

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

I. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Bangladesh is a new nation which attained independence in 1971. Unfortunately the country is steeped in deep poverty which is particularly concentrated in the rural areas. The share of Bangladesh in the world's rural poor is even greater than its share in the world's rural population.¹ The world Development Report 1988, Table 29 reports daily calorie supply per capita for various countries. Among the 39 low income countries, Bangladesh with only 1804 calorie supply per day per capita occupies eighth position from the bottom.

Various theories like high population growth, low rate of national products, scarcity of capital, technological backwardness, 'vicious circle of poverty' etc. are advanced as causes of poverty. While all these have elements of truth in them, the structure of rural economy or the agrarian structure is equally important in explaining the perpetuation of poverty, weak spread effects, leakages in percolation of benefits of growth and poor incentives for growth itself. Agrarian structure as it exists, may itself put impediments to growth. In this sense the fundamental cause² of rural

1. A.R. Khan, "Poverty and Inequality in Rural Bangladesh", Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia, ILO, Geneva, 1977, P.137.

poverty is rooted in the structure of the rural economy. In Bangladesh, inspite of the fact of availability of some studies both on poverty and agrarian structure seperately, very few attempts have been made to study the relationship between the two. In this thesis an attempt is made to study the relationship between rural poverty and agrarian structure in the national context of Bangladesh. Considering the fact that this is a study on poverty, relevant aspects of poverty like (1) concept of poverty, (2) Dimensions of poverty, (3) Unemployment and underemployment situation, (4) Income Distribution, (5) Strategies for poverty alleviation etc. are also taken as the subject matter of discussion of the thesis.

II. OBJECTIVES

Specific objectives of the study are to:

- i) Conceptualize poverty.
- ii) Examine the rural poverty situation of the country.
- iii) Define and analyse aspects of agrarian structure of Bangladesh, relevant to the poverty situation.
- iv) Find out the relationship between rural poverty and agrarian structure of the country.
- v) Examine the major anti-poverty strategies and their impact on the rural poor.

III.

DATA BASE

The study mainly relies on published materials which are secondary in nature. Secondary materials used are such as books, journals, documents, survey and evaluation reports and research studies by various organizations. Materials used in the study are publications of both national and international organizations. These materials also have sometimes served as the sources for statistical informations.

The study analyses data mainly at the national level. Sometimes for the sake of support of the arguments data from micro surveys are used. Coverage of the time period by the study is dictated by the availability of data.

An important source of publication from which considerable volume of data for the study is taken is Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The BBS statistical reports which are found to be useful for the study, among others are, agricultural census of different years, statistical year book of various years, Socio-Economic indicators of Bangladesh, Household Expenditure Survey, Manpower Survey, Labourforce Survey, Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, summary report of the land occupancy survey of 1977 and 1978. Nutrition surveys conducted by the Institute of Nutrition and Food Sciences (INFS) also provide useful nation wide data on various aspects of poverty. Population censuses of 1974 and 1981 are found useful. In addition to all these, data are taken from world development reports of various years.

IV.

CHAPTER SCHEME

Chapter I by way of introduction gives importance, objectives, data base and chapter plan of the study. Chapter II is on concepts of poverty. It analyses Absolute and Relative concepts of poverty. It also analyses structural approach to poverty. Chapter III is devoted to the examination of dimensions of rural poverty. The chapter discusses relationship between growth and poverty; examines the growth position of Bangladesh economy; reviews the earlier attempts at measurement of poverty; estimates poverty on the basis of consumption expenditure approach; it also analyses consequences of poverty for quality of life through indicators like longevity, death rates, infant mortality, etc., and finally it attempts to find out the extent of poverty among different agrarian classes. Chapter IV defines agrarian structure, explains main features (e.g. tenancy, landlessness etc.) of the agrarian structure of Bangladesh. This chapter also examines the impact of agrarian structure on growth and its percolation on the disadvantaged sections of the rural society.

Chapter V attempts to explain the relationship between agrarian structure and employment. It discusses the unemployment and underemployment situation of rural Bangladesh. The chapter also identifies the association between unemployment and poverty. Chapter VI discusses the trend in per capita income of the country. In order to find the disadvantageous position of the rural areas compared to urban areas, rural - urban differential

in per capita income is examined. The chapter also analyses inequality in income distribution in terms of Gini-coefficient. It also discusses the sources of inequality of income distribution. Chapter VII on strategies for poverty alleviation examines the impact of three major anti-poverty programmes e.g. (i) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), (ii) Rural Public Works Programme (RPWP) and (iii) Grameen Bank, on the rural poor. Summary and conclusions of the study are discussed in the closing chapter VIII.