguity and also for the convenience of research I accepted the formal position in the body politic or government as the identification of political elite²⁹, following the definition of Lasswell who (with his associates) used political elite and power elite synonymously³⁰. According to Lasswell, "the political elite comprises the power holders of a body politic"³¹.

²⁸ Geraint Parry, "Elites and Polyarchies", Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, Vol. IV, 1956, p. 176.

²⁹ This view has enjoyed considerable popularity among the recent political scientists. In the study of Lebanon Iliya Harik defined political elite as "the members of the parliament, cabinet ministers and the president of the republic". See Iliya F. Harik, "Political Elite of Lebanon", C. Lenczowski ed., Political Elites in the Middle East (Washington D. C. : American Enterprise Institute for Public Research, 1970), p. 201. The same view was held by Frey and Singer more than a decade ago. See Frederick M. Frey, The Turkish Political Elite (Cambridge, Mass : The M. I. T. Press, 1969); and Marshal, A. Singer, The Emerging Elite : A Study Political Leadership in Ceylon (Cambridge, Mass : The M. I. T. Press, 1964).

³⁰ H. D. Lasswell; D. Lerner and E. C. Rothwell, "The Elite Concept", R. G. Macridis and R. E. Brown eds., Comparative Politics : Notes and Readings, revised edition, Homewood, Illinois : The Dorsey Press, 1969, p. 45.

³¹ Lasswell in H. D. Lasswell; D. Lerner and E. C. Rothwell, The Comparative Study of Elites (Stanford : Hoover Institute Studies), quoted in T. B. Bottomore, op. cit., p. 13.

In Bangladesh each Union Parishad is a rural body politic or government; and since the chairmen and members hold the formal powers of the Union Parishads, they may be called rural political elite. In this sense I have used the term 'rural political elite' indicating the chairmen and members of the Union Parishads.

Studies on Rural Elites in Bangladesh

Studies on rural elites in Bangladesh may broadly be divided into three types. One type of study is confined to the village traditional Sardars and Matbars, the other type is concerned with different leaders of co-operative societies and the third type of study is devoted to the chairmen and members of Union Parishads. A brief review of those studies has been given below:

There is no fixed qualification for the elites in the villages of Bangladesh. The grass-root elites in the village are the traditional Sardars and Matbars. Though these people have no statutory recognition, nevertheless they command a significant local prestige and influence. Rahim (1965) identified them as local influentials. There is no hard and fast rule for the recruitment of Sardars and Matbars. Bertocci (1970) observed that Sardari is hereditary in Comilla village and "the Sardars in addition to being the formal political leaders in the indigenous political system, often gain position in the official organs of local government"³². But the study

³² Peter J. Bertocci, "Rural Communities in Bangladesh : Hajipur and Tinpara", C. Maloney ed. South Asia: Seven Community Profiles, (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), p. 101.

of Zaman (1977) in a village of Rajshahi reveals that, the sardari is not hereditary, rather it is a matter of selection by the people under the samaj, the intra-village corporate group traditionally based on common social and religious interests. He also observed that though sardar is a head of the samaj, his function is purely religious and ritual; and really the political power is exercised by a set of factional leaders who are locally known as pramaniks. The pramaniks are neither responsible to the sardar nor nominated by him. They are paramaniks either because they are rich or belong to a big gusthi, a patrilineal descent group through a remembered common male ancestor. Though Hindu samaj has no sardar, they (Hindu) have also pramaniks.

Islam (1974) analysed that village politics is not isolated from national politics. In Bangladesh, the interaction between traditionalism and modernization involves the villagers in politicking, and as a result, the traditional elites are being challenged by the emerging elites. The point was further dealt by Zaidi (1970). According to him, with the increased educational facilities more educated people are now available in the villages and they have become the causes for the replacement of the traditional elites. Nannan (1972) classified the village level elites into four classes : (1) formal - they are traditional sardar and matbar. Sardar and matbar are formally accepted by the members of the samaj as their leaders and are given some authority to control the samaj; (2) informal - they do not

hanker after power and position in the samaj but due to their good qualities, the people come to them for advice; (3) religious — such as imams of the mosques and pirs (the spiritual teachers); and (4) professional — such as school teachers, village doctors, and so on. But whatever classification may be according to their activities and professions, "the rural elites", Rashiduzzaman noted, "generally operate informal groupings and factions which provide the base for village politics"³³. According to Geoffrey Wood (1976), the factional leaders of the villages are rich peasants. As they are economically better off they not only control the economic power in the villages, but also the political power.

Early in 1960 the Pakistan (now Bangladesh) Academy for Rural Development started organising village based co-operative of the farmers for its rural development experiment. Gradually, with the expansion of the programme, many such co-operative societies have come into existence; and a new type of rural leadership has also emerged. This type of leadership has been studied by some writers. Ahmed (1972) pointed out that, the farmers form co-operative society and the ordinary members of the society give priority to education when they select their manager and chairman. Hannan (1972) clarified the points by stating that all co-operative managers are literate. In another study Ahmed (1974) stated that as each co-operative society is associated with thana level organisation, it is natural that more

³³ N. Rashiduzzaman, op. cit., P. 24.

educated people are sent to the Thana Central Co-operative Association (TCCA). Tipu Sultan (1974) studied the educational background of the members of managing committees of 13 Thana Central Co-operative Associations and found that all are literate.

Though Union Parishad is an old institution, the study on the different aspects of its leadership has begun to be undertaken only recently. Rashiduzzaman (1968) noted that the village factionalism is not confined within the village, rather it eventually influences the grouping at the Union Council (now Union Parishad). According to him there were at least two groups in the former Union Councils. One group supported the chairmen and the other opposed him. The chairman of the Union Council was to be elected from amongst the members, but the success in the contest for chairmanship was dependent on the number of members one might persuade to vote for him. Eventually, the allurements for cash and other material benefits had an important role in the contest for chairmanship. In studying the election of former Union Boards Chaudhury⁽¹⁹⁶⁹⁾ remarked that, as the voters had to vote by open declaration before the presiding officer and in the presence of the candidates or their authorised agents, they could seldom exercise their vote freely without fear. The local Zamindars and the money-lenders influenced the voters. Rehman Sobhan (1968) made a comparative analysis on the land size and income of the Basic Democrats elected in 1959 and 1964 and found no difference among them. So he came to the conclusion that the representative

character in the local councils remained unchanged; only the faces changed through the election. Alam (1974) pointed out that overwhelming majority of the chairmen and members of the Union Parishads are associated with the co-operatives in different positions. Many of them are Union Parishad chairmen and members working with these

The Present Study

The purpose of the present study is to focus on leadership in Union Parishads. Union Parishads are the primary tiers of local self-government in Bangladesh, having responsibility and authority for the development of rural areas, which constitute the bulk of the population of the country. The successful working of the Union Parishads depends largely on the quality of leadership available at this grass-root level. So it is important to see what kind of people become chairmen and members of the Union Parishads and in what way they differ from general masses. Union Parishads are regarded as the centres of rural politics. Hence it would be of interest to examine the nature of the elections of the Union Parishads. The chairmen and members of the Union Parishads are supposed to enhance the rural development, so the pattern of opinions they hold, the attitudes and values they are attached with, are other dimensions which require scrutiny. There is a gap between rural politics and national politics. The national political parties are intermediaries which work as 'reliable bridge' between them. Hence it is necessary

to examine the pattern of party-affiliation of the chairmen and members of the Union Parishads.

These are, in short, the scope and importance of the study. It may be mentioned here that no study, so far as I know, has been undertaken on Union Parishad chairmen and members dealing with these dimensions. This study is new to that extent in Bangladesh since it has attempted to probe the hitherto unexplored areas of socio-economic background, recruitment, value orientations and political affiliations of the chairmen and members of Union Parishads.

The Specific Objectives of the Study

The present study has been developed keeping in mind the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the nature of Union Parishad elections.
2. To study the socio-economic background of the chairmen and members of the Union Parishads constituted in 1973 and 1977.
3. To assess the extent of value-consensus among them.
4. To analyse the nature of their party-affiliations.

Selection of the Study Area

A study of any Union Parishad is closely related to the various offices of the thana, particularly, the office of the Circle

Officer (Development), which has direct control and supervision over the Union Parishad. Hence, it was decided to select the Union Parishads within a thana, rather than the similar number of Union Parishads of two or more contiguous thanas. The Union Parishads of Phulbari Thana of Kurigram sub-division in the district of Rangpur were selected for the study. There were two reasons for this selection. First, this is an empirical study. And easy accessibility is one of the important conditions of empirical study. Selection of Phulbari thana fulfilled this condition, because before joining the Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS), Rajshahi University, I had been a teacher of Phulbari College for three years. Phulbari was thus known to me and I had personal acquaintance with many elites of Phulbari. Secondly, I collected some information on voting behaviour of the people of Phulbari during the period of last Union Parishad election. Those information were very relevant to the present study³⁴.

Selection of the Respondents

The main objective of this study is to find out the leadership pattern in the Union Parishads. The study of the chairmen and

³⁴ The last Union Parishad election was held in January, 1977. During that period, I collected some information from different unions of Phulbari to write a paper on the voting behaviour of the people. The report, however, was not written due to my pre-occupation in college affairs.

members of one election might not reveal the real pattern. Hence two elections of the Union Parishads held after the liberation of Bangladesh had been under review. Phulbari is, moreover, a small thana consisting of six unions. So it was not difficult to include in the study all chairmen and members of both elections of all Union Parishads in the thana. The first election of the Union Parishad as mentioned earlier, was held in 1973 and the second election in 1977. There were 11 positions in each Union Parishad constituted in 1973 — 1 chairman, 1 vice-chairman and 9 members. So their total number in six unions was 66. But of them, 12 members were re-elected in the next election, 1977; and 1 chairman and 1 member died. So the total number of the former chairmen, vice-chairmen and members was 52. There were 12 positions in each Union Parishad constituted in 1977 — 1 chairman, 9 members and 2 nominated women members. So the total number of the present chairmen and members in the thana was 72³⁵. But 2 members — one elected and the another nominated, were found absent from Phulbari during the period of survey³⁶. Thus, the total number of respondents in two elections were (52 + 70) 122.

³⁵ The Union Parishads constituted in 1977 are in existence and are expected to function till 1981, because the official term of the Parishads, as stated earlier, is five years. Hence the chairmen and members of the Union Parishads constituted in 1977 have been regarded as present chairmen and members and the chairmen and members of the Union Parishad constituted in 1973 as former.

³⁶ It was reported that the ~~absentee~~ elected member was a graduate who was seeking government job staying at Dacca, the capital city of Bangladesh. The absent-nominated women member resided with her husband at Bogra district, because the husband was a government employee who worked there.

Data Collection

(1) Questionnaire : "There are two possible methods of constructing an empirical study of contemporary elites. The first, which uses questionnaires, is thorough but difficult. The second, which employs a who's who, is simple but less than thorough"³⁷. The second method does not exist in Bangladesh. So with regard to this study the questionnaire method was followed.

A questionnaire was prepared in Bengali in consistence with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire contained very simple questions. Almost all the questions were open ended. Before the questionnaire was finalized it was pre-tested interviewing 18 respondents for judging the suitability of the questions³⁸. The results of the pre-testing were very encouraging. So after pre-test, the questionnaire remained the same except two questions which were dropped³⁹. The final questionnaire was divided into three parts (Appendix). The first part comprised the questions on socio-economic background of the elites. It included information about

³⁷ Marshall W. Singer, The Emerging Elite : A Study of Political Leadership in Ceylone, Cambridge, Mass : The M. I. T. Press, 1964, p. 51.

³⁸ The respondents pre-tested included 1 ex-chairman, 1 vice-chairmen, 5 members; 2 present chairmen, 7 members and 2 nominated women members.

³⁹ The dropped questions were about the information on the landholdings of their father-in-law and grand fathers. But most of the respondents to whom I administered pre-testing could not reply correctly. Hence these two questions were dropped from the draft-questionnaire.

their age, education, landholding, income and the similar including paternal background. The second part contained questions dealing with the value orientations of the elites. It sought information about their perception of local problems, capacity to suggest new schemes, attitudes towards rural development programmes undertaken by the government and so on. The third part of the questionnaire dealt with the questions relating to party-affiliations and party-loyalties of the elites.

(2) Observation : Besides a structured questionnaire, I employed another method which is known as observation. "Perhaps the greatest asset of observational techniques is that they make it possible to record behaviour as it occurs"⁴⁰. As a method of data collection I adopted both structured and unstructured observations. During the election of 1977, I moved from union to union of Phulbari and observed election campaign and propaganda in order to understand the trend of Union Parishad election. This helped me in constructing the third chapter of the study. Secondly, during the period of administering the questionnaire I had to attend Union Parishad meetings to see the attendance of the members in the meetings.

(3) Key informants : For data collection I was partially dependent on the key informants also. Because it was neither

⁴⁰ G. Solitiz. et al. Research Methods in Social Relations
(New York: Holt, Rineheart and Winston, 1959) P. 201.

possible for me alone to collect all relevant information during the period of Union Parishad election of 1977, nor I myself could attend all meetings of Union Parishads that held during the period of administering the questionnaire. The informants helped me in this regard. The informants were not paid for the purpose. They voluntarily helped me. Some of them were local college teachers, students, secretaries of the Union Parishads and some of them were my friends.

(4) Informal Interview : Elite study becomes truncated unless it is followed by the history of society where from the elites come. But Phulbari thana has no recorded history. For this reasons I informally interviewed some leading persons⁴¹ of the thana which helped partially to construct the local history.

Besides, I consulted Union Parishad election results which were available in the office of the Circle Officer (Development), Phulbari, voter lists, official records of the Union Parishads and the records of various offices of Phulbari Thana.

⁴¹ They included some members of former Union Councils, school teachers, local leaders of political parties and four old persons who were assumed by the local people as the oldest persons of the thana. Of the four old persons one was union level president of the Debt Conciliation Court in British Bengal, one was the local Congress leader of British period and two were the employees of Purbabag chakla of Cooch Behar Zamindari. About Purbabag chakla, see foot note 21 in the second chapter.

Analysis of Data

The data collected through the above mentioned methods were diverse. The data were classified, coded and put into different tables so that they might yield meaningful results.

Limitations of the Study

This is a local study. It analyses leadership pattern in the Union Parishads of a thana in Bangladesh. There may be a few similar findings in other Union Parishads located in different areas of Bangladesh. So on the basis of this study, we should not generalize the Union Parishad leadership pattern of entire Bangladesh. Moreover, data of the study were collected from January to May 1979 and in January 1980 two members for agriculture were nominated to each Union Parishad of Bangladesh. Hence it was not possible to include them in the present study. Secondly, some answers of the respondents — such as their claims about the implementation of rural development programmes and the statements of their property and income — were not verified with counter-check. A detailed verification needed much time which was not possible to spend. Over and above, what was intended in the inquiry was to find out their economic strata and to understand their attitudes towards rural development programmes undertaken by the government. Hence, voluntary statements given by them were considered adequate for the purpose.

Organisation of the Study

Textually, the whole study has been organised into seven chapters including the present one. Chapter 2 gives a short description of the study area regarding its people, economy and historical background. Chapter 3 analyses the nature of Union Parishad election and chapter 4 makes a comparative study of socio-economic background of the elites under review. Chapter 5 is devoted to their value orientations and chapter 6 discusses the nature of their party-affiliation. Chapter 7 is a concluding one which contains summary of the findings.

The outline of the study is given in the following pages:

The early history of Bengal is obscure. However, recent excavations at several sites in West Bengal have revealed the existence of a flourishing prehistoric culture of Bengal which in time may well be proved to be contemporaneous with Indian valley civilisations. Bengal enters in the full light of history with the rise of the Muslims in the mid-13th of the eleventh century A.D. Before that we have only glimpses of its history under the "Haryans and Tripuras and

¹ See also, "Bengal in History", P. 1. cited. Later to be published in A. S. London Collection in Volume.

CHAPTER 2

LOCALITY AND ITS HISTORY

Any attempt to study elites at any level calls for some understanding of the history of society where from elites come, because the history shapes the politics and the nature of elites. The history of a particular society, however, is not isolated from the history of wider society within which it exists. So the history of Phulbari thana can only be understood against the historical background of wider society — Bangladesh. A short history of Bangladesh and a brief description of Phulbari thana regarding its people, economy and historical background are given in the following pages:

Bengal

The early history of Bengal is obscure. However, recent excavations at several sites in West Bengal have revealed the existence of a flourishing pre-historic culture of Bengal which in time may well be proved to be contemporaneous with Indus valley civilization¹. Bengal emerges in the full light of history with the rise of the Palās in the middle of the eighth century A. D. Before that we have only glimpses of its history under the Mauryas and Guptas and

¹ Abu Inan, "Bengal in History", MS. consulted. Paper to be published in A. L. Basham Felicitation Volume.

under the first Bengal national monarch Śaśanka. Immediately before the coming of the Muslims in the beginning of thirteenth century A. D. the Senas held sway over Bengal. The Muslims ruled Bengal for over five hundred years. Then came the British who ruled it for about two hundred years. The British partitioned Bengal in 1905. East Bengal along with Assam became a separate province with capital at Dacca. The other province consisted of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. But the partition was annulled in 1911; and only Bengal, separated from Assam, Bihar and Orissa, constituted a governor's province. Lord Curzon was the first governor of Bengal (1905 - 1909). Bengal, again, was partitioned when in 1947 India was divided into two dominions : the Indian Union and Pakistan. West Bengal joined the Indian Union while East Bengal declared herself in favour of joining Pakistan.

Pakistan:

With the British conquest of India, the Hindus accepted the British rule normally, because to them it was nothing but the change of a ruler. So naturally every move by the British helped the Hindus at the expense of the Muslims who opposed the British rule. The Muslims not only opposed the British rule but for a long period they refused to accept the western education introduced by the British. As a result they were not trusted by the British and

were systematically ousted from the high position in the government². The Hindus, on the other hand, by remaining loyal and receiving western education came closer to the ruling authority and managed to get into almost all the professions that were open to Indian people. At that time many Muslim leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan pondered over the situation and advocated western education for the Muslims. However, after passing a long century of the British rule in India and especially, after the establishment of Aligarh College, the Muslims began to receive western education. But in the twentieth century, the condition of Muslims became so much deplorable that they were almost exposed to formidable Hindu dominance. The Muslims found themselves neglected in every field of social life. Their separate political status was threatened.

Under the circumstances, the 'All India Muslim League' was established in 1906 to achieve three objectives. Those three objectives were : promotion of the feeling of good-will between the Muslims and the British power, protection of the rights and interests of the Muslims and prevention of the feeling of hostility towards other communities. This change of Muslim attitude towards the British enabled them to gain separate electorate and weightage system

² For a detailed analysis of the British policy, see I. H. Qureshi, "The Impact of British Rule Upon the Muslims", History of the Freedom Movement, (1831 - 1905) Vol. II, Part-II, Karachi : Pakistan Historical Society, 1960, pp. 333 - 365; and A. R. Mallick, British Policy and the Muslim in Bengal (1757 - 1856), second edition, Dacca: Bangla Academy, 1977.

in the representation to the elected bodies. But the birth of the Muslim League and the award of separate electorate to the Muslims could not satisfy the Hindus. The dissatisfaction very nakedly appeared after the election of 1937. The Muslim League proposed coalition government in the provinces. The proposal was not only rejected by the Congress but its two years' rule in the provinces "between 1937 and 1939 spelt disaster for Hindu-Muslim unity".³

Thus, while Hindu communalism was simmering and driving the Muslims to the walls, the Muslim separatism was growing stronger. The Muslims developed the historic Two-Nation Theory demanding that 'the Hindus and the Muslims are two separate nations', and that is why the Muslims should have their separate homeland. On the basis of the 'Two-Nation Theory' the Muslim League adopted a resolution in 1940 demanding the partition of India into Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority areas. The general election of India in 1946 testified this demand. The Muslim League upheld the demand for Pakistan as an election issue; and won all Muslim seats in the Central Assembly and also almost all Muslim seats in the Provincial Assemblies. In the post election period, the constitutional crisis as well as communal riots became serious in the country and the partition of India appeared to be the only solution. Hence the British government was compelled to partition India and Pakistan came into existence in 1947. The territory

³ N. A. Muhith, "1947 and 1971 in the Subcontinent : A Study of Parallels; the Second Partition of the Subcontinent", The Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Vol. II (1977), P. 114.

of Pakistan consisted of the provinces of Sind, West Punjab, North-West Frontier and Baluchistan in the west and only East Bengal along with Sylhet district of Assam in the east. In addition, the territory of Pakistan included the princely states that acceded to it.

In Bengal, the Muslims were greatly influenced by the 'Two Nation Theory and whole heartedly supported the Pakistan movement. Apart from the causes that led the Muslims of India to join the Pakistan movement, the Muslims of Bengal were moved by other two reasons also. One was the Zamindari system and other was the partition of Bengal in 1905. A short description of the Zamindari system and the partition of Bengal is given below:

(a) Zamindari System

Zamindari system was introduced in Bengal under the permanent settlement Act of 1793. The Act created a new class of Zamindars in Bengal who were to act as the intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. The main purpose of this system was to collect revenue regularly and in this regard the Zamindars were given much power. The Government was indifferent to the subjects and was not interested for their protection against the interest of the Zamindars. The Zamindars oppressed the subjects in every conceivable manner. They collected illegal cesses from the subjects which were many times

greater than the actual rent⁴. But the fact is that, almost all Zamindars were Hindus, who tortured the Muslim subjects with or without reason. Despite their unwillingness, the Muslim subjects were forced by the Zamindars to subscribe to Hindu religious ceremonies. Though sacrificing of cow during Eid-ul-Azha day is an important religious function for the Muslims, it was prohibited by the zamindars⁵. There are also instances, that some Hindu Zamindars imposed tax upon the Muslim subjects for keeping their beards⁶. This anti-Muslim attitude of the Zamindars divided the whole population into two parties — on the one side were the Zamindars and the Hindus, especially the rich class; and on the other were the Muslims. As a result, the Hindu-Muslim relationship turned into communalism. Thus, "the report on Pabna Trail, showed that if any complainant was a Hindu, the defendant invariably was Muslim and vice versa"⁷.

⁴ For details, see S. C. Chatterjee, Bengal Royts : Their Rights and Liberties (Calcutta : K. P. Bagchi, 1977). Also see Mantasir Hossain ed., & Chirosthai Bondobasto O Bangali Samaj (The Permanent Settlement and Bangali Society) (Dacca University : Itihas Charcha Kendra, Dept. of History, 1976).

⁵ A. Rahim et al. Bangladesher Itihas (The History of Bangladesh) (Dacca : Nawroz Kitabistan, 1977), P. 368 and A. K. M. Anisul Islam, Bangladesh Village : Conflict and Cohesion (Cambridge, Mass : Schenkman Publishing Company, 1964), P. 69.

⁶ See Shamsun Nahar, "The Agrarian Uprising of Titu Mir, 1831: The Economics of a Revivalist Movement, The Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Vol. I, No. I (1976), Pp. 104 - 115.

⁷ K. K. Sen Gupta, Pabna Disturbances and Politics of Rent (New Delhi : People's Publishing House, 1974), P. 51. Here Sen Gupta referred to Bengal Judicial Proceedings, File 448, No. 77, August, 1873.

(b) Partition of Bengal

The Partition of Bengal in 1905 had a far-reaching effect in the political history of Bengal. During that period, East Bengal was dependent on Calcutta for two main reasons. First, East Bengal was a raw material producing area. It had to depend on Calcutta as it was the capital of Bengal and as such a place where almost all industries flourished. Second, East Bengal was famous in the world for its handicraft. But it had to depend on Calcutta city for selling its products. Thus, when the partition of Bengal took place, the Muslims of East Bengal who constituted preponderant majority of the population, became very happy. They hoped that they would make better progress in a separate province, governed from Dacca. With the establishment of capital at Dacca, with High Court, Secretariat, Assembly House, and other fine buildings, the Muslims of East Bengal felt a new pride. The partition did away with their dependence on Hindu-city Calcutta. To them it was nothing but their liberation from the clutches of Hindu domination. But the partition was opposed by the Hindus and they started their agitation for the annulment of the partition. Their protest meetings, "processions and chanting slogan of Bande Mataram, a song disliked by the Muslims of Eastern Bengal particularly, were considered a danger for the peace of the new province"⁸. "The movement took clear anti-Muslim turn and was run

⁸ Syed Razi Wasti, Lord Minto and Indian Nationalist Movement, 1905 - 1910, London : Oxford University Press, 1964, P. 28.

and organised on Hindu lines. Hindu goddesses and gods were appealed to and oaths were taken in the temple of Kali"⁹. In short, "the tactics adopted by the Hindu leaders to mobilize public opinion against the partition of Bengal led to strong difference between Hindus and Muslims"¹⁰.

The Muslims of East Bengal under the leadership of Sir Salimullah opposed the annulment. The British government also gave assurance to the Muslims that partition is a settled fact and it must continue. But the partition was annulled in 1911. At this, the Muslims got severe shock and their good faith in the British as well as in the Hindus was badly shaken¹¹.

Bangladesh

It is true that at the time of partition in 1947 there was imbalance between East and West Pakistan. Among the ICS (Indian Civil Service) and IPS (Indian Police Service) officers who opted for Pakistan, only two were from East Bengal¹². Also the British policy of army recruitment from 'martial races' of West Pakistan

⁹ K. D. Sayeed, Pakistan : The Formative Phase, second edition (London : Oxford University Press, 1968), Pp. 26 - 27.

¹⁰ Syed Razi Wasti, op. cit., Pp. 30 - 31.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of the Partition of Bengal in 1905, see H. R. U. Molla, "The New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905 - 1911" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1965)

¹² H. A. Chaudhury, The Civil Service in Pakistan (Dacca: National Institute of Public Administration, 1963), P. 78.

deprived Bangladesh of Army almost completely. In addition to these, before partition, East Bengal, as stated earlier, was hinter-land of West Bengal. Again the partition also increased this imbalance. After partition, wealth flowed from East Bengal to India. For, the economy of East Bengal was controlled by the Hindu Zamindars and Marwaries (business group); and after partition, they migrated to India with their accumulated capital, as far as they could. The case of West Pakistan was different. It neither lost any capital area nor its economy was controlled by the non-Muslims. Though a few non-Muslims migrated from West Pakistan to India, most of the Muslim capitalists who left India for Pakistan, settled in West Pakistan in quest of better prospects, as the central capital of Pakistan was located there. On the other hand, "the Muslim evacuees who came from India to Bangladesh were mostly poor cultivators, petty landholders and landless labourers"¹³. But it is surprise that in the history of 24 years of united Pakistan, no systematic effort was taken by the central government of Pakistan to remove these imbalances. Over and above, they always pursued the policy of domination and exploitation against East Bengal. Their deliberate policy of domination not only attacked the Bengali literature and culture, but also endangered democratic process of Pakistan. Their attempt at making Urdu as the

¹³ M. Azhar-ud-Din, "Employment and Labour Productivity - Implications for Disparity in Regional Growth, The Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Vol. II, 1977, p. 102.

only state language of Pakistan laid the foundation of Bengali nationalism¹⁴ and their successive attempts not to hand over power to East Bengalis through democratic practices, produced in East Bengal, first, the politics of regionalism¹⁵, second, the demand for complete autonomy; and finally, the struggle for independence. The result was that Bangladesh came into existence in 1971 as an independent state¹⁶.

Phulbari Thana at the National Setting

For the convenience of administration, Bangladesh is divided into four divisions : Dacca, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. Again each division contains several districts. Rajshahi division has five districts; namely, Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra, Dinajpur and Rangpur. Next to the district, there are sub-divisions. Before January 1980, Rangpur district consisted of four sub-divisions; namely, Rangpur Sadar,

¹⁴For details, see S. A. Akanda, "The National Language : Potent Force for Transforming East Pakistani Regionalism into Bengali Nationalism", The Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Vol. I, No. 1 (1976) Pp. 1 - 29.

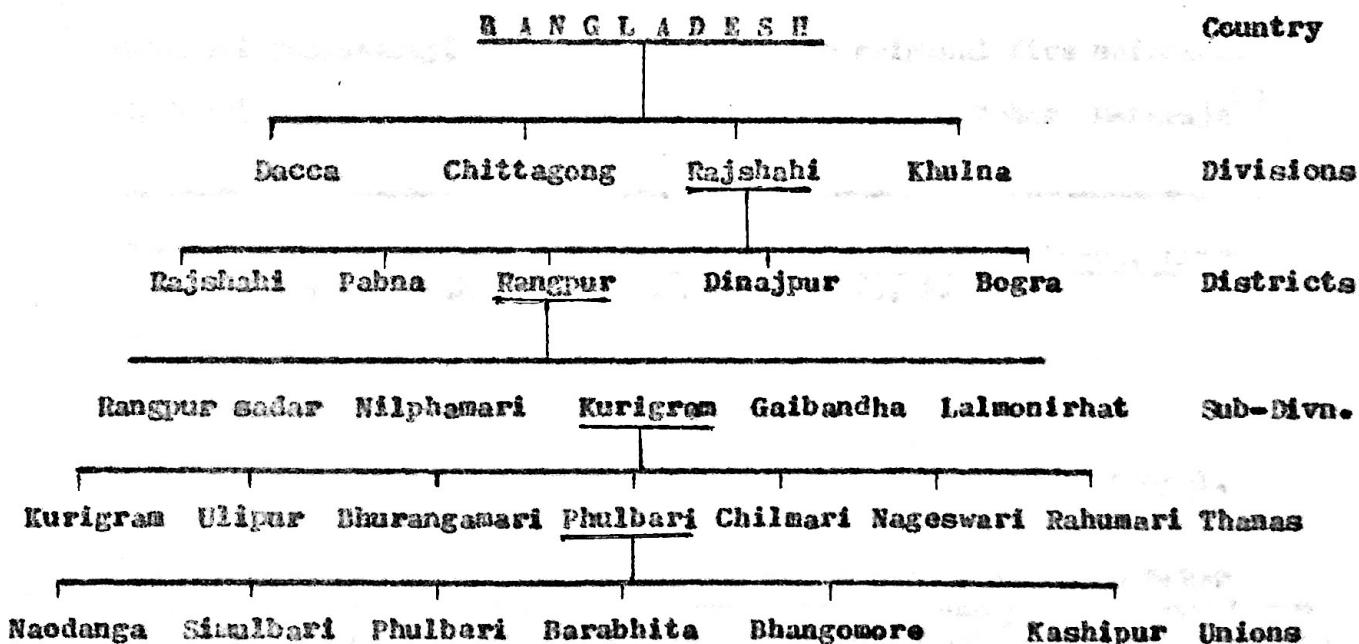
¹⁵For details, see S. A. Akanda, "East Pakistan and Politics of Regionalism" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Denver, 1970).

¹⁶For a detailed analysis of the independence of Bangladesh, see G.V. Choudhury, Last Days of United Pakistan (London : C. Hurst, 1974); Raunaq Jahan, Pakistan: Failure in National Integration (Bangladesh: Oxford University Press, 1973) and G. Morshed, "Separation of East Pakistan, 1954 - 71" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Queen's University, 1975).

~~divisions; namely, Rangpur sadar, Gaibandha, Nilphamari and Kurigram.~~
 Now Lalmonirhat, a former thana of Kurigram, along with other thanas of Rangpur sadar has become the fifth sub-division of Rangpur district. Below sub-division, there are police stations or thanas. At present Kurigram sub-division is composed of seven thanas; viz., Kurigram, Ulipur, Rahumari, Chilmari, Bhurangamari, Nageswari and Phulbari. Again each thana is divided into unions. Phulbari thana consists of six unions. These are : Naodanga, Simulbari, Phulbari, Barabhatta, Bhagamore and Kashipur (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

**Phulbari Thana in the Administrative Structure of
Bangladesh**



The above administrative units are neither the creation of Bangladesh nor of Pakistan. For the convenience of administration and revenue collection those units were created in Bengal in various times. Divisions were created during the British period. But the districts were created in the Muslim period. "Todermaal, the Imperial Dewan of Emperor Akbar divided Bengal into 19 sarkars or districts"¹⁷. So also the thanas, as the lowest units of police administration were created before the creation of sub-division. The thanas were created in 1793 whereas the sub-divisions were created in 1875 and unions in 1870. Phulbari, before becoming a separate thana, was a part of Lalmonirhat thana (recently created sub-division). It was separated from Lalmonirhat in 1944¹⁸. Originally Phulbari thana consisted of five unions. In 1937, Kashipur, a union of Nageswari thana, was included in it¹⁹. During the period of Zamindari system, Kashipur was under Bhitarband Zamindari of Maharani Swaranamayi of Murshidabad²⁰. The original five unions of Phulbari thana were under the Zamindari of Coach Behar Moharaja²¹.

¹⁷ Nurul Islam Khan, gen. ed. Bangladesh District Gazetteers, Rangpur (Dacca: Bangladesh Government Press, 1977), P. 250.

¹⁸ Ibid., P. 293.

¹⁹ Source : Kashipur Union Parishad Office.

²⁰ For details, see W. W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. VII, reprint, (Delhi: D. K. publishing House 1974).

²¹ There were six chaklas or divisions of Zamindari of Coach Behar Moharaja in the district of Rangpur (Ibid.). Those chaklas were known by the name of the Tahsil Office. Among the chaklas, Purbabhad chakla was situated at Phulbari thana. Still Purbabhad sub-post office of Phulbari bears the name.

and of other local Zamindars. Of the local Zamindars, Keshob Chandra of Simulbari, Monmohan Bakshi, Promananda Ranjan Bakshi and Upendra Bhattacharyya of Nowdanga were famous. The Zamindari of Phulbari were abolished with the implementation of the East Bengal Estate Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950.

Territory of Phulbari Thana

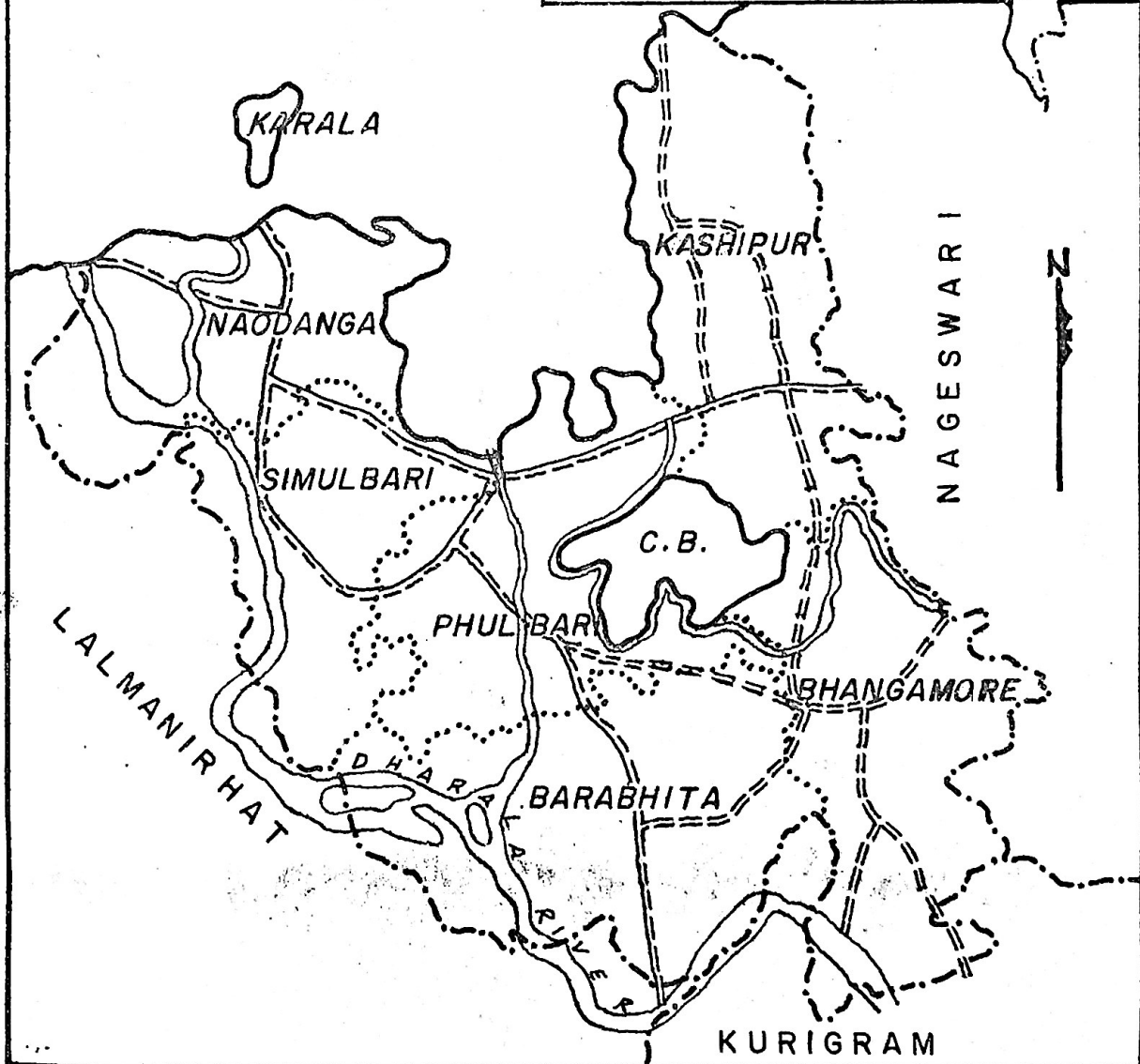
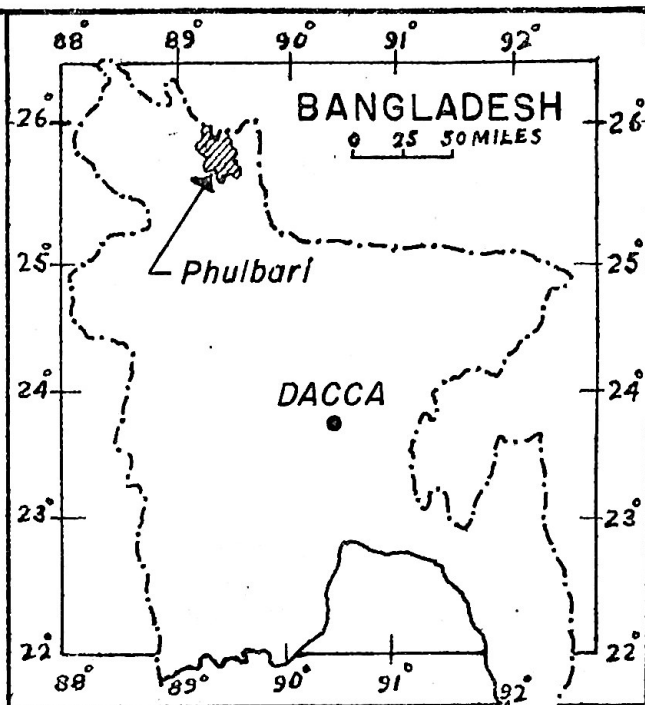
Phulbari, that stands on the side of Cooch Behar (West Bengal, India), is a thana of Kurigram, the north-eastern sub-division of Rangpur district lying between $25^{\circ}53'$ and $26^{\circ}14'$ N. Latitude; and $89^{\circ}20'$ and $89^{\circ}55'$ E. Longitude. Phulbari is situated at the distance of 12 miles north of Kurigram town, sub-divisional headquarters, and 8 miles east of Lalmonirhat town, newly created sub-divisional headquarters and district headquarters of Bangladesh Railway. It is separated from Kurigram and Lalmonirhat by the Dharla river. Thus, in the south-west, Phulbari is bound by the Dharla river, by Kageswari thana in the east and in the north it faces Cooch Behar district of West Bengal, India. Phulbari is the smallest thana of Kurigram sub-division. It covers an area of 63 sq miles including its two enclaves; namely, Shibprasad Mustafi and Karala which are located within Indian territory and excluding an Indian enclave which is situated within its territory (see, C. B. — Cooch Behar

PHULBARI THANA

0 1 2 MILES

International Boundary ———
 Thana — · — · —
 Union · · · · ·
 District Board Road = = = = =
 Thana Parisad " = = = = =
 River

COOCH BEHAR
 SIBPRASAD MUSTAFI



in the Map)²². It is very interesting that within this Indian enclave Bangladesh has also land where live 12 Khanas (households)²³. Sibprasad Mustafi is situated within Cooch Behar at a distance of about 4 miles north of Phulbari and Karala is also situated within Cooch Behar about half mile north of Phulbari (see Map). According to the census of 1961, the areas of Sibprasad Mustafi and Karala are 373 and 270 acres respectively, but the census

²² Sibprasad Mustafi and Karala, are two separate mouzas of Naodanga Union, but there was neither any recorded history nor the people of Phulbari could say how and when these two mouzas, located in Cooch Behar, became the part of Naodanga. However, it appears from the various land records (1934) that these two mouzas were under the Zamindari of Upendra Bhattacharyya of Naodanga. Being located within Indian territory, little is known about their administration, but so far I collected information both are locally administered by Pradhans (chiefs). During 1973, Sibprasad Mustafi was administered by Rajendra Prasad Chatterjee, who was also a member of Dinhatra Town Committee (Dinhata is a thana of Cooch Behar district), and Karala was administered by Giasuddin Bepari. At the time of Union Parishad election in 1973 the voters of these two enclaves came to Naodanga to cast their votes. But during the election of 1977 they were not allowed by Indian authority to come to Phulbari crossing the Indian land. Of course, election authority of Bangladesh communicated with Indian authority so that the polling officers may go to the enclaves for holding election. The Indian authority, however, allowed nobody from Bangladesh to cross Indian land. So election of 1977 did not hold in these enclaves. The people of these enclaves use Indian currency, go to Indian markets and their students read at Indian schools and colleges. The similar case is with Indian enclave, known as Dasiar Sara, situated within Phulbari. Before 1947, this Indian enclave was a part of Cooch Behar state and as the Maharaja of Cooch Behar joined India, so the enclave became the part of India.

²³ Source: Phulbari Union Parishad Office.

was silent about their population. The census of 1974 dropped these enclaves from the territory of Bangladesh, but the voter lists of 1973 and 1976 registered 300 and 450 voters respectively from Sib-prasad Mustafi and Karala.

Phulbari and National Movement

The Muslims of Phulbari, like other Muslims of Bengal spontaneously participated in the Pakistan movement. During that time there was neither radio nor regular newspaper in Phulbari. When the partition of India took place in 1947, the news for the creation of Pakistan was announced to the people by beating drums in the roads, hats (bi-weekly markets) and bazars (daily markets). The liberation of 1971 was not like that of the independence of 1947. It was an armed struggle with terror and genocide²⁴. But Phulbari was fortunate in this regard. During the period of liberation war it was always a liberated area. The Pakistan army could not dare to reach Phulbari because, as mentioned earlier, its north, south and west sides are surrounded by Indian territory and by the Dharla river. In spite of its being a liberated area, the people of Phulbari crossed the border after April, 1971, for the fear of sudden attack of the occupation army.

²⁴ For an elaborate discussion of genocide in Bangladesh during the liberation war of 1971, see Kalyan Chaudhury, Genocide in Bangladesh. (Bombay : Orient Longman Ltd., 1972).

During the entire month of April, 1971, Phulbari was used as a purchasing centre of gold, silver, copper and other metal articles. Many people of Gaibanda, Rangpur sadar and Kurigram who crossed the border used Phulbari as detour due to its seclusion from the occupation army control. Those people, while leaving the motherland, could take nothing with them, but the gold, silver and other relatively portable and valuable metal articles. They sold these materials at Phulbari to the unknown businessmen. The local people reported that after the liberation the number of those unknown faces largely increased. They would sit at Phulbari market in row, from dawn till dark, and purchased gold, silver, etc. including coins of Pakistan period.

The People : Socio-religious Groupings and Demographic View

With respect to settlement, the people of Phulbari may be classified as locals and non-locals. Again the non-locals may be divided into — in-migrants and immigrants. The in-migrants (who migrated from one district to another), locally known as Bhatiyas²⁵,

²⁵ the word Bhatiya came from Bengali word Bhati means downward direction of a stream. In Bangladesh, the stream of the river follows from north south. Hence, the southern districts of Bangladesh are called Bhati Anchal (region). As the in-migrants have come from different southern districts of Rangpur, they are locally known as Bhatiyas.

came here from different districts of Bangladesh in different times. They started settling here at the beginning of the twentieth century, when there was a great influx of Muslims from Pabna, Bogra and Mymensingh to the new formations along the Jamuna river. Like other in-migrants, ^{the} ~~immigrants~~ of Phulbari also left their birth place for the new formations but as it was already occupied by the others²⁶, they rushed to Phulbari attracted by the char areas of the Barla river and settled there.²⁶ Later on, they became tenure-holders of uncultivated lands and jungle lands of Zamindars and Jotdars (petty landlords) by rendering manual services to them and/or paying nominal prices. Secondly, the prices of these uncultivated lands and jungle lands being comparatively low, many in-migrants purchased these lands and settled there. However, the char lands and the low prices of uncultivated lands and jungle lands attracted the in-migrants to settle at Phulbari in different times. The process of in-migration continued in Phulbari till the liberation of Bangladesh. But the surprising point is that Bangladesh District Gazetteers, Rangpur (1977) has neglected these people and only has given the information of in-migrants of neighbouring thanas by stating that, "In Kurigram sub-division, Nageswari and Bhurungamari police station contain char areas and they together with Rahumari had received from the districts of Mymensingh, Pabna and Bogra, immigrants commonly known as Bhatiyas who had colonised the chars"²⁷. The in-migrants are largely

²⁶ Char is new formations, i.e. the land rising out of the bed of the river. Char is khush land i.e. revenue-free public land.

²⁷ District Gazetteers, Rangpur, op.cit., P. 55.

concentrated in Kashipur and Maodanga. According to the local people before thirties of the present century about half of Kashipur was covered with jungle. The char area of Maodanga is also greater than other unions of Phulbari.

The immigrants, known as refugees or muhajirs, came here from India after the partition of India in 1947. The partition of India in 1947, created immigration problem in both India and Pakistan. Many Hindus from Pakistan migrated to India. Also many Muslims from India migrated to Pakistan. Being its location on the border, Phulbari was considered as advantageous place by both immigrants and emigrants for the exchange of their properties. Many Hindus left Phulbari for India after exchanging their lands with the Muslims who also left India for Pakistan. The immigrants, generally have settled in those places where from the Zamindars and other Hindus migrated to India.

Both in-migrants and immigrants are Muslims. Among the locals majority are Muslims and the rest are Hindus. Like all other Muslims, the Muslims of Phulbari have high regard for pirs, the spiritual teachers. In this respect, a small section of the Muslims is known as Halka group. Halka is a Arabic word which means to sit round. As these people say zaker (i.e. to say word 'Allah' and the similar words) sitting round together, they are known as Halka people²⁸. However, there is no official record about the numbers of people

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of the Halka group, see foot note II in the Third Chapter.

belonging to these different socio-religious groups. According to the Census of 1961, 17.37 per cent of the population of Phulbari thana were Hindus and the rest were Muslims including in-migrants, immigrants and locals. The Census of 1974 has dropped separate schedules of the Muslims and Hindus at thana level. In 1974, the total number of population of this thana was 89308 with an average density of 1418 persons per sq mile. Of the total population, 45848 were males and 43460 females. The sex ratio was 95 females to 100 males. In 1961 the population of the thana was 60338 and the density of population was 958 persons per sq mile. Of the total population, 31036 were males and 29312 females, the sex ratio being 94 females to 100 males. From 1961 to 1974 the yearly average increase in the population of the thana was 3.69 per cent. The thana had 6548 literate persons in 1961 and with the increase in population the number of literate persons also increased and reached 11022 in 1974, i.e., the percentage of literacy was 12.03 in 1961 and 14.64 in 1974. In 1961, the total number of households of the thana was 11470 and the number stood 16070 in 1974. The average size of households was 5.26 persons in 1961 and 5.55 in 1974. Union-wise demographic view of Phulbari thana has been given in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Union-wise Demographic View of Phulbari, 1961 and 1974

Name of Union	Total number of population		Number of males		Number of females		Number of literates		Number of house-holds	
	61	74	61	74	61	74	61	74	61	74
Naodanga	7441	11651	3702	5965	3649	5649	830	1118	1407	2076
Simulbari	7191	9830	3770	5114	3421	4766	629	843	1357	1734
Baravita	11771	16860	6103	8632	5668	8228	1126	2117	2129	2922
Phulbari	10784	16761	5524	8549	5260	8212	1349	2194	2150	3015
Kashipur	12801	18465	6553	9493	6248	8974	1676	2795	2450	3565
Bhanganore	10350	15691	5284	8095	5066	7996	930	1955	1977	2758
Total:	60338	89308	31026	45048	29312	43460	6540	11022	11470	16070

Sources: a) Population Census of Pakistan 1961, District Census Report, Rangpur (Home Affairs Division, Ministry of Home and Kashmir Affairs), pp /151-155; and

b) Population Census of Bangladesh 1974, Village Population Statistics Rangpur District (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning), pp.73-74.

Local Offices and Institutions

Phulbari contains a Thana training and development Centre which accommodates some government and semi-government thana level offices including the office of the Circle Officer (Development); police station; a sub-registry office and a branch of Pubali Bank. Recently a jute purchasing centre of Jute Trading Corporation with a godown has been opened here. There is a locally financed hospital at Naodanga. At present the thana contains one college, five high schools, four junior high schools and sixty-one primary schools. In addition to these, there are one fazil madrasah, two dakhil madrasahs and ten forkania madrasahs²⁹. There are fourteen clubs and cultural societies in the thana³⁰.

Communication, Transport and Marketing Facilities

Although Rangpur district is well provided with railway communication with both broad gauge and meter gauge lines running more than 250 miles, no rail line touches the land of Phulbari. Also

²⁹ Source : Thana Education Office, Phulbari.

There are two types of madrasah (Islamic School) education in Bangladesh. One type of madrasah education is directed by the Madrasah Education Board, Dacca. Like the general education, this type of madrasah education has five stages: (a) Ebtodayee (Primary), (b) Dakhil (Secondary), (c) Alim (Higher Secondary), (d) Fazil (Graduation) and Kamil (Master). The other type of madrasah education is managed locally. In some madrasahs of this type higher Islamic education is given, but in forkania madrasahs simply the reading of Holy Quran and the fundamental religious principles are taught.

³⁰

But not a single club or society was registered by the government during my survey period.

there is no pucca (metalled) road in Phulbari, except a harin bone bond road of about a half mile which passes from Phulbari college to the headquarters of police station and TTDC (Thana Training and Development Centre) buildings. There are kutchha (constructed by earth) roads of 117 miles in the thana. The conditions of the District Parishad roads and the Thana Parishad roads are more or less good, but most of the other roads (Union Parishad roads and other local roads) are on a delapidated condition. Small bridges and culverts are found in the roads. But many bridges and culverts are in a state of disrepair. Temporary bamboo bridges are built on the roads during rainy season. The thana contains one sub-post office, located at Phulbari proper and three branches of post office located at different unions. The sub-post office and the police station are telephonically connected with Lalmonirhat.

The remote areas of Rangpur are well connected with district and sub-divisional town by bus service, but no such service is available in Phulbari. Ferry-boat is the only service that connects Phulbari with Kurigram and Lalmonirhat. By-cycles are highly used here. A few motor cycles are also seen in use. The cart drawn by bullock or buffalo is the main vehicle for transport. Next to cart, the boat is an important means of transport during rainy season.

There are five hats (bi-weekly markets) and four bazars (daily markets) in Phulbari^{Thana}. Owing to the lack of road communication its markets are not so developed to meet all requirements of the

local people. The prices of daily necessary commodities which are locally produced, also fluctuate greatly. One of the possible reasons for this is the smuggling across the border.

Dwelling Houses and Settlement Pattern

Phulbari contains 50 villages. The villages consist of scattered groups of houses embedded in dense groves of bamboos and other trees including fruit ones. The house of an ordinary villager consists of one to three small and ill ventilated rooms with a kitchen and a cow-shed; all these are built on three or four sides of the courtyard. A few rich villagers have outer houses for visitors. The walls of the houses are made of bamboo or of thatches tied up with the pieces of bamboo. The roof is made of thatches and is supported on bamboo posts. Some rich people have corrugated tin houses with pucca floors (brick-built). Brick-built house is not seen here, except the Zamindars' dilapidated houses and governmental office buildings. Some families are found to live under the trees.

Land and Agriculture

The alluvial origin of the soil, the annual reinforcement of silt from inundations, and the copious and regular rainfall explains (sic) the remarkable fertility of soil in Wangpur. ... In the north and the east the soil is sandy loam, consisting of alluvium of more or less recent formation. The higher lands which

are beyond the reach of inundations are less fertile than the lower ones. The lower region gets silt from the Tista, the Dharla and the Brahmaputra³¹.

Phulbari thana is situated at the extreme north and east of Rangpur. It gets silt from the Dharla. The land being much fertile, the crops are produced here, with minimum efforts. The land of the thana may be classified into three types: (a) the original land, locally called guione land i.e. the land which is not the formation of river, (b) char land, i.e. the new formations of the Dharla river and (c) Mara nadir char land, i.e. the old formations of the Dharla river. Again in respect of high and low, the guione land is divided into two types : one type is called danga (comparatively high) and the other type is dola (comparatively low).

All land, whatever, relatively high or low; char or guione , can produce paddy. Jute is also widely cultivated here. Next to jute, stands the cultivation of chilly. In recent years wheat is also grown here. In the year 1974-75 wheat cultivated area was 25 acres but in 1977-78 it increased to 650 acres³². Tobacco, pulses, mustard and other vegetables are also produced here. Paddy is the staple and principal food crop. The three main varieties of paddy - Aman, Aus and Boro are grown here³³. The Aman, by far

³¹ District Gazetteers, Rangpur, op.cit., P. 90.

³² Source : Thana Agriculture Office, Phulbari.

³³ Aman is harvested in winter; Aus in autumn and Boro in spring.

Like all other parts of Bangladesh, the HYV (High Yielding Varieties) technology is also practised in Phulbari. For irrigation 17 deep tube-wells of BADC (Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation) have been installed here. In addition to these 15 private shallow tube-wells and 17 power pumps both private and BADC are in operation³⁵. In relation to agriculture there are 28 agricultural co-operative societies in the Thana³⁶.

35. Source : Thana Sub-Unit Office, Phulbari.

[illegible]

CHAPTER 3

ELECTION OF UNION PARISHAD : THE
POLITICS OF GROUPING

The rural politics is basically influenced by groupings in the villages. Two types of groupings are found in the villages. One type is based on various socio-religious feelings of the people, while the other is temporarily formed to attain some goals. The latter type is generally based on the question of neighbourhood, faction and the like. In the second chapter I have mentioned that the people of Phulbari thana are divided into two major communities: Hindus and Muslims; and again, some Muslims are grouped as in-migrants, immigrants and halaka people. In this chapter I shall analyse how these socio-religious groupings and other temporary groupings of the people influence Union Parishad elections. A short discussion of these various groupings and their roles substantiated by some election results has been given below¹.

¹The fundamental idea of the present chapter is based on my three years' experience of living at Phulbari before joining the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University. The data of this chapter were collected mainly during the Union Parishad election of 1977, through observation, key informants and consultation of Union Parishad election results and voter lists. In addition, the responses of the respondents about the causes of their failure in the election helped in analysing the data. Here it may be mentioned that the percentages of the voters, covering two elections, which have been used throughout this chapter, were calculated from the voter list of 1973, according to which the Union Parishad election of that year was held. There was another voter list in 1976 for the election of 1977. The voter list of 1976 registered more new voters and dropped a few voters of 1973 who died. Thus, although the number of the voters registered in the voter list of 1976 was greater than that of 1973, the percentages of voters in the unions or wards, which I have used in this chapter, remained the same, but a difference of around one per cent, in both the voter lists. Hence, for the advantage of analysis of two elections I have used the percentages of the voters in the voter list of 1973.

Communal Groupings

Communalism is an old problem of Indo-Pak-Bangladesh sub-continent. It was communalism which, as stated previously, gave birth to Two-Nation Theory in the British India and as a result India was partitioned in 1947. But the partition of India and even the creation of secular Bangladesh in 1971 failed to resolve this problem. Communalism, still, exists in this part of the world. The creation of secular Bangladesh and the introduction of certain secular reforms might be the causes for the disintegration of communalism at the national level; but at the local level, especially, during Union Parishad election, it is still a dominating factor.

I have presented in the second chapter that Phulbari thana was under the Hindu Zamindars. The Zamindar-subject relationship of the thana, however, was not different from that prevailing in other parts of Bengal. Before seeking local election a subject needed permission from the Zamindar concerned². The Hindus were fortunate enough in this regard and very rarely the Muslims would get such permission. This policy and other anti-Muslim policies pursued by the Zamindars created in the minds of Muslims a feeling of anti-Zamindars and of anti-Hindus. Consequently, the Hindus, who controlled the authorities of the unions, were dropped from the scene after the establishment

² Baizsar Rahman, Union Board Nirbachan O Zamindar : Ekti Alochana (Union Board Election and the Zamindars : A review), (unpublished paper, Phulbari, 1937) P. 19

of Pakistan. The reason is that for becoming a president/chairman, as stated earlier, one had to command the support of majority members, but no Union Board/Council of Phulbari thana was composed of Hindu majority members, because the Muslims constitutes majority of the population in every union. Due to communal feeling generally the Muslims do not like to vote for a Hindu, when Muslim candidate is available and vice versa. Hence, no Hindu candidate had scope for becoming president/chairman of any union of the thana, except a few members who were elected from Hindu majority wards. In other words, as the Muslims were politically suppressed before due to communal feeling; after the creation of Pakistan, the same feeling has placed the minority Hindus in a disadvantageous position against the majority Muslims. However, an opportunity for becoming chairman came to the Hindu community, when in 1973, the election of chairman by the voters of entire union was introduced in the country³. In the election of 1973 two Hindus became chairmen in two unions of Phulbari thana. See Table 3.1.

³ It may be mentioned here that there was also provision for direct election of the president of Union Board by the voters of entire union in the election of 1956, but no Hindu contested for presidency in any union of the thana. It was the first direct election of president by the voters of entire union and contesting candidates were two or three in the unions (source: field survey data). Possibly this discouraged the Hindus to contest for presidency, because in presence of two or three Muslim candidates the Hindu candidates had no possibility of winning.

Table 3.1

Election Results for the Seats of Chairmen in Two Unions : Union 1 Comprised 23.29 Per Cent Hindu Voters and Union 2 Comprised 31.60 Per Cent Hindu Voters. The Remaining Voters in both the Unions were Muslims.

Year of election	Serial No.	No. of seat	Number of contesting candidates			Returning candidate	
			Total	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim
1973	Union 1	1	5	1	4	1	-
1973	Union 2	1	5	1	4	1	-
1977	Union 1	1	5	2	3	-	1
1977	Union 2	1	5	1	4	-	1

Source : Office of the Circle Officer (Development), Phulbari.

Table 3.1 presents that in the election of 1973 one Hindu candidate from Union 1, constituting 23.29 per cent Hindu voters⁴, contested for chairmanship with four Muslim candidates. Also another Hindu candidate from Union 2 comprising 31.60 per cent Hindu voters,

⁴ The Hindu voters were chalked out from the voter list by counting Hindu names, because in Bangladesh there is a sharp difference between the names of Hindus and Muslims. The names of Muslims are generally Arabic words, beginning with the word Muhammad, while the names of Hindus are non-Arabic words beginning with the word Sri.

contested for chairmanship with four Muslim candidates. The result was that both of the Hindu candidates returned. It was possible for them to be elected as chairmen, because in these two unions there was no division of Hindu votes, as there was no other contesting Hindu candidate for chairmanship. On the other hand, although the Muslim voters constituted majority, their votes were divided among the four candidates in each election; and thus, the division paved the way for returning the Hindu candidates. It is to be noted that when these two sitting Hindu chairmen contested for the same seats in the next election, 1977, they could not return. As for the sitting chairman of Union 1, there was another contesting Hindu candidate for chairmanship⁵. Hence, the Hindu votes were divided between two candidates. The Muslim votes were also divided among the four candidates. But voter-to-candidate ratio of the Muslims (76.71% : 3) being higher than the ratio of the Hindus (23.29% : 2), one Muslim candidate returned. Not to speak of two, had there been only one Hindu candidate, probably, he could not return, because if we suppose that the Muslim votes were divided among the Muslim candidates equally, then, the ratio 23.29% : 1 would be less than the ratio 76.71% : 3. The other sitting Hindu chairman of Union 2, although, contested with four Muslims in 1977, he could not return.

⁵ The new Hindu candidate for chairmanship was a school teacher. He contested, because of his factional conflict with the ex-chairman. For faction, see section, 'Factional Groupings and Other Unorganised Groupings' in this chapter.

He had possibility of returning, if the Muslim votes were divided among the four candidates, like the election of 1973. But in 1977 the situation was different. After the termination of date for withdrawal of candidature, three Muslim candidates came to a compromise according to which two decided not to contest the election supporting the remaining one. So in fact, there were two Muslim candidates; and since voter-to-candidate ratio of the Muslims (68.40% : 2) was higher than that of the Hindus (31.60% : 1), one Muslim candidate returned. It will be interesting here to analyse the election results of the members and to see how communal feeling worked in their election too. The results of two consecutive elections for the seats of member presented in Table 3.2 reveal that in ward 1 having Hindu majority voters (52%), two candidates from the Hindu community contested for the seats of member in the election of 1973 and they returned. In the next election, 1977, there were also two Hindu candidates for the same, who also returned. The election results in the table also reveal that in ward 2, which constituted Muslim majority voters (69.32%), all returning candidates for membership were Muslims in the elections of 1973 and 1977. A Muslim candidate returned in Hindu majority ward 1 in both the elections. But this was most likely, because a ward, as stated earlier, is represented by three members and Hindu contesting candidates were two. The reason for returning of the Hindu candidates from ward 1 in two successive elections was that every voter was entitled to cast three votes for electing three members; and the

Table 3.2

Election Results for the Seats of Member in Two Wards : Ward 1
Comprised 52 Per Cent Hindu Voters and the Rest were Muslims, While
Ward 2 Comprised 69.32 Per Cent Muslim Voters and the Rest were Hindus.

Year of election	Serial No.	No. of seats	No. of votes enjoyed by a voter	No. of contesting candidates			No. of returning candidates	
				Total	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim
1973	Ward 1	3	3	5	2	3	2	1
1977	Ward 1	3	3	6	2	4	2	1
1973	Ward 2	3	3	7	2	5	-	3
1977	Ward 2	3	3	8	2	6	-	3

Source : Office of the Circle Officer (Development),
Phulbari

Hindu voters, being majority (52%), could easily elect two Hindu candidates. On the contrary, the other two Hindu candidates from Muslim majority ward 2 failed in the election, because 30.68 per cent Hindu voters were not enough to elect candidate(s) against 69.32 per cent Muslim voters having five or six candidates, when every voter had three votes for electing three members⁶.

⁶ It may be mentioned here that according to the system of three votes for every voter, if a voter votes more than one^{for a} candidate, his one vote remains valid.

In-migrant and Local Groupings

The conflict between in-migrants (interdistrict migrants) and locals is one of the social problems in Bangladesh⁷. According to Jahan, "such interdistrict migration creates interdistrict conflict. The riots against pre-dominantly Noakhali born labor in the industrial city of Khulna in 1964 were an example of this kind of conflict"⁸. Phulbari thana is not exception to this conflict. It has already been discussed that many in-migrants have settled here. They came from different districts of Bangladesh. It is, however, surprising to note that, though the in-migrants have been living here permanently for long years, still the local people consider them as outsiders; and maintain little contact with them (in-migrants). This attitude of the majority locals has placed the minority in-migrants in a awkward position in all aspects of social life and consequently a spirit of unity has grown among them. Though the in-migrants maintain their district (where from they migrated) identities among themselves in their personal relationship, they form a corporate group to contest against the locals during local election. Table 3.3 reveals this trend. The table shows that an in-migrant from a union under review constituting 42.49 per cent in-migrant voters⁹, contested in the

⁷ For details, see S.H.Khan, "Beyond the Trap of Tradition ? In-migrants and Locals in a Rural Community of Bangladesh" (unpublished M. Phil. thesis, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Rajshahi University, 1977).

⁸ Rounaq Jahan, op. cit., p. 181.

⁹ As there was no separate schedule in the voter list for the in-migrants, the in-migrant voters were chalked out from the voter list by the help of in-migrant members and later they (in-migrant voters) were checked by the local people.

election of 1973 for the seat of chairman against a local candidate. The result was that he could not return. But it is interesting to note that, the same in-migrant when contested for the same seat in the next election, 1977, with three local candidates including the sitting local chairman, he returned. Thus, when there were only two candidates: one from the in-migrants and the other from the locals, the local returned. It was possible for the local to be elected in

Table 3.3

Election Results for the Seat of Chairman of a Union in
which 42.49 Per Cent Voters were In-migrants and the Rest
were Locals.

Year of election	No. of seat	No. of contesting candidates			Returning candidate	
		Total	Local	In-migrant	Local	In-migrant
1973	1	2	1	1	1	-
1977	1	4	3	1	-	1

Source : Office of the Circle Officer (Development), Phulbari and field work.

1973, because the majority voters were locals¹⁰ and there was no division of votes, but in 1977 when the local votes were divided among the three local candidates, the in-migrant returned.

The conflict between in-migrants and locals^{may} also be observed if we analyse the election results for the seats of member. Table 3.4 containing election results shows that in ward 1 comprising 54.19 per cent in-migrant voters, there were three candidates from the in-migrants for three seats of member in two successive elections that held in 1973 and 1977. There were also local contesting candidates in each election. The result was that all of the three in-migrant candidates returned in both the elections. This was because every voter, as already stated, had three votes for electing three members and in-migrant voters being majority, they easily elected their three candidates in each election. The table also shows that two in-migrants, from ward 2 in which 30.13 per cent voters were in-migrants and the rest 69.87 per cent were locals, sought elections in 1973 and 1977 for the seats of member with other local candidates. The result was that both of the in-migrants

¹⁰ The division of voters into the locals and the in-migrants raises a question : what was the position of the immigrant voters who are also non-locals, whether they entered into alliance with the non-local in-migrants or supported the locals ? Here it is important to note that during election, in the unions surveyed by me there was no alliance among the minority groups, such as in-migrants, Hindus, immigrants and halka against the majority local Muslims. Rather the people of each group, when there was no contesting candidate from their group, tried to accommodate themselves with the majority local Muslims. Hence though there were some immigrant voters in the union/ward (and there was no immigrant candidate) which has been used as an example of showing in-migrant-local conflict, they (immigrants) have been considered in the group of locals, because the local candidates were Muslims.

Table 3.4

Election Results for the Seats of Member in Two Wards: Ward 1 was Composed of 54.19 Per Cent In-migrant Voters, While Ward 2 was Composed of 30.13 Per Cent in-migrant Voters. The Rest Voters in Both the Wards were Locals.

Year of election	Serial No. of ward	No. of seats	No. of votes enjoyed by a voter	No. of contesting candidates			No. of returning candidates	
				Total	Local	In-migrant	Local	In-migrant
1973	Ward 1	3	3	6	3	3	-	3
1977	Ward 1	3	3	7	4	3	-	3
1973	Ward 2	3	3	8	6	2	3	-
1977	Ward 2	3	3	7	5	2	3	-

Source : Office of the Circle Officer (Development), Phulbari and field work.

were run over by the local candidates in both the elections. The reason for the failure of these two in-migrants was the same as the case of two Hindu candidates from Muslim majority ward which has already been discussed. That is, 30.13 per cent in-migrant voters were insufficient for winning candidate(s) against 69.87 per cent local voters with six or five candidates when every voter was entitled to cast three votes for electing three members.

Halka and Non-Halka Groupings

It has been pointed out in the second chapter that a small section of the Muslims of Phulbari is known as halka group¹¹. The people of halka group, instead of giving emphasis to the performance of the fundamental duties in Islam, such as, prayer for five times, fasting, etc., give emphasis to zoker. The other Muslims of Phulbari are very critic of these people as they do not give emphasis to the

¹¹ The people of halka group are the followers of two pirs, - Asadullah Siraji, son of Ismayel Hossain Siraji (a renowned Muslim writer in un-divided Bengal) of Pabna district of Bangladesh and Ekramul Hogue of Haldi Bari (Jalpaiguri, India). Before the liberation of Bangladesh, Siraji group was very active about the local election. According to the local leaders of the group, their candidates never failed in the union election. During his life time, Asadullah Siraji wished that after his death he would be buried at Kabirmamud of Phulbari, where he built a centre, called Khanka to assemble followers. Immediate after the liberation of Bangladesh Asadullah Siraji was killed and his dead body was hidden under ground. After two months, when his skeleton was recovered, a quarrel began between his daughter of the first wife and the sons of the second wife on the question of grave. The daughter claimed that his grave should be at Kabirmamud of Phulbari, as he wished during his life time. But the sons demanded that his grave should be at his birth place, Banikunja of Pabna. However, the sons won over the daughter. Now the daughter supported by the followers of Phulbari buried a teeth of Asadullah Siraji, that was broken during his life time, at the Kabirmamud of Phulbari. Now there are two graves of Asadullah Siraji, one is at Kabirmamud of Phulbari with a teeth and another is at Banikunja of Pabna with skeleton. But it is very interesting that the followers of Asadullah Siraji have been divided on the question of his killing. Most of the followers believe in his killing, but some do not believe in it. They think that Siraji is alive and sure he will come out to them in time. However, as the group is divided, its organization also became comparatively weak than before. So the followers, who believe in the killing, with the followers of Ekramul Hogue (the other pir) contested in the elections of 1973 and 1977 and their all contesting candidates returned.

in the election of 1973, they had two candidates for the seats of fundamental duties in Islam. Since other Muslims criticise them, the people of halka group, like the Hindu or in-migrants, display their group ^{character} in contesting the local election. See Table 3.5.

It is clear that there was no division among the 48 per cent voters. Table 3.5 (for every voter) in showing the Election Results for the Seats of Member of the Ward in which 48 Per Cent Voters Belonged to Halka Group.

Year of election	No. of seats	No. of votes enjoyed by a voter	No. of contesting candidates			No. of returning candidates	
			Total	<u>Halka</u> group	Others	<u>Halka</u> group	Others
1973	3	3	9	2	7	2	1
1977	3	3	10	3	7	3	-

Source : Office of the Circle Officer (Development), Phulbari and field work.

The election results in Table 3.5 shows that in a ward though halka group voters were in minority, consisting of 48 per cent voters¹², in comparison with others comprising 52 per cent voters, their (halka group) candidates returned in consecutive two elections.

¹² Like the in-migrants, the halka voters were found out from the voter list by the help of local halka leaders and later they were checked by the non-halka people.

In the election of 1973, they had two candidates for the seats of member so one non-halka candidate returned. But when in 1977 three candidates from halka group contested for the three seats, none from non-halka candidates returned. The reason for returning of halka candidates is clear that there was no division among the 48 per cent halka voters (because of three votes for every voter) in electing two and three candidates respectively in 1973 and 1977. On the contrary, 52 per cent non-halka voters were divided in support of seven candidates in two elections. Consequently, election result was in favour of halka candidates in both the elections.

Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Groupings

Apart from the different types of groupings mentioned above, there is another type of grouping that influences Union Parishad election. This type of grouping is due to the presence of immigrants from India. It has been stated earlier that the partition of sub-continent in 1947 created immigration problem in both Pakistan and India. Many Hindus left Pakistan for India and also many Muslims came from India to Pakistan. As a result many immigrants have settled at Phulbari thana. The immigrant people have an influence on the local

election process¹³. In both the elections of 1973 and 1977, the immigrant people had representation in the Union Parishads (infra, Table 3.7). But there was no information as to the fact that only immigrant feeling caused one's winning in the election.

Regional or Territorial Groupings

Though it is said that regional or territorial feeling should not exist in the country, it is found every where and it has tremendous influence on the election process of the country. According to regionalism, the people of one region/area think themselves different from the people of other region/area and do not prefer to vote for the candidate belonging to outside their region/area. Territorial groupings are most highly discussed groupings among the people. Next to the above different types of groupings, territorial groupings play an important role during Union Parishad election. The territorial groupings are formed according to the advantageous positions of the territorial divisions of a union. The territorial divisions of a union are ward, mouza, village and para¹⁴. Sometimes

¹³ The immigrants have influence not only on local politics, they have also influence on national politics. For details, see T. Maniruzzaman, The Politics of Development : The Case of Pakistan, 1947-1958 (Dacca : Green Book House, Limited, 1971) Pp. 100-104.

¹⁴ Para is a part of village, Mouza is a lowest revenue unit, generally, consisting of an area bigger than the area of a village.

the river or District Board road or any other local road passing through a union, create territorial boundary.

During election, no other factor creates high tension among the people than territorial groupings¹⁵. The main reason of high tension is that territorial groupings are formed temporarily to win the election; and generally the local Muslims, who constitute majority of the population, involve in such groupings. During the time of election, territorial groupings with high sentiment existed in every union under review, but in case of chairman election, the territorial groupings produced no effective result because of unity of the minority groupings, such as, in-migrants, Hindus, halka and immigrants (see foot note 15 and also see infra, nomination process in the Union Parishad in this chapter), factional groupings and the groupings of the poor persons who are generally influenced by material benefits (see infra in this chapter). However, there were sufficient data

¹⁵ A District Parishad road from east to west passes through a union under study. During the election of 1977 there were five contesting candidates for the seat of chairman of that union. There was one candidate from the south side of the road and four were from the north side. The south side of the road consisted of about one-third voters of the union, while the north side consisted of remaining voters. Now the contesting candidate from the south side of the road raised territorial sentiment among the people in such a way that his supporting people watched the road at night so that the workers of the candidates from the north side of the road can not enter the south side for canvass. Of course, he could not win, because a candidate from the north side of the road who returned could manage the votes of Hindu community in the south side by selecting, a woman from Hindu community as nominated member (see infra, in this chapter, how the local Muslim chairmen won over minority groups by selecting their women as nominated members).

that territorial sentiment of the voters produced effective results in electing the members. The election results shown in Table 3.6 reveal how the voters of a mouza in a ward were influenced by territorial sentiment and contested against the voters of other mouza in the same ward for electing the members. It is evident from the table

Table 3.6

Election Results of Members in a Ward Constituting Two Mouzas:
Mouza 1 had 42.86 Per Cent Voters, While Mouza 2 had 57.14
 Per Cent Voters.

Year of election	No. of seats	No. of votes enjoyed by a voter	No. of contesting candidates			No. of returning candidates	
			Total	From <u>Mouza 1</u>	From <u>Mouza 2</u>	From <u>Mouza 1</u>	From <u>Mouza 2</u>
1973	3	3	11	3	8	3	-
1977	3	3	11	5	6	-	3

Source : Office of the Circle Officer (Development),
 Phulbari.

that a ward of a union under consideration consisted of two mouzas. Of the total voters in the ward, mouza 1 comprised 42.86 per cent and mouza 2 comprised the rest. During the election of 1973, 3 candidates from mouza 1 contested for three seats of member for which 8 candidates from mouza 2 also contested. The result was that all

candidates from mouza 1 returned. It is surprising that when in 1977, 5 candidates including 3 sitting members from mouza 1, and also 6 candidates from mouza 2 contested for the same three seats, no candidate from mouza 1 returned. This was because, in case of former election, there was no division of voters in mouza 1; and 42.86 per cent voters (every voter having three votes), were enough to elect three members against 8 candidates from mouza 2 having 57.14 per cent voters. The situation, however, was different in the election of 1977. At that time the voters of two mouzas were divided but vote-to-candidate ratio of mouza 2 ($57.14\% \times 3 : 6$) was higher than the ratio of mouza 1 ($42.86\% \times 3 : 5$) and, therefore, none from mouza 1 returned.

Factional Groupings and Other Unorganised Groupings

Faction is an important characteristic of peasant politics. Nicholas studied factions in terms of five characteristics : (1) they are conflict groups, (2) they are political groups, (3) they are not corporate groups, (4) and the members are recruited by leaders on the basis of (5) diverse principles, such as kinship and patron client relationship. Factions display no ideology and are not permanent conflict groups, though a particular faction may exist over a time. In Bangladesh factional leaders may be traditional

matbars, barga-givers¹⁶ money lenders, businessmen, gusthi leaders, school teachers, etc.

Factionalism manifested, during Union Parishad election, was more less common in all unions under study. But in presence of above mentioned groupings it was latent, yet there was constant effort to divide the votes. The fact may be clear if we analyse a case in this connection. During the election of 1977, in a union there were four intending candidates to contest for the seat of chairman. One candidate from ward 1, one from ward 3 and two from ward 2. Apparently the position of candidates from ward 1 and ward 3 was better. Because they will contest alone from their respective wards whereas in ward 2 there will be two candidates. One candidate from ward 2 was a chairman of the former Union Council, ^{and} assumed to be richest person in Phulbari. He was very aspirant to be elected and was serious in his election strategy. He was neither afraid of the candidate from his own ward nor of the candidate from ward 3, because the former was sitting vice-chairman and the latter was sitting chairman and there were several points of criticism against them. Besides, the proportion of voters (26.61%) of ward 3 was less than that of ward 2 (40.44%). Again, though the proportion of voters (32.96%) of ward 1 was also less than that of ward 2, he was afraid of the candidate from ward 1, because he (candidate from ward 1) was a new who, already

¹⁶ Barga, the system of share cropping is a special feature of the agriculture in Bangladesh. The rich farmers give their surplus land temporarily to the poor farmers on the condition that, the crops will be shared between the tillers and the owners.

raised 'Ward Feeling' among the people. So the former Union Council chairman from ward 2 hit upon a plan and convinced a factional leader from ward 1 to contest the election for chairmanship with a promise that he (former chairman) will bear all his election expenditure. Accordingly, the factional leader did contest. Thus, by dividing the votes in the ward 1, the former Union Council chairman, returned in the election.

It may be mentioned here that, the factional groupings are small. Although they influence the election, they alone are not sufficient to win the election. Over and above, everybody in the village doesnot belong to factional grouping. In the study of a village of Rajshahi, Zaman (1977) observed, that out of 128 households, 68 (53.12%) belong to different factional groupings. The rest are either neutral, 26 (20.31%) or vacillating, 6 (4.69%) or non-aligned, 28 (21.88%). Neutral are those who, in fact, belong to no factional grouping, but support the factional strife either because of the merit of the faction issue or personality characteristics of the pramanik (factional leader) who leads faction. Vacillating are those persons who have no fixed alliance and go to different pramaniks. But non-aligned are those persons who neither belong to any factional grouping nor go to any pramanik and almost of them belong to the poor peasant category.

My micro inquiry to the voting behaviour of the people who do not belong to any of the above groupings, such as in-migrant-

local, communal, immigrant, hulka and territorial, also reveals almost similar division like that of Zaman. According to the inquiry¹⁷ one group of people (43.10%, including factional leaders) are greatly influenced by factional leaders in matter exercising voting power. There are people similar to that of Zaman's neutral character, who do not care for factional leaders. These people may

¹⁷ During the last election when I was able to understand the group sentiment of the people belonging to different groupings; I requested my colleagues of Phulbari college, who were the inhabitants of Phulbari to help me in selecting a para (a portion of village) which was free from any group feeling, so that I may understand their voting behaviour. They advised me a para which was composed of local Muslim only. ~~It was decided as a para which consisted of local Muslim only.~~ It was decided before them to collect the opinions of the household heads on the question of vote. Because the other members of the family particularly, the women follow the heads in matter of vote. The para consisted of 58 households. My key informants collected the opinion of the heads of the para carefully. Out of 58 household heads, 10 (17.24%) followed the direction of a gushti leader (gushti leader is also included in 10); 15 (25.86%) followed two school teachers in matter of electing candidate (here also the teachers are included in number); 2 (3.45%) mentioned the name of a particular candidate, who was competent to them in comparison with others; 11 (18.97%) also mentioned the name of a particular candidate but argued that he (the particular candidate) had possibility to win and that is why they decided not to waste their votes by giving others; and 3 (5.17%) heads of the household in the para were to be the election agents of the contesting candidates of other para. They did care nothing of any influential persons in the para. The remaining 17 (29.31%) heads were very poor in the para. They live on the income of day labour. As they moved, for searching the job, everyday from para to para, so they had no fixed alliance to the particular leaders. Asked their opinions about the vote, they replied that they did not decide and following the policy of 'wait and see'. Later it was known from the 3 election agents, who worked as the broker between these voters and the contesting candidates, that all of them (17) voted on the allurements for cash.

be divided into two groups. One group of people, who are very few in number (3.43%) vote judiciously, while the people of other group ^(18.27%) think, after voting for a candidate, if he could not return then the votes cast are being wasted. So these people give their votes to whom who have, according to their assumption, maximum possibility of being elected. They measure the possibility by asking others and observing election campaign and propaganda of the candidates. The other group of the people (29.31%), who correspond with Zaman's conception of 'non-aligned', are those who are extremely poor. The vote is meaningless to them. Eventually the allurements for money and other material benefits control their votes. The last group of people (5.17%), who resemble the people of vacillating character identified by Zaman, work as brokers between contesting candidates and the poor people.

It appears from the above analysis that the elections of the Union Parishads are mostly influenced by the groupings in the union. The nature of these groupings is not uniform. It differs from union to union and also from ward to ward within a union. Of course, there are people who do not belong to any kind of groupings. But their separate group character is manifested from their voting behaviour. All of them, except a few, either are influenced by the candidates expected to win or by the temptation of getting some material benefits. However, in analysing the voting behaviour of the different types of people I do not mean that the people of one type never vote for the others. What I mean here is that they normally do not vote for others when election candidate from amongst them is available. This trend

may be explained in another way if I analyse the cases of re-elected members (those who continued their offices from first election, 1973 to second election, 1977). In the unions under study all sitting chairmen and vice-chairmen sought re-election in 1977 for the seats of chairman, but none could return. Like the chairmen and vice-chairmen, all sitting members ^{except one} also sought re-election for the seats of member but only 12 were re-elected. It is important to note that all, but one ¹⁸, of the re-elected members belonged to different minority people, including in-migrants, 5; Hindus, 4; and halka people, 2. Thus, when there was a trend among the mass voters to elect new persons, the voters from these people were not invigorated with that trend. Possibly they might ^{be} invigorated, if there were alternative candidates from amongst them. In the election of 1973, total number of the members from these different people were 17 (see infra, Table 3.7). All of them sought re-election in 1977, but 11 were re-elected and 6 were not. In case of 6 who were not re-elected, there were alternative candidates from their own people who returned. In case of 11 there were no alternative candidates from amongst them, so they were re-elected ¹⁹. Now a question arises: what is the cause that brings unity among them in such a way? It is

¹⁸ He was an imam (who leads prayer) of the local mosque. The nature of his work possibly prevented the voters from electing a new candidate in his place, because the people have high regard for imam and pir.

¹⁹ The information was collected by asking the re-elected members.

the feeling of minority, resulting from the dominance of majority, which brought unity among them. The in-migrants think themselves a minority as the majority locals consider them outsiders and do not like their entry into social, political and economic systems of the villages/unions. The Hindus, also think themselves a minority against the Muslims. The minority halika people are also criticised by the others. In other words, not only these people but any people, whether majority or minority, who think themselves neglected by the others for any reason, the 'We Feeling' grows in them more rapidly resulting unity among them.

Despite the election, the politics of groupings is ^{found} in the nomination of the women members of the Union Parishads. According to the Local Government Ordinance, 1976, there is a provision, as stated earlier, for two nominated women members. Accordingly two women were nominated in each Union Parishad constituted in 1977. Though the nominating authority was the government officer concerned (sub-divisional officer), virtually the selection was at the hand of the chairmen of Union Parishads concerned. When the election was over, every newly elected chairman was asked to send names of women from his union to the authority concerned for nomination and his opinion was seldom overlooked.

Out of 6 chairmen of Phulbari thana, one was in-migrant in the election of 1977. Except the nominated women members of the Union Parishad of this in-migrant chairman, all other nominated women

members were in accordance with the selections of the chairmen concerned. It is important to note that in case of election most of the chairmen and members were from the majority local Muslims, but in case of nomination most of the members were from the different minority people (Table 3.7). Out of 12 nominated women members 3 came from the local Muslims and 9 came from the non-local Muslims including Hindus, 4 ; in-migrants, 1; immigrants, 2; and halka people, 2. It is also important to note that these 9 nominated women members belonged to those unions in which there were no candidates for the seats of chairman from their own people²⁰. Another important fact, in this connection, is that out of 3 nominated women members who came from the local Muslims, 2 belonged to the union of in-migrant chairman whose opinion on the question of nomination was not considered by the nominating authority²¹. It may be mentioned here that although the chairmen were asked to submit the names of women from their respective unions after the election, in fact, they made the selection of women before the election. As the minority people act unitedly during election, every local

²⁰ This information was collected by asking the 9 nominated women members who came from different minority people.

²¹ After election, like all other chairmen, the in-migrant chairman also submitted to the authority concerned the names of women for nomination. But, unlike other chairmen, his opinion on nomination question was not considered and other two women from the local Muslims were nominated. It was reported that these two women had relatives among the district level government officials, who worked for their nomination.

Table 3.7

Representation of the Various Types of People in the Union Parishads Constituted in 1973 (1st election) and 1977 (2nd election).

Category of representatives	In-migrants	Local Hindus	Halka people	Immigrants	Local Muslims	Total
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
<u>1st election</u>						
Chairmen	-	2	-	-	4	6
Vice-chairmen	-	-	-	-	6	6
Members	6	7	2	2	37	54
Total:	6	9	2	2	47	66
<u>2nd election</u>						
Chairmen	1	-	-	-	5	6
Members	6	7	3	2	36	54
Nominated members	1	4	2	2	3	12
Total:	8	11	5	4	44	72

Source : Office of the Circle Officer (Development), Phulbari and field work.

Muslim chairman, according to his election strategy, attempted to win over them by selecting their women as nominated members before the election²².

However, if the voting behaviour of the people of Phulbari is such as this chapter reveals then who became chairman and members of the Union Parishads in the elections under review? In other words, how would we identify them? The answer needs the discussion of their social background which has been given in the next chapter.

²² Here this may arise a question : if the selection of nominated women members was an attempt to win over minority people then whether all local Muslim candidates for the seats of chairman, did such selection before the election? The answer is that candidates might try but generally the minority people give support to the prospective candidate.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL BACKGROUND
OF THE RURAL POLITICAL ELITE

In the preceeding chapter recruitment process of the rural political elite has been analysed¹. I now propose to discuss their social background as it significantly affects their social interaction processes and thus influences their attitudes and values. Moreover, the discussion of their social background will help to identify what sorts of persons are dominant in rural politics and become chairmen and members of the Union Parishads and in what way they differ from the rest of the society. In this study social background has been used in a broad sense so as to include the factors such as sex, age, education, occupation, landholding, income, etc².

¹ Henceforward I shall use 'rural political elite' and 'elite' interchangeably.

² It may be recalled here that the total number of respondents was 122. Of them 12, as stated earlier, continued their offices as members from the first election held in 1973 to the second election held in 1977. In order to find out the actual pattern of leadership in the Union Parishads under study, those 12 re-elected members have been included in the first election also in studying the factors (such as sex, age, education, landholding and others) of which the information could be collected separately for each election (see questionnaire in the appendix). However, in case of inclusion of the re-elected members in the first election, categorization of the elites has been done as chairmen and members in the first election and chairmen and members in the second election or simply elites in the first election and elites in the second election. In case of exclusion of them from the first election, the elites have been categorised as ex-chairmen and members; and present chairmen and members or simply chairmen and members.

Sex

The elites as revealed by this study appeared to be heavily weighted with males. Although women constituted 48.66 per cent of the total population of Pabbari thana according to the Census of 1974, they were grossly under-represented in the Union Parishads. In the first election of the Union Parishads only one woman (1.51%) was elected as member and in the second election except nominated women members all were males. This indicates that the women do not play an important role in rural politics. This, however, is not unique for rural communities. The urban communities of Bangladesh also are not different³. A question arises: what determined the sex distribution of the elites? Why the proportion of women among the elites was so small? Khan replied the questions in the following words:

Women are directly or indirectly discouraged from appearing in Public and freely mixing with men or from entering occupation and profession that would keep them away from homes for substantial period of time. Even to day it is believed by many in the community that the ideal place for women is the home and they are not capable of handling the responsibilities associate with elitist positions. While some changes toward women occupying elite position are now visible, they are not significant enough to encourage women to come out of their homes and occupy such position.

³ See P.R.Khan, "District Town Elites in Bangladesh" Asian Survey, vol. XIX, No.5 (May, 1979), pp.468-484.

⁴ Ibid. p. 470.

Age

"The age-composition of the members of any institution is an important index to know the kind of people who are responsible for running it. If any organisation is dominated by elderly people, it is doubtful if they can meet aspirations of an emerging society"⁵. Bangladesh is a transitional society with an interaction of the forces of traditionalism and modernization. It is, therefore, expected that the younger people will assume the leadership in social life. The available data show that the age of the elites ranged from 19 to 59 years⁶. For a precise and meaningful analysis the age data have been grouped under three age groups. Table 4.1 explains the age distribution of the elites.

The table indicates that there was no significant difference as to the age distribution of the elites between two elections. However, if we consider the elites as the category of chairmen and members, there was a significant difference between them. In case of chairmen and vice-

⁵ Rashiduzzaman, op. cit., P.13.

⁶ Two nominated women members were 19 and two elected members — one former and the other present — were 59. The average age of the elites in the first election was 39.42 years and in the second election 37.20 years.

Table 4.1

Distribution of Elites by Age

Category of elites	Age in years			Total
	Below 30	30 - 44	45 - 59	

First Election

Chairmen and Vice-chairmen	1 (9.09)	3 (27.27)	7 (63.64)	11 (100)
Members	11 (20.75)	26 (49.06)	16 (30.19)	53 (100)
Total:	12 (18.75)	29 (45.31)	23 (35.94)	64 (100)

Second Election

Chairmen	-	2 (33.33)	4 (66.67)	6 (100)
Members	9 (16.98)	30 (56.60)	14 (26.42)	53 (100)
Nominated women members	8 (72.73)	3 (27.27)	-	11 (100)
Total:	17 (24.29)	35 (50.00)	18 (25.71)	70 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Source: field work.

(23.7%) in the second election were in the age group below 30 years. In the first election there was a larger concentration of persons belonging to the age group of 45 - 59 years, but in case of members larger concentration was found in the age group of 30 - 44 years. Contrary to the chairmen/vice-chairmen and members, the heavier concentration of nominated women members was in the age group below 30 years. Out of 11 nominated women members, 8 (72.73%) were below 30 years and remaining 3 (27.27%) were between 30 and 44. No nominated woman member came from the age group between 45 and 59 years, while majority of the chairmen and vice-chairmen represented this age group. Out of the 11 chairmen and vice-chairmen in the first election, 7 (63.64%) and out of the 6 chairmen in the second election, 4 (66.67%) came from the age group of 45 - 59 years. Only 1 (9.09%) in the first election was below 30 years. The remaining 3 (27.27%) and 2 (33.33%) in the first and second elections respectively were in the range of 30 - 44 years of age. Among the members in the first election 26 (49.06%) and among the members in the second election 30 (56.60%) belonged to the age group between 30 and 44 years. The other members in both the elections came either from the age group below 30 years or from the age group between 45 and 59 years. In short, out of the 64 elites in the first election, 29 (43.31%) and out of the ⁷⁹69 elites in the second election, 35 (50%) were in the age group between 30 and 44 years; and 23 (35.94%) in the first election and 18

(25.71%) in the second election were in the age group between 45 and 59 years. The rest 12 (18.75%) in the first election and 17 (26.29%) in the second election were below 30 years. A significant feature of the age distribution of the elites is that none of them came from the age group of 60 and above⁷. However, the absence of persons belonging to the age of 60 and above from the elite structure signifies that the older leaders of ~~the~~ Phulbari thana either are unwilling to take part in rural politics as because their active period of life has come to an end or they do not get scope for entering the scene of the politics of Union Parishad against the more active middle aged and younger leaders in the severe competition for power.

Education

Education plays an important role in the acquisition of elite status. So the study of educational background of the elites is very important to assess their characteristics.

7

The finding differs from the study of Rahman according to which some of the chairmen and members are 60 and above. See Aminur Rahman, "Bangladesher Orthonoitic Unnanani Union Parishader Bhomica" (Role of Union Parishads in the Economic Development of Bangladesh), Local Government quarterly, Vol. 7, No. 1-4 (March, June, September and December, 1978), P.89.

The available data on education of the elites have been presented in Table 4.2. It is evident from the table that like the age, there was no remarkable variation in the educational status of the elites between two elections. However, there was variation in education between the members and nominated women members; and also between the members and chairmen/vice-chairmen. The table reveals that the chairmen/vice-chairmen and nominated women members were comparatively better educated than the members. No chairman/vice-chairman had educational qualification below class VI and also no nominated women member had educational qualification below class III. Contrary to this, a considerable number of the members belonged to these two groups. That is among the members in the first election 5 (9.43%) and 14 (26.42%) and also among the members in the second election 4 (7.55%) and 18 (33.96%) respectively read upto class III and class VI. Of the rest members, 22 (41.51%), 7 (13.21%) and 5 (9.43%) in the first election; and 20 (37.74%), 6 (11.32%) and 5 (9.43%) in the second election respectively read upto class X, intermediate level and graduation level or above. With regard to the chairmen/vice-chairmen, the table shows that 5 (45.46%) of the chairmen and vice-chairmen in the first election and 4 (66.67%) of the chairmen in the second election read upto class X, and 4 (36.36%) in the first election read upto intermediate level. The rest 2 (18.18%)

Table 4.2
Distribution of Elites by Education

Category of elites	Level of education					Total
	Upto class III	Upto class VI	Upto class X	Upto intermediate	Upto graduation level or above	
<u>First election</u>						
Chairmen and vice-chairmen	-	-	5 (45.46)	4 (36.36)	2 (18.18)	11 (100)
Members	5 (9.43)	14 (26.42)	22 (41.51)	7 (13.21)	5 (9.43)	53 (100)
Total	5 (7.81)	14 (21.87)	27 (42.19)	11 (17.19)	7 (10.94)	64 (100)
<u>Second election</u>						
Chairmen			4 (66.67)	-	2 (33.33)	6 (100)
Members	4 (7.55)	19 (33.96)	20 (37.74)	6 (11.32)	5 (9.43)	53 (100)
Nominated women members	-	2 (18.18)	7 (63.64)	3 (18.18)	-	11 (100)
Total	4 (5.71)	20 (28.57)	31 (44.29)	8 (11.43)	7 (10.00)	70 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Source: Field work

chairmen and vice-chairmen in the first election and also the 2 (33.33%) chairmen in the second election read upto graduation level or above. Among the nominated women members 2 (18.18%) read upto class VI and 7 (63.64%) upto class X. The remaining 2 (18.18%) nominated women members read upto intermediate level.

It appears from the educational background that a greater percentage of all categories of elites came from those persons who read upto class X. This invariably proves that the persons in this group are more prominent and active in Union Parishad politics. Another outstanding characteristic of the elites is that none of them was illiterate⁸, whereas rural literacy in Bangladesh according to the Census of 1974 is 22.3 per cent and especially in Phulbari thana is 14.64 per cent.

Education of the Fathers, Mothers, and Husbands/ives of Elites

The education of the fathers, mothers and wives/husbands is an important factor which provides opportunities for ones' advancement in society. The data on the point show that the husbands of female elites were better educated than the others and even than that of elite people in general.

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The similar finding has been reported by Rahman, see Aminur Rahman, op. cit., P. 81.

Of the 12 husbands of female elites 66.66 per cent read upto graduation level or above, 16.67 per cent read upto intermediate level and remaining 16.67 per cent read upto class X. There was no husband whose educational qualification was below class VI. On the other hand 57.60 per cent of the wives of male elites were illiterate, who could neither read nor sign and only 0.63 per cent read upto intermediate level and 13.92 per cent upto class X. The remaining 20.25 per cent and 7.59 per cent of the wives read respectively upto class VI and class III. Like the husbands, the fathers of female elites were also comparatively better educated than the fathers of male elites. Among the 12 fathers of female elites 16.67 per cent read upto graduation level or above and also 16.67 per cent read upto intermediate level ; and 33.33 per cent and also 33.33 per cent respectively read upto class X and class VI. On the contrary among the fathers of male elites 28.18 per cent were illiterate who could neither read nor sign and 26.36 per cent either could sign or read upto class III; and only 1.82 per cent read upto intermediate level. The remaining 11.82 per cent and 21.81 per cent of the fathers of male elites respectively read upto class X and class VI. Like the fathers, the mothers of female elites were better educated than the mothers of male elites. Of the mothers of female elites, 16.67 per cent read upto class X and also 16.67 per cent read upto class VI and remaining

66.66 per cent read upto class III. On the other hand, almost all the mothers (89.09%) of male elites could neither read nor sign and only 3.64 per cent read upto class VI and 7.27 per cent upto class III.

Occupation⁹

A man's occupation is another important factor in determining his social position. So it is worthwhile to see the occupations of the elites. Cultivation constitutes main occupation in rural Bangladesh, but the data on occupation (Table 4.3) demonstrate that all of the elites were not exclusively engaged in cultivation. The data reveal that there was no significant change in the occupational pattern of the elites either in election-wise or position-wise. Of them, 34 (53.12%) and 30 (42.86%) in the first and second elections respectively were engaged only in cultivation and 11 (17.19% / 15.71%) in each election had cultivation as main occupation and business as secondary occupation. Contrary to the above, 18 (28.13% / 25.72%) in each election had cultivation

9

All respondents were asked to mention their occupation during their election period(s) (see questionnaire in the appendix). Accordingly, out of 12 re-elected members (i.e. who continued their offices from the first election to the second one), two claimed that their main occupation changed between 1973 and 1977. The occupation of one changed from cultivation to business and the occupation of the other changed from business to cultivation.

Table 4.3

Distribution of Elites by Occupation

Category of elites	Occupation				Total
	Cultivation alone	Cultivation and business	Others and cultivation	Household affairs	
<u>1st election</u>					
Chairmen and vice-chairmen	4 (36.36)	5 (45.46)	2 (18.18)	-	11 (100)
Members	30 (56.60)	6 (11.32)	16 (30.19)	1 (1.89)	53 (100)
Total:	34 (53.12)	11 (17.19)	18 (28.13)	1 (1.56)	64 (100)
<u>2nd election</u>					
Chairmen	1 (16.67)	3 (50.00)	2 (33.33)	-	6 (100)
Members	29 (54.72)	8 (15.09)	16 (30.19)	-	53 (100)
Nominated women members	-	-	-	11 (100)	11 (100)
Total:	30 (42.86)	11 (15.71)	18 (25.72)	11 (15.71)	70 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Source: Field work

as secondary occupation. Their main occupation were contract-business, medical practice, deed-writing, business, imamati (the work for leading prayer in the mosque) and blacksmithery. The rest elites, all of them were females, were engaged exclusively in household affairs¹⁰. Thus it is evident that the male and female elites had separate domain of occupation. The occupation of the former was outside the house, while the occupation of the latter was concentrated within the house.

Occupations of the Fathers/Husbands of Elites

Since the occupation of the father/husband has an impact upon the influence of a person in the society, it is essential to note the occupations of the father/husbands of elites. The available data on the point depict that 80.90 per cent of the fathers of male elites were engaged exclusively in cultivation. On the other hand, 33.33 per cent of the husbands of female elites were engaged in cultivation only. The rest of the fathers/husbands had cultivation as secondary occupation and their main occupation included business, teaching, imamati, medical practice and joatdary (petty landlordism).

10

This finding differs from a recent study according to which 76.06 per cent of the nominated women members are engaged in household affairs and the remaining are engaged in handicraft, service, etc.. See Syeda Rowshan Qadir, "Selected Characteristics of Women Representatives: As stated by the Chairmen of Union Parishads" Local Government quarterly, op.cit., P.19.

Landholding¹¹

Land constitutes main source of rural income in Bangladesh; and the landownership is an important basis of power at the grass-root level. So it is necessary to note the land size possessed by the elites. Generally, the pattern of landownership in Bangladesh is such that the bulk of land is concentrated in the hands of a small number of big owners as against a large number who either own very little land or no land at all.

The size of landholdings of the elites varied from 2.05 acres to 45 acres. It would be interesting here to compare the landholdings of the elites with general landholding pattern prevailing in Phulbari thana. But local data were not available in this regard. Hence an attempt has been made to compare the landholdings of the elites with national data as furnished by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics has categorised the households of Bangladesh into 17 categories ranging from landless to over 15 acres of land¹². For the convenience of present study those categories have been reduced into five groups : (a) 0 - 2.00 acres, (b) 2.01 - 5 acres,

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In case of female elites the landholdings of their husbands have been considered.

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Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Statistics Division, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1978 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh (Dacca, Bangladesh Government Press, April, 1979), P. 144, Table 4.3.

(c) 5.01 - 9.00 acres, (d) 9.01 - 14.00 acres and (e) over 14.00 acres. And in the light of these five groups, the landholdings of the elites have been presented in Table 4.4.

It appears from the table that no body from the elites came from the landless and the farmers having .01 - 2.00 acres of land, who constitute 74.94 per cent of the total number of households in Bangladesh. In other words, the elites under review came from the farmers who have land more than 2 acres. This was, however, the case of members. If we consider the case of chairmen, none of them came from the farmers having land 5.00 acres or less than 5.00 acres. Thus with regard to the landownership, the elites differed not only from the masses, they also differed from one another. That is some of the members in both the elections came from the group of farmers who own land 2.00 - 5.00 acres while no chairman/vice-chairman in both the elections belonged to this group. Moreover the largest proportion of the chairmen and vice-chairmen came from the group of over 14 acres. Out of the 11 chairmen and vice-chairmen in the first election, 5 (45.46%) and out of the 6 chairmen in the second election, 3 (50%) were in the group of over 14 acres of land. The remaining 3 (27.27%) and 3 (27.27%) in the first election ; and 2 (33.33%) and 1 (16.67%) in the second

Table 4.4
Distribution of Elites by Landholding

category of elites	No. of elites	Landholding in acres					Average landholding in acres
		0-2.00	2.01-5.00	5.01-9.00	9.01-14.00	over 14.00	
<u>1st election</u>							
Chairmen and vice-chairmen	11 (100)	-	-	3 (27.27)	3 (27.27)	5 (45.46)	17.73
Members	53 (100)	-	13 (24.53)	16 (30.16)	9 (16.98)	15 (28.90)	10.90
Total :	64 (100)	-	13 (20.31)	19 (29.69)	12 (18.75)	20 (31.25)	12.07
<u>2nd election</u>							
Chairmen	6 (100)	-	-	2 (33.33)	1 (16.67)	3 (50.00)	20.00
Members	53 (100)	-	7 (19.21)	13 (26.53)	15 (28.30)	18 (33.96)	12.92
Nominated women members	11 (100)	-	4 (36.36)	4 (36.36)	1 (9.10)	2 (18.18)	9.19
Total :	70 (100)	-	11 (15.71)	19 (27.14)	17 (24.29)	23 (32.86)	12.94
Total households of Bangladesh in per cent -a		74.94	17.47	5.23	1.43	0.93	-

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Sources: 1) Field work

2) Row -a is an abridged form of Table 4.3 in 1979 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning, April, 1979), P.144.

election respectively belonged to the groups of 5.01 - 9.00 and 9.01 - 14.00 acres. Among the members in the first election 13 (24.53%), 16 (30.19%), 9 (16.98%) and 15 (28.90%) respectively came from the groups of 2.01 - 5.00, 5.01 - 9.00, 9.01 - 14.00 and over 14 acres. Of the members in the second election, 7 (19.21%), 13 (24.55%), 15 (28.30%) and 18 (33.96%) ; and also of the nominated women members, 4 (36.36%), 4 (36.36%), 1 (9.10%) and 2 (18.18%) respectively were in the groups 2.01 - 5.00, 5.01 - 9.00, 9.01 - 14.00 and over 14 acres.

The table containing the landholding data shows that the average size of landholding of the chairmen and vice-chairmen in the first and second elections respectively was 17.73 and 20.00 acres ; and the average size of landholding of the members respectively was 10.90 and 12.92 acres in 1973 and 1977. The average landholding of the women members, nominated in 1977, was 9.19 acres. Thus in respect of average landholding, the chairmen/vice-chairmen belonged to the group of over 14 acres of land and the members, both elected and nominated, to the group of 9.01 - 14.00 acres. And there is no significant change between two elections, rather there was a tendency towards the concentration of land in the hands of the elites. While the average size of landholding

of the elites in the first election was 12.07 acres, in the second election it was 12.94 acres¹³.

Landholdings of the Fathers of Elites¹⁴

As landownership is an important factor in providing opportunities for one's dominance in society, it is essential to note the landownership of the fathers of elites. The data regarding this point show that out of the total 122 elites, 59.02 per cent had landholding less than that of their fathers and 18.85 per cent had same as their fathers had. The remaining 22.13 per cent of the elites had landholdings bigger than that of their fathers. However, the

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Out of the 12 re-elected members, the landholdings of three were reported to be decreased after the first election. The only re-elected member who reported that his main occupation changed from cultivation to business (supra foot note 9) belonged to this group. Four reported that the size of their landholding remained constant between two elections. The remaining five expressed opinion on increasing their landholdings. The only one re-elected member who reported that his main occupation changed from business to cultivation (ibid) belonged to this group. However, considering three cases of increase, decrease and constant, the average size of landholding of the 12 re-elected members increased by 0.23 acres from 1973 to 1977.

14 In studying the landholdings of the fathers, in case of female elites the landholdings of their fathers-in-law were considered. There were two reasons for this. First, majority of the women respondents could not give the statement of their fathers' landholdings. Though they also could not give the statement of the landholdings of their fathers-in-law, it was possible to collect the information by asking their husbands or the other family members. Second, the influence of father-in-law has great impact upon the advancement of a women in rural politics than that of her father.

average size of landholding of the fathers had bigger than that of the elites. The average size of landholding of the elites was 12.52 acres and their father had 15.26 acres.

Annual Income¹⁵

As it is evident from landholding background that on the average basis the elites came from the group of big farmers ; their income background also indicates that they belonged to the well-to-do stratum of the society. The annual income of the elites varied from Tk. 4,000 to 70,000. For the advantage of analysis the incomes of elites have been divided into four groups : (a) Tk. 4,000 - 11,999, (b) Tk. 12,000 - 19,999, (c) Tk. 20,000 - 27,999 and (d) Tk. 28,000- and above. The distribution of elites by these different income groups has been shown in Table 4.5.

The table provides that none of the elites came from the income group below Tk. 4,000. The table also provides that though the recruitment of the members started from the

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In this study income has been considered in gross sense and estimated on the basis of 1979 market price. Respondents were asked to report their total annual income during the period(s) of their election(s) (See questionnaire in the appendix). In case of female elites, like the landholding, the income of their husbands has been considered.

Table 4.5

Distribution of Elites by Income

Category of elites	No. of elites	Annual income in Taka				Average income in Taka
		4000-11999	12000-19999	20000-27999	28000 and above	
<u>1st election</u>						
Chairmen and vice-chairmen	11 (100)		1 (9.09)	2 (18.18)	8 (72.73)	23000
Members	53 (100)	12 (22.64)	12 (22.64)	20 (37.74)	9 (16.98)	14000
Total:	64 (100)	12 (18.75)	13 (20.31)	22 (34.38)	17 (20.56)	15546.87
<u>2nd election</u>						
Chairmen	6 (100)	-	1 (16.67)	1 (16.67)	4 (63.63)	27000
Members	53 (100)	8 (15.09)	10 (18.87)	24 (45.28)	11 (20.76)	15000
Nominated women members	11 (100)	3 (27.28)	2 (18.18)	4 (36.36)	2 (18.18)	15500
Total:	70 (100)	11 (15.71)	13 (18.57)	29 (41.43)	17 (24.29)	16107.14

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Source: Field work.

income group of Tk. 4,000 - 11,999, most of them came from higher income groups. Also though the roots of chairmen/vice-chairmen were to be found in the income group of Tk. 12,000 - 19,999, most of them came from high income groups, especially the group of Tk. 28,000 and above. However, if we consider the average income of the chairmen/vice-chairmen and members separately, the chairmen/vice-chairmen belonged to the income group of Tk. 20,000 - 27,999, and the members, to the group of Tk. 12,000 - 19,999. Like the landholding, there was no significant change among them between two elections, rather there was a tendency towards an inflow of persons having higher income into the Union Parishads. The average income of the elites in the first election was Tk. 15,546.87 and in the second election it was Tk. 16,107.14 .¹⁶

Size and Nature of Family¹⁷

The finding regarding landholding and income of the elites can not be meaningful unless the sizes of their

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Of the three re-elected members who expressed the view about their decreasing landholdings, one claimed that his annual income increased after 1973 due to rise in business, (it was he whose main occupation changed from cultivation to business), but two reported that their annual income decreased because of decrease in land. Of the rest three reported that their income was constant and six claimed that their income increased after 1973 due to increase in land and rise in business. However, considering three cases, the average annual income of the 12 re-elected members increased by Tk. 1,400.

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Here family means a group of persons who reside and dine together sharing a common hearth. It includes the persons who are related by blood, marriage and adoption, but excludes the servants who are paid for the service.

families are considered because the landholding and income are closely related with family size. According to the Census of 1974 an average household size of Phulbari thana is 5.5 members and at the national level it is 6.4. The number of members in the families of elites varied from 4 to 25. See the following table.

Table 4.6

Distribution of Elites by Family-size

Category of elites	Size of family		Total
	4 - 6	7 - 25	
Elites in the first election	1 (1.56)	63 (98.44)	64 (100)
Elites in the second election	2 (2.85)	68 (97.15)	70 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Source: Field work.

The above table indicates that among the elites only 1 (1.56%) in the first election and only 2 (2.85%) in the second election lived in the families comprising 4 to 6 members. The rest elites in both the elections belonged to the families of 7 to 25 members which are larger than the average size of the household of Phulbari thana as well as of Bangladesh as a whole. However, it appears from the

study of landholding, income and family-size backgrounds of the elites that larger landholdings and higher incomes go with larger families. The inclination towards larger families among the elites may be explained in terms of their better economic ability to maintain larger families. The larger family is more helpful to develop eliteship qualities. It provides free time to its members to devote themselves to political activities. Thus it is evident that larger size of the family, along with larger landholding and higher income, has a positive co-relation with eliteship.

With regard to the nature of family, the data reveal that the incidence of nuclear family was higher among the elites. The following table shows the nature of the families of which the elites were members.

Table 4.7

Distribution of Elites by the Nature of Family

Category of elites	Nature of family		Total
	Nuclear	Joint	
Elites in the first election	35 (54.69)	29 (45.31)	64 (100)
Elites in the second election	50 (71.43)	20 (28.57)	70 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.
Source: Field work.

Table 4.7 provides that 35 (54.69%) and 50 (71.43%) of the elites in the first and second elections respectively were the members of nuclear families as against 29 (45.31%) and 20 (28.57%) respectively in the first and second elections who lived in joint families. The study of the nature of family, however, indicates that the joint families have been declining in the rural setting¹⁸. Similar finding is revealed from the studies of Sarker (1976), Zaman (1977), Bimal (1978) and Rahman (1980).

With reference to the spouse, the data (Table 4.8) reveal that 18 of the elites (28.13% / 25.71%) (including the

Table 4.8
Distribution of Elites by the Number of Spouse

Category of elites	Monogamy	Polygamy	Total
Elites in the first election	46 (71.87%)	18 (28.13)	64 (100)
Elites in the second election	52 (74.29)	18 (25.71)	70 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.
Source: Field work.

¹⁸ Among the 12 re-elected elites 6 were the members of nuclear families and the other 6 lived in joint families during 1973, but in 1977 the number of nuclear families became 8 including 6 of 1973.

The re-elected elites (all were males) reported no change in respect of the number of their wives between the elections. In 1973, 2 had wives more than one.

husband of a nominated women member) in each election had more than one wife and the remaining elites were monogamous.¹⁹

Prior Experience

Prior experience of the elites is an important indication to assess their circulation. If they have no prior experience in their line, it may be said that there is an inflow of new persons into the elite structure. The following table gives the experience-wise distribution of the elites.

Table 4.9
Distribution of Elites by Prior Experience

Category of elites	No. of elites	No. of inexperience	No. of experience				
			Total	UP	UC	UC & UB	UB

1st election

Chairmen and vice-chairmen	11	6	5	-	3	1	1
Members	53	48	5	-	4	1	-
Total:	64	54	10	-	7	2	1

2nd election

Chairmen	6	-	6	-	5	-	1
Members	53	38	15	12	3	-	-
Nominated women members	11	11	-	-	-	-	-
Total	70	49	21	12	8	-	1

Notes: 1) UP= Union Parishad, 2) UC= Union council and
3) UB = Union Board. Source: Field work.

¹⁹ The re-elected elites (all were males) reported no change in respect of the number of their wives between two elections. of them, 2 had wives more than one.

The Table 4.9 depicts that out of the 64 elites in the first election, 10 i.e. 15.63 per cent were experienced in the line and 54 i.e. 84.37 per cent were inexperienced. The position-wise distribution of the elites shows that the percentage of inexperienced among the members was greater than that of chairmen and vice-chairmen. Out of the 11 chairmen and vice-chairmen, 5 i.e. 45.46 per cent were experienced and 6 i.e. 54.54 per cent were inexperienced. Of the experienced, 3 had Union Council experience, 1 had Union Board experience and the remaining 1 had both Union Council and Union Board experiences. Out of the 53 members, only 5 i.e. 9.49 per cent were experienced and remaining all were inexperienced. Of the experienced members 1 had both Union Council and Union Board experiences and 4 had only Union Council experience.

With regard to the elites in the second election the data, as presented in table 4.9, suggests that, the percentage of the experienced among them was comparatively greater than that of the elites in the first election. While among the elites in the second election 21 i.e. 30 percent were experienced; in the first election, as stated earlier, 10 i.e. 15.63 per cent had prior experience. The position-wise distribution of the elites in the second election shows that all nominated women members were inexperienced and on the

contrary all chairmen were experienced. Out of the 6 chairmen, 5 (83.33%) had Union Council experience and 1 (16.67%) had Union Board experience. No elected member had Union Board experience although 15 i.e. 28.30 per cent were experienced. That is out of the 53 members, 3 had Union Council experience and 12 had the experience of Union Parishad of the first election.

Experience of the Fathers and Other Members in the Families of Elites

Family tradition has a great influence in the process of acquiring elite status. So it is essential to ascertain whether their fathers/husbands, grand fathers, uncles, brothers were the members of the former Union Council or Board. With regard to this information, the available data reveal that out of the total 122 elites, 41 i.e. 33.60 per cent belonged to those families in which either their fathers/grandfathers/uncles/brothers (for male elites); husbands/fathers-in-law (for female elites) were the members of the former Union Council or Board.

Media of Exposure

Radio/transistor and newspaper are the major sources of news for the people of Phulbari thana. The distribution of the elites in regard to radio/transistor-ownership shows that most of them owned radio/transistor (Table 4.10). Out of

of the total 122 elites, 94 (77.04%) owned radio/transistor and 28 (22.95%) did not own. But all of the elites who claimed to have radio/transistor did not listen to radio

Table 4.10

Distribution of Elites by Ownership of Radio/Transistor and News Listening

Category of elites	Ownership of radio/transistor			No radio/transistor		
	Total	Everyday news listening	Sometimes new listening	Total	Sometimes news listening	Never news listening
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
Chairmen and vice-chairmen. N= 17	15	15	-	2	2	-
Members N= 94	69	25	44	25	20	5
Nominated women N=11	10	1	9	1	-	1
Total	128	94	53	28	22	6

Source : Field work

news everyday (but listened to radio/transistor everyday for other programmes). Out of the 94 elites who claimed to have radio/transistor, 41 (43.62%) listened to radio news everyday and 53 (56.38%) listened to news irregularly. Of the 28 elites who had no radio/transistor, 22 (78.57%) listened to news sometimes through the radio/transistor which

were available in the neighbouring house/clubs/shops and the remaining 6(21.43%) never listened to radio news. If we consider the elites position-wise, the highest percentage of the ownership of radio/transistor was found among the nominated women members. Out of the 11 nominated women members 10 (90.90%) owned radio/transistor while 15(88.23%) of the chairmen and vice-chairmen and 69(73.40%) of the elected members owned radio/transistor. On the contrary, if we consider them as to who owned radio/transistor and listened to news everyday then the chairmen and the vice-chairmen ranked first because cent per cent of them, who owned radio/transistor, listened to news everyday, while 25 (36.23%) of the elected members and 1 (10%) of the nominated women members, who owned radio/transistor and listened to news everyday. Again if we consider them as to who neither owned radio/transistor nor listened to it, no chairman/vice-chairman belonged to this group. On the contrary, 5(5.31%) of the elected members and 1 (9.09%) of the nominated women members were found in this group.

As radio/transistor listening was almost common to the elites, newspaper-reading was not so (Table 4.11). Out of the total 122 elites, 26(21.31%) read newspaper regularly and 68(55.74%) read newspaper only off and on. The remaining 28 (22.95%) elites never read newspaper. Thus it is evident that the highest percentage of those who read newspapers regularly was found among the chairmen and vice-chairmen. Of the

Table 4.11

Distribution of Elites by Newspaper-Reading

Category of elites	Newspaper - reading			Total
	Everyday	Sometimes	Never	
Chairmen and vice-chairmen	8 (47.05)	9 (52.95)	-	17 (100)
Members	17 (18.08)	58 (61.70)	19 (20.22)	94 (100)
Nominated women members	1 (9.09)	1 (9.09)	9 (81.82)	11 (100)
Total :	26 (21.21)	68 (55.74)	28 (22.95)	122 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.

Source: Field work.

total chairmen and vice-chairmen 8 (47.05%) read newspaper everyday ; while 17 (18.08%) of the members and 1 (9.09%) of the nominated women members read newspaper regularly. A significant characteristic of the chairmen/vice-chairmen was that none of them was found in the group of those who never read newspaper; whereas, 19 (20.22%) of the members and a preponderant majority consisting of 9 (81.82%) of the nominated women members never read newspaper.

Social class

From above discussion of the social background of the elites it appears that they belonged to the better stratum

of the rural society. So an effort was made to ascertain their own thinking of their class status by asking them to state the class to which they belonged. Four broad categories of classes - upper, upper middle, middle and lower, were provided in the questionnaire. The data (Table 4.12) regarding this show that a large number of the elites constituting

Table 4.12
Distribution of Elites by Social Class

Category of elites	Social class					Total
	Upper	Upper middle	Middle	Lower	No class/ (no reply)	
Chairmen and vice-chairmen	1	5	10	-	1	17
Members	-	5	93	4	3	105
Total	1 (0.82)	10 (8.20)	103 (84.42)	4 (3.28)	4 (3.28)	122 (100)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages.
Source: Field work.

103 (84.42%) in number considered themselves belonging to the middle class and only 1 (0.82%) and he was an ex-chairman, classified himself in the upper class²⁰; 10 (8.20%) categorized themselves in the upper middle class and 4 (3.28%) thought that they were in the lower class. Of the rest, 1 could not understand the question and she was an nominated woman member and 3 did not choose any specific class and remarked that they were Muslims and belonged to no class.

²⁰ His notion of upper class might have an association with large land property, because he was the only respondent who owned 45 acres of land.

CHAPTER 5

PERCEPTION, ATTITUDE AND
VALUES OF THE RURAL POLITICAL ELITE

The elites are the decision makers in the community and thus their attitudes and values by affecting community decision influence the whole system and its functioning.

In this context an author rightly pointed out :

Normally, one would include among the various attributes of the elite with reference to the influence over society, the ideals which they cherish and the values which they hold and advocate. It is through these ideals and values that they seek to inspire the community and try to bring about social change consistence with these values. Coherence in the values subscribed to by the elite would mean that society can move forward to achieve its goals smoothly, whereas a differentiated value structure among the elite is bound to generate some conflicts and may impede the pace of movement in any direction!

Studies so far done on the various dimensions of the rural elites in Bangladesh have not given proper attention to their value orientation. Here an attempt has been made to study the attitudes and values of the elites under review with reference to the following issues.

¹ Sheo Kumar Lal, The Urban Elite (Delhi: Thomas Press Limited, 1974), P.93.

1. Perception of Community Problem and Capacity to Suggest Solution

One way to understand the elites is to examine how they perceive community problems. The elites being representatives of the people, their perception of community problems in the situational context may prove to be very significant in understanding the social needs of the people. "One important function of leadership is to correctly perceive the needs of the community in a given situation".² In this connection the respondents were asked to mention three problems which they thought most important in their locality. Responses to this open-ended question were carefully recorded and coded against each problem. Table 5.1 gives a picture of frequencies of responses in a summary form.

The table shows that according to the thinking and perception of the elites, there are many important problems which the people of Phulbari are facing. Of course, these problems are not unique for Phulbari, these are also for entire Bangladesh. Among the problems highest responses were about food problems (83.60%) and the least responses went to educational problem (2.45%). The responses to clothes problem stood second (62.29%), the problem of agricultural

² V.M. Sirsikar, The Rural Elite in a Developing Society (New Delhi: Orient Longmans Ltd., 1970), P.96.

Table 5.1
Responses of the Elites to the Community Problems

Most important problems	Category of elites						Grand total
	Ex-chairmen, vice-chairmen and members			Present chairmen and members			
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	
	N=51	N=1	N=52	N=59	N=11	N=70	
							N=122
Food	47	1	48 (92.30)	43	11	54 (77.14)	102 (83.60)
Clothes	28	1	29 (55.76)	37	10	47 (67.14)	76 (62.29)
Agricultural inputs	28	-	28 (53.84)	46	-	46 (65.71)	74 (60.65)
Communication	24	-	24 (46.15)	24	-	24 (32.28)	48 (39.34)
Marketing	12	-	12 (23.07)	11	-	11 (15.71)	23 (18.84)
Medical	4	-	4 (7.69)	7	-	7 (10.00)	11 (9.01)
Drinking water	1	1	2 (3.84)	1	6	7 (10.00)	9 (7.37)
Unemployment	3	-	3 (5.76)	2	-	2 (2.85)	5 (4.09)
Education	-	-	-	3	-	3 (4.28)	3 (2.45)
Others	6	-	6 (11.53)	3	-	3 (4.28)	9 (7.37)
Total:	153	3	156	177	27	204	360
responses:							

Note: Figures in parentheses refer to percentages.

Source: Field work.

inputs third (60.65%) and the problem of communication fourth (39.34%) ; while responses to the problems of marketing, medical facilities, drinking water and unemployment were in between communication and education. The responses to other problems consisted of the harassment of police and other government officials, housing, smuggling across the border to India and religious indifferences of the young people.

Food and clothes are basic needs of human life. These are the most important problems facing our country. The situation is more grave in rural areas than the urban ones. To meet food deficiency, increase in the food production is essential and this, in turn, needs scientific cultivation which, again, in turn, needs agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers, pesticides, improved seeds, irrigation facilities, etc. Thus the human basic needs of food and clothes including agricultural inputs appeared as the most important problems in the thinking and perception of the elites as a whole.

It has been shown in the second chapter that Phulbari thana is very backward in respect of communication facilities. So this problem also attracted the attention of the elites. They understood the importance of roads and other means of communication to accelerate economic develop-

ment. They also understood that in their areas, the farmers do not get the real price of their products due to non-availability of proper marketing facilities. Illiteracy is a grave problem facing our country. There is a general need of education facilities. But the elites thought that the prevailing educational facilities in Phulbari were comparatively better than the other problems. So educational problem attracted least attention of the elites, even none of the ex-chairmen and members thought it an important problem at all. Similarly the rest problems also attracted the attention of a few number of elites.

A mere glance at the table containing community problems indicates that there was a difference of efficiency among the elites in perceiving community problems. While elected elites could select three problems but all nominated elites could not do so. Out of the 11 nominated elites 6 could mention the names of three problems, 4 mentioned two problems and 1 only one. There was also difference in the nature of the responses of the elites. The responses of the male elites collectively touched every problem in the table, but the responses of the female elites were limited to only three problems; namely, food, clothes and drinking water³. These are the problems that a person can perceive

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The female elites reported to me that, every now and then, the hungry people particularly the women and children came to them for food and clothes and everyday there was a rush to their wells for taking drinking water. From this they perceived the problems of their locality.

them sitting at his own house. The perception of other problems requires knowledge and understanding of the society outside the house. Thus it indirectly implies that our female rural elites still are confined within the four walls of the houses.

Though Table 5.1 reveals that the elites were aware of the problems prevailing in their locality, there was a difference in the frequencies of responses to a particular problem. While 92.30 per cent responses of the former chairmen and members went to the food problems, but for the same problem 77.14 per cent responses came from the sitting chairmen and members, i. e. in respect of food problem, the frequencies of responses of the former chairmen and members were higher than that of the sitting ones. But the problems of clothes, agricultural inputs and communication showed tendency contrary to food problem, i.e. about these three problems, the responses of the sitting chairmen and members were higher than that of the former. Also the frequency of responses to the problem of drinking water (though less frequency) was higher among the sitting chairmen and members. With regard to the remaining problems, the frequencies of responses of the former chairmen and members were higher than that of the sitting ones.

A member of the elite is accepted by the masses on the basis of his performance. This performance is measured in two ways: his perception of community problems, as mentioned above, and his capacity to offer suggestion and solution to those problems. Before asking the question, "can you offer suggestions to solve the problems you selected?" it was expected that as the elites selected problems they also would be able to suggest solutions. But all elites were not able to suggest solutions to all of their selected problems (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Distribution of Elites by Ability to Suggest Solution to their Selected Community Problems

Category of elites	No. of elites able to suggest			No. of elites unable to suggest solution	Total
	Solutions to three problems	Solutions to two problems	Solution to one problem		
Chairmen and vice-chairmen	16 (94.12)	1 (5.88)	-	-	17 (100)
Members	29 (30.85)	49 (52.13)	16 (17.02)	-	94 (100)
Nominated women members	-	2 (18.18)	7 (63.64)	2 (18.18)	11 (100)
Total:	45 (36.89)	52 (42.62)	23 (18.85)	2 (1.64)	122 (100)

Notes: 1) Figures in parentheses refer to percentages.
 2) Election-wise categorization of elites has been avoided due to lack of significant differences in the proportion of elites between two elections with regard to suggestion of problem.
 Source: field work.

It has already been pointed out that there was a difference of efficiency among the elites in perceiving community problems, but this difference was very wide among them in suggesting solutions to those problems. Out of the 122 elites, 45 (36.89%) were able to suggest solutions to all of their selected problems. Except one (he was an ex-chairman), all chairmen and vice-chairmen and 29 members belonged to this group. Of the rest, 52 (42.62%) could suggest solutions to two problems; 23 (18.85%) to one problem; and 2 (1.67%) could suggest nothing who belonged to the group of nominated women members.

In Phulbari thana there was no handloom industry. The elites suggested to establish this industry there. Except this suggestion, all suggestions of the elites were nothing new but the better execution of the schemes initiated by the government. According to their opinions, the better execution of the schemes is dependent on the efficiency and sincerity of the government officers who are responsible for supervision as well as implementation of the schemes. Again, the respondents were asked to state the schemes which they implemented without the help of government. All chairmen, both former and present; all former vice-chairmen; 15 former members and 30 present members (excluding nominated women members) claimed that they without the help of government

implemented some schemes, such as, construction of local roads, establishment of madrasah and re-excavation of ponds.

2. Attitude towards Family Planning

Being a burning question of the day population problem was asked separately. A vast majority of the elites realized growing population as threat to the prosperity and development of the country. The available data (Table 5.3) present that among the former chairmen, vice-chairmen and members 39 i.e. 75 per cent supported family planning and 13 i.e. 25 per cent did not support it. But among the present chairmen and members the percentage of supporters was comparatively higher, i.e. of them 58 i.e. 82.86 per cent supported family planning and 12 i.e. 17.14 per cent did not. The data also suggest that all present chairmen and also all nominated women members supported family planning. On the contrary, all present elected members did not support it. Out of the 53 present selected members, 41 (77.35%) supported family planning and 11 (22.65%) did not support it. Also out of the 41 ex-members, 30 (73.17%) including the only woman member supported family planning and the remaining 11 (26.83%) did not support it. Similarly 2 (18.18%) of the ex-chairmen and vice-chairmen did not support family planning. In short, out of the 122 elites, 79 (79.51%) supported family planning and 25 (20.49%) did not support it.

Table 5.3
Distribution of elites by
Attitude towards Family Planning

Category of elites	No. of elites who support family planning	No. of elites who do not support family planning	Total
Ex-chairmen and vice-chairmen	9 (81.82)	2 (18.18)	11 (100)
Ex-members	30 (73.17)	11 (26.83)	41 (100)
Total:	39 (75.00)	13 (25.00)	52 (100)
Present chairmen	6 (100)	-	6 (100)
Present members	41 (77.36)	12 (22.65)	53 (100)
Present nominated women members	11 (100)	-	11 (100)
Total :	58 (82.86)	12 (17.14)	70 (100)
Grand total:	97 (79.51)	25 (20.49)	122 (100)

Note: Figures in perentheses refer to percentages.
Source: Field work

3. Attitude of the Male Elites towards Women Members in Union Parishad

While seeking the opinions of the male elites about women representation in Union Parishad, it was expected that those who do not support family planning will also not support women representatives in Union Parishad. This was

true. But in addition to them (who were 25 in number and all of them were males, Table 5.3) some of the elites supporting family planning did not support women members in Union Parishad. In other words, out of the 85 male elites supporting family planning, 10 (11.76%) did not support women representation in Union Parishad. It should be noted that those of the elites who supported family planning but did not like women representation in Union Parishad belonged to the category of members.

4. Span of Perception

In order to understand the span of perception of the elites, an effort was made with a question --- to what problem will you give more emphasis ? national or local. The responses have been designed in Table 5.4 which gives a clear picture of elites' span of perception. It appears from the table that except a negligible minority, all gave emphasis to local problem. But position-wise distribution of the elites shows that the percentage of local problem preference among the members ^{was} higher than that of chairmen/vice-chairmen. Out of the 17 chairmen and vice chairmen, 8 i.e. 47.06 per cent paid attention to the national problem against local problem, while only 5 i.e. 5.32 per cent and 1 i.e. 9.10 per cent respectively from the members and nominated women members gave emphasis to national problem. Again, the percentage of those who were unable to understand the

question was higher among the nominated women members than the elected members. Of the elected members, 18 i.e. 19.15 per cent could not understand the question, but out of the 11 nominated women members, 5 i.e. 45.45 per cent were found in the group of those who could not understand the question. Thus considering the span of perception it may be said that the rural elites are more interested in local problem than the national one.

Table 5.4

a) Distribution of Elites by
Preference for National or Local Problem

Category of elites	No. of elites able to reply			No. of elites unable to reply
	Total	Emphasis on national problem	Emphasis on local problem	
Chairmen and vice-chairmen N=17	17	8	9	-
Members N=94	76	5	71	18
Nomina- ted women members N=11	6	1	5	5
Total : 122	99	14	85	23

Source: Field work.

5. Opinion on the Form of Government

During the preparation of the questionnaire a question had been discussed very widely at national level on the issue that what form of government, either parliamentary or presidential, Bangladesh should have? Simply to test the opinions of the respondents on the point the following question was put in the questionnaire:

What form of government in your opinion, is suitable for Bangladesh ?

- a) presidential form
- or
- b) parliamentary form.

It was first thought that, except a few, all of the respondents would not be able to reply, because it was a national issue to be decided by the national leaders, especially the experts. The respondents, being local leaders interested in local problem, will not bother themselves with this issue. But surprisingly enough, majority of the respondents were able to reply the question. All chairmen, both former and present and also all former vice-chairmen could reply the question (Table 5.5). That is among them 12 (70.59%) preferred presidential form of government and 5 (29.41%), parliamentary system. With regard to members, the data as presented in Table 5.5 show that all of them could not reply the question. Out of the

94 members, both former and present, 60 (63.83%) preferred presidential system and only 11 (11.70%) supported parliamentary system and remaining 23 (24.47%) could not reply. Out of the 11 nominated women members, only 2 (18.18%) could

Table 5.5
Distribution of Elites by Opinion on
Parliamentary or Presidential Form of Government

Category of elites	No. of elites able to reply			No. of elites unable to reply
	Total	Preference for presi- dential form of govt.	Preference for parlia- mentary form of govt.	
Chairmen N=17 and vice- chairmen	17	12	5	-
Members N=94	71	60	11	23
Nominated women N=11 member	2	2	-	9
Total:	122	90	16	32

Source: Field work.

reply the question supporting presidential system and 9 (81.82%) were unable to reply. Thus the percentage of those who could not reply the question was higher among the nominated women members (81.82%) than that of other members (24.47%). In short, out of the 122 respondents 90 (73.77%) could reply the question and 32 (26.23%) expressed their

inability to reply the question. And out of the 90 respondents who were able to reply the question, 74 (82.22%) expressed opinions supporting presidential system and 16 (17.78%) expressed opinions supporting parliamentary system.

Asking the respondents about the causes of their preference, it was found that out of 90 who replied the question, only 10⁴ (11.11%) had elementary conception about the mechanism of presidential and parliamentary forms of government. So they could give arguments for their preference. The other 80 respondents (88.89%) who had no conception about these two systems but replied the question, may be divided into two groups according to the causes of their preference. One group of respondents referred their preference to the demands of the political parties to which they belonged. The other group of respondents, all of them preferred presidential system, as the cause of their preference, stated that in the past during the presidential era the government was stable and the people lived comparatively in a better condition than during the period of parliamentary system. The former group consisted of 13 respondents and latter group 67 respondents.

⁴ They included 2 ex-chairmen, 2 ex-vice-chairmen, 3 present chairmen and 3 ex-members.

6. Opinion on Rural Development Programmes

Many rural development programmes have been undertaken throughout Bangladesh. The members of the rural political elite are more or less concerned with these programmes. It would be worthwhile to know their opinions on the working of those programmes. It is expected that this will help the policy makers as well as the countrymen to know how far those programmes have helped rural development. This again, may help the government to take proper attention to the implementation of those programmes and also, if needed, to bring about change and modification in the programmes.

The present section attempts at analysing the opinions of the male elites on the working of the various rural development programmes undertaken in Phulbari thana. The female elites were excluded, because generally they do not participate in the Union parishad meetings (infra Table 5.7) nor they are directly involved with such programmes. Here, I have taken only such programmes, the responsibilities of which entirely lie with Union Parishad chairmen and members. Among those, the most popular programmes are Rural Works Programmes (RWP)⁵ and Food for Works

⁵ Rural Works Programmes was started in 1962 for construction of roads, bridges, culverts and embankments in the rural areas. For details, see Rehman Sobhan, op. cit.

programmes⁶ (FPP). Out of the 51 former male chairmen and members, 41 (80.39%) including all chairmen and vice-chairmen and also out of the 58 male present chairmen and members, 48 (81.35%) including all chairmen were directly involved in these programmes and the remaining members, both former and present, were involved in the programmes indirectly. The inquiry to their opinions on the implementation of the programmes reveals a gloomy picture. Opinions on the implementation of the programmes varied from 25 per cent to above, but no respondent expressed opinion that more than 55 per cent works of those programmes had ever been done.⁷ To relieve

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Food for works Programme has now been continuing in full swing in Bangladesh. Relief goods are a major source of finance for the programme. It includes such activities as construction and repair of roads, construction of embankments, excavation and re-excavation of canals, ponds, drains and the like. The aim of the programme is to provide the marginal farmers and day labourers with food for their work. During 1977-79, 24249 maunds (maund is a measure of weight of 40 seers or about 82 lbs.) wheat had been allotted for Phulbari thana under the programme (source: office of the Circle Officer (Development) Phulbari).

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It was reported that when Rural Works Programme was started in 1962, 5 per cent of the money of the programme was taken by the government officer concerned. With the passage of time this percentage increased and on the eve of Ayub's downfall it became 15 per cent. After the liberation, the percentage increased more. In this regard many respondents told me, "now you can imagine if a person is to prepare a false master roll of 15 per cent or more for the officer, then what amount he will appropriate for himself? We, the chairmen and the members, our case is such". Another respondent who was a chairman of a project committee reported that under Food for Works Programme 1950 maunds wheat were allotted for an embankment on the bank of the Pharla river. One day a new officer came to see the work and praised the work. But in his next visit, he directly proposed to sell the wheat and accordingly it was done. According to the project chairman only about 35 per cent allotted wheat of that project was spent for the work.

the deterioriated food situation another programme under Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme (VGFP) has been working in Phulbari thana since the severe famine of 1974. But the opinions of the respondents about the programme were in no way better, even in some cases were worse than that of Rural Works Programme and Food for Works Programme. Similar opinions they expressed regarding the programme which has been taken to build union level maternity and children welfare based Family Planning Clinics?⁹

A severe famine struck Bangladesh in 1974. The famine was most intense in Kurigram subdivision of Rangpur district. For a detailed discussion of the famine in Kurigram, see Ali Akbar, "An Analysis of Nature, Causes and Implications of the 1974 Famine in Kurigram", The Journal of the Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Vol. II (1977). During that period many gruel kitchens had been started in Kurigram subdivision including Phulbari thana. Later on, Vulnerable Group Feeding Programme (VGFP) started. During my final survey period there were six centres under the programme in Phulbari thana, one centre for each union. Six hundred and forty three maunds wheat were allotted to these centres for every month (source: Office of the Circle officer (Dev.), Phulbari). A responsible employee of the office of the Circle officer (Dev.) Phulbari reported to me that generally 32 to 35 per cent of the allotted wheat to these centres was distributed among the deserving people and the remaining entire amount was shared by the government officers and Union Parishad chairmen and members. He further told me that there were many instances that the entire quota of wheat was sold and money was shared by them telling the people that the quota has been lapsed. He further reported that there was no possibility of disclosing the scandle of wheat of FFP or VGFP or money of RWP. Because there was a system of distribution among the officers from top to bottom including the petty clerks and peons.

⁹ Recently with the help of the world Bank the government has taken initiative to build Family Planning Clinics in each union of Bangladesh step by step. Five such clinics had been approved for Phulbari thana and Tk. 43,80,000/- for these clinics was sanctioned in the financial year 1977-78 (source: Thana family Planning office, Phulbari). The construction works of these clinics were started through the present chairmen of Union Parishads. But as it was a cash paid work, the nature of percentage taken by the government officers concerned was the same as the practice of Rural Works Programme.

Various causes of unsatisfactory working of the above programmes were mentioned by the elites. But as the main cause all referred to the corruption of the government officers concerned. They were further asked whether they took initiative to remove the government officers' corruption in order to implement the programmes properly. According to the answers all male members and vice-chairmen may be classified into two groups. One group of small minority, consisting of 10 (10.10%) in number, replied that they took initiative but no result was obtained. The other group of vast majority comprising 89 (89.80%) blamed the chairmen on the ground that they (chairmen) were the leaders of the team, and as they did not take initiative, they (members and vice-chairmen) had nothing to do. Out of the 11 chairmen, both former and present, only one (9.09%) present chairman replied that he took initiative and was waiting for result¹⁰, 3 (27.27%)

¹⁰ The initiative taken by the present chairman regarding Rural Works Programme or Family Planning Clinics, were not only known to the people of Phulbari thana but these had been published in some of the daily newspapers of Bangladesh. With regard to Rural Works Programme he reported to me that there was a sanction of Tk.4116/- for a small bridge in his union. On starting the work, as project chairman he received Tk.2,000/- of first instalment. But when he denied to give 25 per cent of the total amount to the officer concerned, the money of the next instalment had been stopped. He appealed the case to the higher authority but till my departure no action was taken and the work remained at the state of half done. The chairman also reported that there was a project of re-excavation of canal in his union with an amount of 1942 maunds wheat under Food for Works Programme. As project convenor he received the first quota of wheat (685 maunds) but when the officer concerned negotiated him for percentage, he (chairman) denied. As a result the officer forcibly took

did not reply (two were ex-chairmen and the other present chairmen). The rest 7 (63.63%) chairmen replied in the negative way on the ground that an initiative may cause to stop the work of the project under the programme or to hand over the charge of the project to the other¹¹.

The replies of the respondents, might be true, but it was also true that most of them lacked the qualities like honesty and sincerity. They admitted this indirectly when answered a question: what is the percentage of the chairmen and members of the Union Parishads, according to you, are honest and sincere to the public work?¹² The responses of

(Foot note continued)

away key of the godown from him and gave it to a member whom he later illegally appointed as convenor of the project. Later on, every thing was done according to the whim of the officer (see The Bainik Barta, the 23rd July, 1978; The Bainik Bangla, the 5th August, 1978, and The Bainik Ittefaq, the 23rd August, 1978). Regarding this, the chairman filed another petition to the higher authority and till my departure the case was going on. In respect of Family Planning Clinic, he also brought the same allegation against the Government officers (see The Bainik Barta, the 23rd July, 1978; The Bainik Ittefaq, the 16th January, 1979 and The Bainik Sangbad, the 18th January, 1979). According to his report when he denied to give percentage of the money sanctioned for the Family Planning Clinic to the officer, the money of the second instalment had been stopped and after a month he received a notice from the district authority ordering him to hand over the charges of clinic to the ^{Chairman of} Thana development Committee. He filed a petition to the ministry concerned and was waiting for the result when I departed from Phulbari.

¹¹ All cited the example of the chairman who took initiative.

¹² Direct question regarding their own honesty and sincerity was not asked as it might have resulted in vague and evasive answer.

the question varied from 5 per cent to 40 per cent, but the mean of the responses was that 15 per cent of the chairmen and members were honest and sincere to public work. Again, the respondents were asked: are you hopeful of rural development, if the developmental works continue in such a way? More than half of the male respondents expressed pessimistic view about rural development under the prevailing condition (5.6).

Table 5.6

Distribution of Male Elites by Optimistic or Pessimistic View about Rural Development

Category of male elites	No. of optimistic	No. of pessimists	No. of elites who did not reply	Total
Ex-chairman and vice-chairmen	2 (18.18)	9 (81.82)	-	11 (100)
Ex-members	13 (32.50)	22 (55.00)	5 (12.50)	40 (100)
Total:	15 (29.41)	31 (64.79)	5 (9.80)	51 (100)
Present chairmen	3 (50.00)	3 (50.00)	-	6 (100)
Present members	26 (49.06)	24 (45.28)	3 (5.66)	53 (100)
Total:	29 (49.15)	27 (45.76)	3 (3.09)	59 (100)
Grand Total:	44 (40.00)	58 (52.73)	8 (7.27)	110 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses refer to percentages.

Source: Field work.

7. Sense of Obligation

One of the important dimensions in the study of the values of elites is to examine their sense of obligation and commitment to the duties for which they are responsible. In this connection an endeavour was made to examine the sense of obligation and commitment of the present chairmen and members. But the question is how to study this? An examination of their participation in the meetings of Union Parishads and the time they spend for public work may provide a means of understanding their sense of obligation.

7.1. Participation in Union Parishad Meeting

Union Parishad is a decision-making body. The decisions of important business of the union are to be taken at the meetings of Union Parishad. So participation of the members in the meetings of Parishad is very essential. One general meeting is held in a month in every Union Parishad. The date for the meeting is fixed. As the general meeting is held every month in a fixed day, no notice is served and simply the agenda is given to the notice board. Besides the general monthly meeting, special and emergency meetings are held and notice is served to all concerned. During my 5 months stay at Phulbari for administering questionnaire many meetings were held in Union Parishads. But the number

of meetings held differed from Parishad to Parishad. One Parishad conducted 15 meeting, while the other only 5. The total number of meetings of all Union Parishads was 63. The attendances of members in those meetings were carefully recorded. It was not possible for me to attend all meetings. The secretaries of Union Parishads, who are supposed to be non-political figures, supplied the information of those meetings which I could not attend. The attendances of the members at different meetings have been shown in the following table.

Table 5.7
Showing Attendances of Present Chairmen and
Members at Union Parishad Meetings Held During
5 Months

No. of meetings held	No. of attendances at the meetings
2	12 (including nominated members)
5	10 (no nominated women member was present)
3	9
3	8
9	7
10	6
11	5
9	4
11	3
Total: 63	

Source: Field work.

Table 5.7 shows that out of 63 meetings held only in 2 meetings all members including the nominated women members were present¹³. Besides these two, the nominated women members did not attend any meeting. The table also shows that 41 (65.07%) meetings were held without quorum¹⁴.

7.2. Time Spent for Public Work

Another way to examine the sense of obligation of the elites is to know how much time they spend for public work on an average. The data (Table 5.8) indicate that the

¹³ The two meetings, in which the nominated women members were present, held in two Union Parishads immediate after my arrival at Phulbari for administering the questionnaire. Before the meetings I informed the chairmen that I would like to attend the meetings of their parishads. Perhaps, this was the cause of nominated women members' attendance at the two meetings. Generally, like all other elected male members, the husbands or near relatives of the nominated women members participated in the meetings of the parishads, debated in the discussion, put signature to the resolution on behalf of the nominated women members and generally performed other functions. It was reported that this usage was not only practised in the present Union Parishads but in 1973 the only woman who was ~~was~~ elected as member her husband also did the same. This was, no doubt, illegal so when the attendances of the members at the meetings were recorded these illegal attendances were excluded.

¹⁴ Quorum requires two-thirds majority of the members in case of budget meeting, but in case of other meetings it requires simple majority. Table 5.7 shows that most of the meetings were held without quorum. But due to the lack of quorum no meeting was declared null and void. Quorum was maintained in two ways: first, by allowing in the meetings the husbands or near relatives of the nominated women members and secondly, if there was shortage of number in quorum, the resolution of meeting was sent to the absentee members for signature.

chairmen were so busy with public work that they could not mention how much time they spend per day for public work.

Also 13 (24.52%) of the elected members claimed the same.

The remaining elected members stated that they spent between 1 and 5 hours per day for public work. No elected member would finish public work per day below an hour. On the contrary, no nominated women member would spend an hour per day for public work¹⁵.

Table 5.8

Distribution of Present Chairmen and
Members by Time Spent Per Day for Public Work

	Less than an hour	1 to 2 hours	Above 2 to 3 hours	Above 3 to 4 hours	Above 4 to 5 hours	Indefinite time
Chairmen N=6 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	6 (100)
Members N=53 (100)	-	9 (16.98)	11 (20.75)	17 (32.08)	3 (5.66)	13 (24.53)
Nominated women N=11 members (100) (100)	11 (100)	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Figures in parentheses refer to percentages.
Source: Field work.

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The public work performed by the nominated women members was mainly concerned with family planning. They helped Family Welfare Assistants (Female Family Planning Workers appointed by the government in each ward of Union) and advised women, who came to the, for adopting birth control method.

CHAPTER 6

PARTY-AFFILIATION AND
PARTY-LOYALTY OF THE RURAL POLITICAL ELITE

'Party-affiliation and party-loyalty' is an area which is still unexplored in Bangladesh. This chapter seeks to analyse the party-affiliation and party-loyalty of the elites. I shall deal here mainly with the following questions:

- a) How many of the elites under review had party-affiliation during my survey period ? ;
- b) how many of them changed party and why ? ;
- c) was there any relation between their party-change and the change of party in power ? ;
- d) how many of the elites, who had no party-affiliation, were sympathisers of party ? and lastly
- e) what was the position of those elites who had neither party-affiliation nor sympathy for a party ?

Party-Affiliation

With regard to affiliation to the political parties, the data (Table 6.1) indicate that out of the 70 present chairmen and members, 40 (57.14%) had affiliation to one or the other political party and 30 (42.86%) had no such affiliation. The data further indicate that all chairmen and all re-elected members had party-affiliation and, on the other hand, no nominated woman member had party-affiliation.

Table 6.1

Distribution of Present Chairmen and Members
by Affiliation or Non-affiliation to Political Parties

	No. of non- affilia- tion	No. of affiliation	No. of affiliation						
			Total	BNP	AL(M)	ML	NAP (M)	JSD	IDL(R)
Chairman N=6	-	6	5	1	-	-	-	-	-
Members N=41	19	22	10	5	3	1	2	1	
Re- elected members	N=12	-	12	10	2	-	-	-	
Nomina- ted women members	N=11	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total:	70	30	40	25	8	3	1	2	1

- Notes: 1) BNP= The Bangladesh Nationalist Party
 2) AL(M) = The Awami League (Malek)
 3) ML = The Muslim League
 4) NAP(M)= The National Awami Party (Mozaffar)
 5) JSD= The Jatio Samajtantrik Dal
 6) IDL(R) = The Islamic Democratic League (Rahim)

Source: Field work

It is interesting to note that majority of them who claimed to have their party-affiliation belonged to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party¹, the ruling party. In other words, out of the 40 party-affiliated chairmen and members, 25 (62.50%) belonged to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the remaining 15 belonged to different political parties including the Muslim League,² 3 (7.50%) ; the Awami League (Malek),³

1

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party developed through the Jatiotabadi Ganotantrik Dal (Nationalist Democratic Party), established in 1976. The Jatiotabadi Ganotantrik Dal and other political parties formed the Nationalist Front before the presidential election of 1978. Ziaur Rahman, the present president of Bangladesh was the chairman and presidential nominee of the front. Immediate after the election the front was dissolved and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was formed in September 1978, under the chairmanship of President Ziaur Rahman. The BNP won more than two-third seats of the Parliament in the last election in 1979.

2

The Muslim League was established in 1906 as a separate political organisation of the Muslims in India. Under the leadership of this party Pakistan came into being in 1947. "Ideologically, the Muslim League maintained a modernist Islamic position" (Talukdar Maniruzzaman, Politics of Development, op.cit. p-118). During the post liberation period of Bangladesh the Muslim League and other parties, such as Jamat-i-Islami and Nizam-i-Islam were banned. In 1986 the Muslim League was revived. During the last parliamentary election it entered into alliance with the Islamic Democratic League, headed by Moulana Abdur Rahim, and obtained 12 seats. But it lost 2 seats in the by-election.

3

The Awami League was formed in 1949. Originally it was the Awami Muslim League. Later the word 'Muslim' had been dropped from the name of the party. In contrast to the Muslim League the Awami League maintained secular orientation. As the Muslim League played a tremendous role in establishing

- 8 (20%); the Nationalist Awami Party (Mozaffar),
 1 (2.53%); the Jatio Samajtantrik Dal⁵,

(Foot note continued)

Pakistan the Awami League also played the same in achieving the independence of Bangladesh. The ^{Awami} League was divided in 1978 under the leadership of Abdul Malek Ukil, a former Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament and Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, a former Minister of Bangladesh. Both groups of the Awami League participated in the last parliamentary election. The Awami League (Malek) won 40 seats and the Awami League (Mizan) 2 seats. In the by-election the Awami League (Malek) won more 2 seats.

4

The National Awami Party was founded in 1957 by Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, the first president of the Awami League. It was June 1957, Bhasani was defeated to Suhrawardy in the East Pakistan Awami League Council on the question of foreign policy and resigned. After a month he called a convention at Dacca in which the National Awami Party was formed. The Sino-Soviet ideological conflict of early 1960's led to the split of the NAP in 1967. One group of the NAP, known as pro-Peking group, was led by the founder of the party — Moulana Bhasani and the other group of the NAP, known as pro-Moscow group, was led by Wali Khan of former West Pakistan. After the liberation of Bangladesh Mozaffar Ahmed, former president of East Pakistan pro-Moscow group, became its president (for detail analysis of division of the NAP, see Talukdar Maniruzzaman, Radical Politics and the Emergence of Bangladesh, Dacca: Bangladesh Books International Ltd., 1975). The NAP (Mozaffar) has only one seat in the present Parliament.

5

The Jatio Samajtantrik Dal (The National Socialistic Party) was formed after the liberation of Bangladesh. It originated from the Student League, the student organisation of the Awami League. In 1972 the Student League was divided on the question of four principles — Nationalism, Socialism, Democracy and Secularism, collectively known as Mujib-bad (Mujibism). One group believing in the Mujib-bad continued to be the supporter of the Awami League. The other group believing in scientific socialism enunciated by Karl Marx, withdrew support from the Awami League. The leaders of the latter group formed the Jatio Samajtantrik Dal in October 1972. In its first national convention the party elected M.A. Jalil, a retired army officer; S.M. Abdur Rab^a, central leader of the former student League and the then Vice-President of the Dacca University Students' Union; and Sahjahan Siraj, the then General Secretary of the Student League; President, Secretary General and Joint Secretary respectively. In the present Parliament the JSD represents nine seats.

2 (5%); and the Islamic Democratic League (Bahim), 1 (2.50%). Thus with more than 60 per cent of the chairmen and members having affiliation to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party the representation of other parties was bound to be very poor in the present Union Parishads. This majority clearly indicates the influence of the ruling party at the local body politics. The ruling party influenced not only the sitting chairmen and members, the ex-chairmen and members also, though in a lesser percentage, were not free from its influence (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

Distribution of Ex-chairmen and Members by Affiliation or Non-affiliation to Political Parties

	No. of non-affiliation	No. of Total	No. of affiliation					
			BNP	AL (N)	ML	NAP (JSD) (N)	IDL (R)	
Ex-chairmen N=11 and vice-chairmen	-	11	6	2	1	1	-	1
Ex-members N=41	20	21	8	6	3	1	2	1
Total:	52	32	14	8	4	2	2	2

Note: For abbreviations see notes of Table 6.1

Source: Field work

⁶ The Islamic Democratic League was established in 1976 by the leaders of the banned Jamat-i-Islami and Nizam-i-Islam Parties. But very soon the IDL was divided by the Jamat based and Nizam based leaders. The IDL led by the former Jamat leader Moulana Abdur Rahim obtained 7 seats in the parliamentary election of 1979. Very recently the Jamat-i-Islami has also been revived.

The data presented in Table 6.2 reveal that among the 52 former chairmen and members 32 (61.53%) had party-affiliation and 20 (38.56%) had no party-affiliation. The data also reveal that among the former party-affiliated chairmen and members 14 (43.75%) belonged to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party; 8 (25%) belonged to the Awami League (Malek) and remaining 10 belonged to the different parties; namely, the Muslim League, 4 (12.50%); the National Awami Party (Mozaffar), 2 (6.25%); the Jatio Samajtrantik Dal, 2 (6.25%) and the Islamic Democratic League (Rahim), 2 (6.25%). Thus, like the present chairmen and members though the Bangladesh Nationalist Party did not represent overwhelming majority among the former chairmen and members, ~~but~~ it represented single majority among them.

Pattern of Party-Loyalty

It is apparent from the foregoing discussion that the party-affiliation of the rural political elite under study was greatly influenced by the ruling party. This point will further be clear if the nature of their party-change is analysed.

The available data suggest that among the party-affiliated present chairmen and members 28 (70%) changed parties and 12 (30%) did not change. Of the changers, 18 (64.28%) changed party once and 10 (35.71%) twice. The data further

suggest that all present chairmen changed party and all of them came from the Muslim League (Table 6.3). It may be mentioned here that during the Muslim League regime they were either Union Councillors or Union Board members (Supra Table 4.9). Out of the 6 present chairmen, 4 (66.67%) changed party for one time and 2 (33.33%) for two times. Of the 4 who changed party once, 3 joined the Bangladesh Nationalist party and 1 reported that he joined the Awami League in 1969 and in the later period did not change it. As for the remaining

Table 6.3 Distribution of Present Chairmen by Party-wise Affiliation and Party-change

Name of Party	No. of party-wise affiliation	No. of changers			
		Total	From ML	From ML via AL	From ML via NAP(M)
BNP	5	5	3	1	1
AL (M)	1	1	1	-	-
Total:	6	6	4	1	1

Note: For abbreviations see notes of Table 6.1
Source: Field work

2 present chairmen who changed party twice, both lastly joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party; in between the Muslim League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party one joined the Awami League in 1972 and the other, the

National Awami Party (Mozaffar) in the same year. It is thus clear that during the Muslim League regime they belonged to the Muslim League and in the time of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in power, except one, all became its members. Although they did not work in the Union Parishads constituted in 1973 yet 2 changed party during that period, and their changes also were in favour of the ruling party, the then Awami League, because in between the Muslim League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, as stated above, one had joined the Awami League and the other joined the National Awami Party (Muzaffar), the close associate of ^{the} Awami League.

With regard to the 22 party-affiliated present members other than re-elected ones, the data projected in Table 6.4 depict that among them 12 changed political party and 10 did not changed. Of the changers, 8 changed party twice and 4, once. All of them who changed party twice reported that they first belonged to the Muslim League. It is noticeable that the only 3 members in the present Union Parishads, who claimed to have their Union Council experience (supra Table 4.9) belonged to this group. Of the ⁸ present members who changed party twice, 7 joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party via the Awami League (1972) and the remaining one also joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party but via the National Awami Party (Mozaffar) (1972). Here it is also noticeable that, like the present chairmen, they also were

Table 6.4

Distribution of Present Members (other than Re-elected Ones) by Party-wise Affiliation and Party-Change

Name of party	No. of party-wise affiliation	No. of non-changers	No. of changers			
			Total	From ML via AL	From ML via NAP(M)	From AL
BNP	10	-	10	7	1	2
AL (M)	5	5	-	-	-	-
ML	3	3	-	-	-	-
IDL(R)	1	1	-	-	-	-
JSD	2	-	2	-	-	2
NAP(M)	1	1	-	-	-	-
Total:	22	10	12	7	1	4

Note: For abbreviations see notes of Table 6.1

source: Field work

members of the Muslim League when it was in power and during the period of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in power they became its members shifting loyalty from the Muslim League. All of the 4 present members who changed party for one time reported that they originally were members of the Awami League and after the political change in 1975 they shifted loyalty from it ; 2 joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and 2, the Jatio Samajtantrik Dal. Out of the 10 present members who did not change party, 5

belonged to the Awami League (Malek); 3 belonged to the Muslim League; 1, to the Islamic Democratic League (Nahim); and the remaining 1, to the National Awami Party (Mozaffar).

The data regarding the 12 re-elected members exhibit that among them 10 changed party for one time and 2 did not change (Table 6.5). The data also exhibit that all

Table 6.5

Distribution of 12 Re-Elected Members by Party-wise Affiliation and Party-change

Name of party	No. of party-wise affiliation	No. of non-changers	No. of changers	
			Total	From AL
BNP	10	-	10	10
AL (M)	2	2	-	-
Total:	12	2	10	10

Note: For abbreviations see notes of Table 6.1

Source: Field work

changers changed the Awami League and joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. This clearly indicates that during the period of their first membership, they belonged to the Awami League, the then ruling party and when they became members for the second time all but 2 changed the Awami League and joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the

new ruling party. The only 2 re-elected members who did not change party belonged to the Awami League (Malek).

It is evident from the above analysis that the party-loyalty of the sitting chairmen and members was greatly influenced by the ruling party. The point will further be cleared if representation strength of different political parties in the previous Union Parishads (before 1975) is found out by analysing the party-changing pattern of those who held the offices of those parishads. The ex-chairmen, vice-chairmen and members including the re-elected ones in 1977 held the offices of previous Parishads. The party-changing position of the re-elected members has already been discussed. Let me now explain the party-changing position of the ex-chairmen, vice-chairmen and members. The available data depict that out of the 32 party-affiliated ex-chairmen, vice-chairmen and members, 19 (59.37%) changed parties and 13 (40.63%) did not change. The data also depict that out of the 11 ex-chairmen and vice-chairmen, 7 changed party and 4 did not change (Table 6.6). Of the ex-chairmen and vice-chairmen who changed party, 3 changed party for two times, i.e. they changed the Muslim League in 1972 (all had Union Council/Board experience, supra Table 4.9) and joined the Awami League in that year. Later on they changed the Awami League also ; 2 joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party

Table 6.6

Distribution of Ex-Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen
by Party-wise Affiliation and Party-Change

Name of party	No. of party- wise affilia- tion	No. of non- chang- ers	No. of changers			
			Total	(From ML via AL	From AL	From ML
BNP	6	-	6	2	3	1
ML	1	1	-	-	-	-
AL(M)	2	2	-	-	-	-
NAP (M)	1	1	-	-	-	-
IDL(R)	1	-	1	1	-	-
Total:	11	4	7	3	3	1

Note: For abbreviations see notes of Table 6.1

Source: Field work

and 1, to the Islamic Democratic League (Rahim). Of the 4 ex-chairmen and vice-chairmen who changed party for one time, 3 changed the Awami League after 1975 and joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party; and the other also joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, but he came from the Muslim League. Thus from the pattern of party-change of the ex-chairmen and vice-chairmen, it is seen that the changes in their party-affiliation were also in favour of the ruling party. Of the 4 ex-chairmen and vice-chairmen who did not change party, 1 belonged to the Muslim League; 2, to the Awami League (Malek); and 1, to the National Awami Party (Mozaffar).

With regard to the party-affiliated 21 ex-members, the data state that among them 12 changed party and 9 did not. Out of the 12 changers, 10 changed party for one time and 2, for two times (Table 6.7). Of the 10 ex-members

Table 6.7
Distribution of Ex-Members by
Party-Wise Affiliation and Party-Change

Name of party	No. of party-wise affiliation	No. of non- changers	No. of changers		
			Total	From ML via AL	From AL
BNP	8	-	8	2	6
AL(M)	6	6	-	-	-
ML	3	3	-	-	-
IDL(R)	1	-	1	-	1
JSD	2	-	2	-	2
NAP(M)	1	-	1	-	1
Total:	21	9	12	2	10

Note: For abbreviations see notes of Table 6.1

Source: Field work

who changed party for one time all originally were members of the Awami League. They changed the Awami League after 1975; 6 joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party; 2, the Jatio Samajtantrik Dal; 1, the Islamic Democratic League (Bahin) and the remaining 1 joined the National Awami Party (Mozaffar). The 2 ex-members who changed party twice; both of them changed the Muslim League first (both were

former Union Councillors) and joined the Awami League in 1973 ; they changed the Awami League too and joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Of the 9 ex-members who did not change party, 6 belonged to the Awami League (Malek) and 3, to the Muslim League.

In the above discussion party-changing pattern has been analysed. And on the basis of the different party-changing periods of the elites who worked in the previous Union Parishads constituted in 1973, the following table has been constructed which shows the representation strength of the different political parties in those Parishads.

Table 6.8
Representation of Different Parties
in Union Parishads Constituted in 1973

		No. of non- affilia- tion	No. of affiliation			
			Total	AL	ML	NAP(M)
Chairman and vice- chairmen	N=11	-	11	8	2	1
Members	N=53	20	33	30	3	-
Total:	64	20	44	38	5	1

Note: For abbreviations see notes of Table 6.1
Source: Field work

Table 6.8 clearly shows that out of the 64 elites holding different positions in the Union Parishads of 1973, 44 (68.75%)⁷ had party-affiliation and 20 (31.25%) had no party-affiliation. The table also indicate that out of the 44 party-affiliated elites, 38 (86.36%) were members of the Awami League, the then ruling party. This preponderant majority of the ruling party-representation in the Union Parishads of 1973 was, no doubt, greater than the majority of the ruling party-representation in the present Union Parishads constituted in 1977.

Thus from the analysis of party-changing pattern and representation strength of the different political parties in the previous and present Union Parishads it is clear that most of the members of the rural political elite under study belonged to the ruling party and the changes in their party-loyalties were greatly influenced by it.

7 Apparently it is seen that the percentage of party-affiliated elites in the present Union Parishads was comparatively lesser (57.14%) than that of the previous ones (68.75%). This was because of the nominated women members who had no party-affiliation. However, if we exclude the nominated women members and consider only the chairmen and the elected members, the percentage was almost the same (67.79%).

Sympathy for Party

From Table 6.9 that out of the 50 members, both former and present, who had no party-affiliation,

It has already been pointed out that all nominated women members and 19 of the present members and also 20 of the ex-members had no party-affiliation. They were asked as they had no party-affiliation, whether they were sympathizers of any political party. Majority of them replied that they were men of the government and that is why they were sympathizers of the government party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. See Table 6.9. below.

Table 6.9

Distribution of Members having no Party-Affiliation, by sympathy for different Parties

	No. of (non-affiliated members)	No. of sympathizers			No. of members having nei- ther party- aff. nor sy. for a party
		Total	The Bang- ladesh National- ist party)	(Other parties) voted	
Present members	19	14	14	-	5
Present N.W. members	11	7	7	4	4
Ex-members	20	12	7	5	8
Total	50	33	28	5	17

Source: Field work

It is evident from Table 6.9 that out of the 50 members, both former and present, who had no party-affiliation, 33 (66%) had sympathy for one or the other party. Interesting enough, almost of them were sympathizers of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and only 3 were sympathizers of the other parties. The table shows that 17 (34%) members had neither party-affiliation nor sympathy for any party. Those 17 members were further asked if they had neither party-affiliation nor sympathy for any party, how they casted vote during national election. According to their replies, they may be divided into two groups. One group consisted of 4 nominated women members and other group consisted of remaining 13 members. The nominated women members replied that during election they followed the direction of their husbands or the heads of their families. But the replies of the 13 members were different. Six replied that they voted for the candidates who were comparatively competent and 2 replied that they voted for those candidates, for whom other people voted. These 2 members may be included in the group of those people who believe in the wastage of vote, as we observed in the fourth chapter. The remaining 5 replied that the vote was a secret thing and hence they were not ready to disclose it to others.

only one chapter from the thesis is given in the book.

V.P. Singh, op. cit., p. 92.

Waves of Party-Change

From the analysis relating to the party-changing pattern, three waves of party-change are found. One wave occurred during the mass uprising of 1969, the second wave occurred after the liberation of Bangladesh and the third wave took place after the political change in 1975 and the emergence of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party through Jatiotabadi Ganotantrik Dal (The Nationalist Democratic Party). For the former two waves, all party changers came from the Muslim League but for the third, the changers came from both the Muslim League and the Awami League and only one came from the National Awami Party (Mozaffar), who before joining the National Awami Party (Mozaffar) belonged to the Muslim League (Table 6.4).

Causes of Frequent Change

"A change in party-affiliation based on intellectual convictions can never be blamed".⁸ But many times a change in party-affiliation particularly when the change is related to the change of the party in power raises question about the 'intellectual convictions' of the elites under study. Besides this, their replies about the causes of change in party-affiliation were very interesting. The only one changer from the Muslim League to the Awami League

⁸ V.M. Sirsikar, op. cit., p.92.

during mass uprising of 1969 claimed that he joined the Awami League, as it fought for separate entity of the Bangalees which the Muslim League neglected. After the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, the elites who shifted loyalty from the Muslim League to the Awami League or the National Awami Party (Mozaffar) (one only) replied that they did so for their personal safety⁹. The elites who changed parties and joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party may be divided into two groups. The elites of one group stated that the dynamic leadership of Ziaur Rahman, the present President of Bangladesh, attracted them to join the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. The elites of the other group described themselves as men of the government and that is why they joined the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the government party.

The replies of the elites might be true. But their replies did not tell the whole story of change in party-affiliation. There were other reasons responsible for bringing about change in the party-affiliation. In rural communities of Bangladesh, the party in power has greater influence than that of the other parties. So the persons interested in rural politics try to be members of the party

⁹ Their claims might be true. Because the Muslim League and other parties, such as, Jamat-i-Islami and Nizam-i-Islam opposed the liberation of Bangladesh. Hence, in most cases the members of these parties, whether guilty or innocent, were harassed after the liberation.

in power in order to establish their influence in the community more easily. Secondly, the political parties in Bangladesh organisationally are very weak, especially, in rural areas. Hence, the party-loyalty of the rural elites is very fluid.

The study is such an effort. It analyses the nature of the rural political elites in a town of Bangladesh. The study reveals that the rural political elites represent the upper strata of society in the rural areas and as such, they significantly differ from the general people. This is due to the fact that all categories of people are not proportionately represented in the Union Parliaments.

The economic status of the elites indicates that the poorer stratum of society comprising the landless and small farmers (i.e. who have no land or have land up to 2.50 acres and who have annual income less than Tk. 4,000/-) constitute 10% of the Union Parliaments, although they form the majority in the society. At the national level the, constitute 30% of the total households in Bangladesh (about 1.2%). Thus the hold of the few rich people on the mechanism of rural power structure is not a healthy sign both for democratic set-up and rural development in the country. In other words, in the management of

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Empirical investigations about rural level elites and politics have begun to be undertaken only recently. The present study is such an effort. It analyses the nature of the rural political elites in a thana of Bangladesh. The study reveals that the rural political elites represent the upper strata of society in the rural areas and as such, they significantly differ from the general people. This is due to the fact that all categories of people are not proportionately represented in the Union Parishads.

The economic status of the elites indicates that the poorer sections of society comprising the landless and small farmers (i.e. who have no land or have land upto 2.00 acres and who have annual income less than Tk. 4,000/-) continues to be outside the Union Parishads, although they form vast majority in the society. At the national level they constitute 74.94 per cent of the total households in Bangladesh (Table 4.4). Thus the hold of the few rich people on the mechanism of rural power structure is not a healthy sign both for democratic set-up and rural development in the country. In other words, in the management of

the local bodies there should be sufficient representation from all categories of people, "failing which the local administration would be the stronghold of certain vested interests¹.

The sex composition of the elites presents a more gloomy picture. Out of the elected elites under review only one (0.90%) was woman. This is not, however, peculiar to the rural power structure, the national power structure of Bangladesh is not also different. Of course, the government policy for the reservation of seats for women in the Parliament of Bangladesh (to be known as House of Nation) and the nomination of women in Union Parishads have partially filled up the sex gap. But the participation of women members in the meetings of the Union Parishads is very discouraging (Table 5.7).

The age distribution of the elites indicates that the Union Parishads have attracted many of the younger people to take leadership. Of the elites in the first and second elections 21.87 per cent and 24.29 per cent respectively were below 30 years of age. The rest came from the age group between 30 and 59 years. This invariably indicates that the people belonging to the age group between

¹ M. Rashiduzzaman, op. cit., p.95.

30 and 59 are still dominant in rural politics. The persons belonging to this age group are dominant not only in rural politics but also in national politics. In the last parliamentary election 70 per cent of the members were in the age group of 30 - 59 years² and in the previous parliament 82.35 per cent of the members belonged to the age group of 31- 60 years³.

The background study about the experience of the elites gives an entirely new dimension to the process of leadership. Under the Basic Democracies system 85 per cent of the sitting basic democrats sought re-election in 1964, and of them 57.74 per cent were re-elected.⁴

According to this study except one all elites of 1973 sought re-election in 1977, but only 12 (19.04%) were re-elected. It is to be noted that out of 12, all, but one, were re-elected due to the traditional group feeling of the people. It has already been pointed out that in their cases there were no alternative candidates from the groups to which they belonged. If there were new candidates from their groups, they might not have been

² Bangladesh, Ministry of Planning, Statistics Division, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, (Dacca: Bangladesh Government Press), 1979, PP.11-31.

³ Bangladesh, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Bangladesh Parliament (A hand book) (Dacca: Bangladesh Government Press), 1974, P.3, Table 3.

⁴ Rehman Sobhan, op.cit., PP.249-250.

re-elected, as indicated in the cases of others from their groups. Besides, in the previous Union Parishads only 10 (15.63%) elites were experienced in the line and in the present Union Parishads, besides the re-elected members, only 8 (11.42%) were found experienced. This indicates that there is a continuous inflow of new elements into the leadership of Union Parishads. Not only the inflow of new faces but ~~xxxx~~ the inflow of new families is also observed. The available data suggest that two-thirds (66.4%) of the elites came from the families of which no members had ever been elected/nominated to any Union Parishad/Council/Board.

The nature of Union Parishad election reveals a sharp difference between rural politics and national politics. National politics is mostly dominated by political parties. It is practised by westernised lawyers, intellectuals and other modern occupation holders⁵. On the other hand, rural politics is controlled by the rural rich persons who utilize traditional ties of the people on the questions of local and non-local, religion, faction, neighbourhood and other issues. Though there is a difference between rural

⁵ See, Bangladesh Parliament, op. cit., and M. Haroon, ed. Who's Who in Parliament (Dacca: Shaukhin Prakashani, 1979).

politics and national politics, but this does not mean that rural politics is completely isolated from national politics. The dominance of the party in power is reflected on the rural body politics. The present research reveals that a preponderant majority of the elites had affiliation to one or the other political party, although most of them belonged to the party in power and the change in their party-affiliation was largely influenced by its change. The influence of the ruling party on the rural politics is not unique in Bangladesh. The same trend is found in India also. Sirsikar (1970) studied the party-affiliation of the members of Panchyat Raj (local self-government in India) in Maharashtra and observed that 85 per cent of them had ~~affiliation~~ affiliation to the Congress, the then ruling party.

In a transitional society like ours a mixture of traditional and modern forces is obvious. It is expected that the forces of modernization and social change would finally be dominant over the traditional forces of society. In this connection education plays an important role. Looking at the extent of literacy, the elites were a literate group (Table 4.2). Though the elites used traditional group sentiment of the people for their personal purpose in order to get power, most of them seemed to be induced towards the forces of modernization and they were also aware of both local and national issues although the former predominates (Table 5.4).

Bangladesh is a land of villages. It is now well understood that overall development of the country is predominantly dependent on the development of the villages. With this objective in view a large number of development schemes have been undertaken in the rural areas of Bangladesh since 1960s. However without enthusiastic participation and wholehearted co-operation of the rural masses, no development plan could achieve success in its objectives. Here lies the importance of the elites to motivate, mobilize and lead the unorganised masses. Their sincere and effective leadership is a primary requisite of development in the society today. But the data from Phulbari reveal a dismal picture. Majority of the elites expressed pessimistic view about rural development (Table 5.6). The inherent reason for their pessimism, they referred, was the high level corruption of the government officers and the wastage of development funds. This not only hampered the developmental work but became a serious blow to the growth of sincere and viable leadership in the rural areas. What are the causes of corruption? Are the government officers alone responsible for this as the elites stated? These questions require further intensive research based on participant

observation and unstructured interviews. However, the present discussion may be concluded with the words of an old man of Phulbari thana:

It is true that the government officers are mainly responsible for misappropriation of development funds, but it is also true that the Union Parishad chairmen and members have been used as their instruments.

No matter what is right, the role of rural elites is very important not only at the stage of policy making but also at the final stage of implementation of public policies.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

PART - I

1. a) Name:

b) Father's name :

c) Name of village :

d) Name of MOUZA :

e) Name of ward :

f) Name of Union :

g) Religion :

h) Sex :

2. a) Date/year of birth :

b) Birth place :

c) Father's birth place :

d) Grand father's birth place :

3. a) Position held in the Union Parishad :

1973, Chairman/vice-chairman/member :

1977, Chairman/member/nominated women member

4. a) Did you ever serve the Union Council/Board ? Yes/no

b) If yes, when ?

c) Did your father/husband/grandfather/uncle/brother ever serve in the Union Parishad/Council/Board ? Yes/no

5. a) Did you ever fail in the election of Union Parishad/Council/Board ? Yes/no

b) If yes, state the cause(s) of your failure ?

6. a) Is your family joint or nuclear ? Joint/nuclear

b) If nuclear, when did you split ?

c) Number of members in your family:

During your election period, 1973

" " " " 1977

d) Number of wives

7. a) Occupation during your election period:
 1973 Main: _____ Subsidiary: _____
 1977 Main: _____ Subsidiary: _____
 b) Father's/husband's occupation: Main: _____ Subsidiary: _____
8. Annual income during your election:
 1973 _____ 1977 _____
8. a) Education: _____
 b) Wife's/husband's education : _____
 c) Father's education : _____
 d) Mother's education : _____
10. a) Land during your election period :
 1973 _____ 1977 _____
 b) Father's/husband's land : _____
11. a) Do you own radio/transistor ? Yes/no
 b) Do you listen to radio-news ? Yes/no
 c) If yes, regular or irregular ? Regular/irregular
 d) Do you listen to radio/transistor for other programmes ? Yes/no
 e) If yes, regular/irregular ? Regular/irregular
12. a) Do you read newspaper ? Yes/no
 b) If yes, regular/irregular ? Regular/irregular
13. What social class do you consider you belong to ?
 Rich/upper middle/middle/poor

PART - II

1. State three most important problems which the people of your locality face to day :
 a) _____
 b) _____
 c) _____

2. a) Can you suggest the solutions to your selected problems ?
Yes/no
b) If yes, state
3. a) Have you implemented any scheme (other than government) for the development of your Union/Ward ? Yes/no
b) If yes, state the name of the scheme(s)
4. a) Would you like to suggest any new scheme ? Yes/no
b) If yes, state
5. a) Do you support Family Planning ? Yes/no
6. a) Do you support woman member in the Union Parishad ?
Yes/no
7. a) To what problem will you give more emphasis ?
National/local/no response
8. a) What form of government, in your opinion, is suitable for Bangladesh ?
Parliamentary/presidential/no response
b) What is the cause of your preference ?
9. a) What were/are the projects of rural development that worked/are working in your Union/ward ?
b) Are/were you associated with them ? Yes/no
c) Do you think that the works of those projects have been done/are being done properly ? Yes/no
d) If no, what were/are the causes ?
e) Are you hopeful of rural development, if the development works continue in such a way ? Yes/no
10. What is the percentage of UP chairmen and members, who according to you, are sincere and honest to public work ?
5%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80% and 90%
11. How much time you spend for public work per day ?
(for the present chairmen and members)

PART - III

1. a) Are you a member of any political party ? Yes/no
 b) If yes, to what party you belong ?
 c) If no, have you sympathy for any party ? Yes/no
 d) If yes, tell the name of the party
 e) If no, how would you cast vote during national election ?
2. When did you join the present party ?
3. a) Have you ever changed party? Yes / no
 b) If yes, tell the name(s) of the party/parties that you have left
 c) State the time in which the change(s) occurred
 d) Reasons for leaving the party/parties
 e) Reasons for joining the present party

(This is an english translation of the Bengali questionnaire used in the Survey)

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