

## Good Governance in a Village and the Need for Village Autonomy in Bangladesh: An Overview

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### Abstract

*Bengal Local Self Government Act of 1885 and The Village Self Government Act of 1919 were very much autonomous in terms of wording if not in spirit. So the idea of village autonomy is not a new coinage in Bangladesh context. There is a gulf of difference between provincial autonomy and village autonomy. Village autonomy has been taken in the limelight in order to facilitate the reawakening and remaking of the new social order through citizen participation and empowerment at the grassroots where village government will be working as their next door neighbour. Constitutional mandate on village autonomy has been elucidated and clarified. Is good governance in a village a myth or something very achievable? What does it mean? The answer is safe and secure life, fulfilment of basic needs, freedom from disease and corruption, resiliency in facing disaster gregariously, articulate voice in decision making, availability of quick service delivery, quality education and medical treatment, economic solvency, cultural diversity, human rights etc. Village is a people platform and hub of community development. Good governance is presently much in demand for village people. Still village people are not mentally ready to take good governance. Nor do they feel tremendous zeal for it with all their hearts. Autonomy gives citizenry a legal standing and an articulate voice in social decision making. Autonomy and aspirations of people go hand in hand. Autonomy is the freedom of choice and a catalyst of free thinking. Autonomy is the institutionalization and crystallization of self governance. It is not a matter of imposition from above. Nor is it extrinsic at all. Good governance is implicit in the massive and multifarious activities for social formation. In this article the focus area is good governance, village autonomy and the need*

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*of village autonomy for good governance. Major focus is village autonomy .Various aspects of this theme have been dealt with elaborately to substantiate its justification . There are altogether 7 sections here. They have been organized systematically following the sequence. Doctrines and views of different theorists and developmentalists of international repute have been incorporated in moderation to give it an overtone of research. Experiences of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Philipines have been inserted into the article along with comparative analysis. Need for autonomy is discussed at length. Some policy suggestions and hints are also given at the end.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

Majority people of our country live in villages. It is not only the birthplace but also the death place of a villager. It is cultural as well as spiritual entity of a villager with some emotional bonding. A man goes by the name of his village. A Village is a glorious legacy and heritage of Bangladesh. It is the root of the majority people of Bangladesh. Village is an institution to be proud of. A ward is artificially delimited and demarcated. Villagers of a particular village have strong group cohesion which may be termed as something like village chauvinism. Artificial ward has overshadowed this enthusiasm resulting in an unholy syndicate of rural power brokers. In spite of their instinctive collectivity or solidarity villagers are very helpless. Why? Because there is no village body to resolve village issues or agendas. A village forum is very imperative to discuss village problems. They have neither negotiating nor bargaining power with government agencies, nor is there any scope to participate in them to enhance their capacity.

Detailed village profiling of all kinds of village resources is the prerequisite of measuring development in villages. How will you discriminate between cosmetic development and intrinsic development, eyewash development and genuine development without tangible mathematical parameters? Human development should be the primary consideration for the villagers. Because infrastructural development is not sustainable .Development is

measurable through some economic and human parameters constituting a tangible development mathematics. Village should be a base unit for all statistical research or survey. A village profile prepared on the basis of all out statistical survey may be a showcase of genuine development. Any increase or decrease would be easily discernible. No local government can be more tangible and substantial than village body.

There is a gulf of difference between nation republic and village republic . They are always mutually inclusive and never mutually exclusive. Autonomy has the connotation of separatist elements . But 87362 villages will never be separate republics in this globe. It is impossible. Here autonomy means less control, less restriction, less regulation, less regimentation, less centralization , more devolution, more freedom , more resource mobilization , more simplification of business process etc. A village has a natural boundary line, a separate territorial jurisdiction, distinctive set of people, distinctive natural resources, distinctive norms and cultural values and a long legacy which are the characteristics of a state .Village government would be the next door neighbor of village people because of its close vicinity. It is beautiful because of its smallness, traditional communal harmony, peaceful coexistence and congenial working environment . It is a hub of huge potentials . It may be a dairy farm, poultry farm, hatchery, forest garden , fruits garden , kitchen garden, horticulture centre and what not.

"Dynasties rose and fell and empires were built and destroyed. But the village communities retained their community spirit. These communities " contained in miniature " as Elphinston remarked , "all the materials of a state within themselves" Sir Charles Metcalfe characterized them as "republics having nearly everything they can want within themselves. Mutual dependence of the different sections of the community , age-old customs and traditions reinforcing community spirits and self-sufficiency seems to have been the forces that helped retain the village community unified and intact . Each village was a compact socioeconomic and administrative unit with its full complement of

public functionaries as servants of the village community – rather than of the government." (Hye H. A, 1985, page 173,174)

## **2.0 Rationale for Village Autonomy**

Our constitutional mandate is very explicit to give autonomy to local governments composed of elected representatives of different professionals. There is no ambiguity and confusion in its interpretation. But policy makers are very suspicious of the capacity of local governments. This is why they can not reach any consensus to give autonomy . Moreover there is no visible demand from the side of locals. The following articles of constitution illustrate the legal footing on the autonomy of the local governments ;

The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women. (Article -9)

There would be local government in every administrative unit.

- (i) Such local government would be entrusted to bodies composed by elected persons.
- (ii) The foundations of local government units will be prescribed by act of Parliament relating to administrations and the work of public officers, administration of public order and preparation and implementation of plan.
- (iii) The Parliament would confer powers on the local government bodies to impose taxes for local purposes etc.( Article 59 and 60)

All the organic elements of village autonomy like decentralization, devolution, election, debureaucratization, deregulation, people participation, people empowerment, people ownership, freedom of information are very much consistent with the constitutional provisions and also so are with the spirits of our

Liberation War . Our Liberation War was not only for geographic independence but also for freedom from exploitation and corruption.

"To do justice to the subject we need to consider alternative channels of decision making and resource mobilization , at various levels , and how these institutions may be fitted together into productive networks of institutional development ."(Uphoff and Easman, 1974) Every village is enjoying natural autonomy . Central government hardly nose into the affairs of any village . Given the backdrop it is likely to be very justified to think that it is no use providing any statutory autonomy to any village. But legislative support and legal sanction have multiple implications to enhance citizen values boosting up the ownership , dignity and confidence level of village people. They will find the meaning of their life in many dimensions remaking and reinventing a new social order because of recent electrification, expansion of telenetwork, digitalization and availability of sufficient mobile phones. It is likely to unlock tremendous potentials. Village people are naive, motivatable and trainable .Autonomy being consonant with their aid policy Bangladesh Development Forum consisting of various Development Partners is likely to concentrate their more energy and focus on rural development and poverty alleviation. Eventually they may gear up fresh aid flow through PKSf which in return may provide it direct to autonomous village bodies for income generation and for other purposes. There are 87362 villages . Autonomy will make development strategy village specific, innovative and competitive. Autonomy will put a big push to their collective bargaining power so that they can pressurize tahsil offices , up offices, police stations, sub registry offices , agriculture banks etc. to deliver lawful services free of corruption and harassment. As the size of village is small, so will be its size of autonomy . Empowerment , ownership, access to information and participation are offshoots of autonomy.

If public offices do not give them services without bribe or if they harass them . What should they do ? Where should they put

their complaints ? If they put their complaints , would they have any quick remedy ? Would they have any inexhaustible extra-energy to follow this up? Ultimately they would be bound to surrender to the bribe syndicate ? Otherwise they would be denied to render any service. An explicit and expeditious service dispensation mechanism is to be devised to dispel the long-windedness of office procedures through the effective coordination of village body. It is the demand of time. "The younger generation of socialists argue that the new style local government is changing the relationship between the public and those in authority. Previously people used to see themselves in the role of passive recipient or applicant, now people are having the sense of the ownership of the local services and they are ready to fight and protest against central government if any attack on local government comes from that quarter. The left claims that their efforts transformed local council into authorities fighting side by side with the provider of services." (Hambleton and Hoggett, 1984)

Accountability of Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad should be twofold. One vertical chain of accountability at the apex and mid level. Two horizontal chain of accountability at the bottom level . Latter is much more useful and village forum may be nucleus for this. Otherwise a broad scale vacuum will be created . Mere vertical accountability is not enough for its credible transparency to build up solid confidence among the villagers. Because generally people are very skeptical of honesty of any public office. Villagers are the recipients or clienteles of local government services. So local body should be at the close vicinity to them. It is quite impossible to ensure their access to available government services without the help of village body acting as a village pressure group. They will never disunite when they will harvest the fruits of unity. Village society is naturally organized without any legal status and financial power. Legal sanction and financial power will give it a fresh impetus .

How can we expect an accountable Union Parishad or Upazila Parishad minus a vibrant and dynamic village body for us. As

vertical accountability of Union or Upazilla Parishad is going to be almost nil day by day under a duress of politics and civil society . So it would be highly wise and prudent to keep them under rigorous discipline of horizontal accountability mechanism. The existing oversight mechanism of Union, Upazila or Zila Parishad is neither adequate nor satisfactory. Who will audit or inspect them? To whom will the audit or inspection report submit? What body will take an action against them if any corruption is found ? Audit and inspection report should be made public in various ways. Because secrecy of office information will always benefit the corrupt people and will thwart all kinds of transparent steps. Openness is the formidable deterrent to corruption. This is why village in Bangladesh is badly in need of 360 degree oversight mechanism from govt. , NGO, media and academic angle through providing moral , legal, intellectual ,advisory , consultancy and policy support without any intervention into their internal management.

Some people may say village government was formed beforehand and it has got no successful track records. So it is no use forming it again. A dispassionate study of previous village government will reveal the following loopholes;

One, it was practically a ward government - not a village government. Because head of that village government was a ward member.

Two, it was a helping body, not an independent body. Because it was not an administrative unit. It was mere a reporting agent to union body.

Three, its charter of duties was not well defined nor had it any tangible fund .

Four, their own problems and corruption issues were outside the purview of their agenda.

Five, they have no power to levy taxes or to resolve petty disputes.

Six, union body was not accountable to village electorate isolatedly.

Seven, that was not formed through general election. In fact they were not given any power to make their own destiny.

It can never be dysfunctional provided above bottlenecks are addressed in future.

Village government is the phenomenon of recent past years. . So the display of its reasonable failure can not be a potent or unbroken logic to discard the idea of village body or forum. That body was partisan, unrepresentative, nonadministrative unit and powerless in character. It is true. This is why this reason can not be dished up to break it, nor is it quite impossible to make it nonpolitical, neutral or impartial. Villagers are basically apolitical. But the fact, is that they are bound to be party political to receive their due services from the public offices. Otherwise they are undertreated , underated and finally neglected.

Public apathy is one of the reasons of malgovernance and corruption. LGs have to work under the glare of public scrutiny . In villages nothing can happen beyond the gaze of public eye which is almost ubiquitous . No body will be able to hide his or her misdeeds. People are interconnected here.

"People within a locality have some acquaintance with each other through things like intermarriage , trading relations, religious festivals or participation in local government activities." (Hye H. A. 1985 , Page 46).

There are 87362 villages.(Source: Population Census 2001, BBS). Administrative units of Bagladesh as on 31st December 2010 are as follows ;

Upazila 483

Thana 499

Union 4500

(Source LGRD Ministry and Police Headquarters )



On average every village has more than 2000 population which is quite a optimum number for the formation of autonomous village body in view of Indian Village Panchayet(VP).

Different people have different kind of cognitive abilities like insight, intuition, wisdom and sagacity which are mostly unexplored and **unutilized** because of the want of continuous institutional support.

"In any country , according to the laws of demography and natural distribution of intelligence , a majority of talent will reside outside of the capital city and outside the civil service. Not to enlist the country's human resources to their fullest extent will hold back its progress as its people need as an asset not a liability(as is too often the view). Mobilization of human resources includes people's ideas and management skills, not just their labour.( Hye H. A. 1985 Page 43)

### **3.0 Policy Consensus on Village Autonomy.,**

Policy hand is the magic lamp of central government. Malgovernance in any village is endemic in the policy inconsistency or anomaly. There is no stop gap or quick fix solution to any problem , nor does one pair of shoes fit all . Long policy vision and broad policy focus are the prerequisites of policy precision. Any village legislation on autonomy must be all inclusive and all participatory. Greed for power and money is the concomitant of human nature. Power and money accumulation should not be allowed to roll in a handful of rural elites. Open audit and information should be encouraged. Social criminalization , lumpenization and pauperization should be well-balanced in the draft village autonomy act to be framed on the experience of any pilot scheme. All possible policy stake holders should be well consulted before any policy prescription is designed. Resource allocation on policy research should be always on the increase for the best results. A separate resource allocation is needed for policy formulation in each division. A Village Ethics

Committee to uphold the Village Ethics along with family values should be considered before taking any first step. Government apex body like National Council on Rural Development may ponder on these points.

"Decentralization is usually seen as involving some loss of power for the central government but this depends on its objectives and its relationships to the public. Power, after all, is basically the ability to get or achieve what one desires. If the center wants for the rural majority what they want for themselves in terms of improved living standards, greater status and dignity, physical security etc. Any increase in their capacity to produce these things for themselves will enhance the center's power. Decentralization reduces central power only when there is a conflict of objectives and interests. Having decentralized governance through a variety of modes such as described above does not mean the central government should or can be diminished. As Leonard says from his study of Kenya in a decentralized administrative structure, the centre needs to be every bit as strong as in a centralized one". (Hye, H, A, 1985, 61)

"The establishment of any kind or degree of local economy requires local government to have a solid financial base of its own, because outside financing often comes with conditions which limits the autonomy". (Nathan 1989:5) (Ahmed Tofail, 1993, page 279, Academic Publishers, Dhaka)

"The local state of Bangladesh remained ever feeble, distorted, and underdeveloped both with regards to its upstream and downstream linkages." (Ahmed, Tofail, 1993, Page 374, Academic Publishers, Dhaka)

"The central state never showed any interest in developing autonomous local state institutions in Bangladesh, consciously keeping them weak, dependent, underdeveloped placed under the tutelage of the central bureaucracy." (Ahmed, Tofail, 1993, Page 374, Academic Publishers, Dhaka)

Difference between Local Administration and Local Government  
"Local administration (LA)- Local agencies and staff of central government ministries or parastatals, that are accountable to bureaucratic superiors.

Local government (LG)- Elected bodies such as village councils or panchayets, having authority to deal with developments and regulatory tasks, accountable to local residents, in contrast to LA." (Hye H. A. 1985 page 49)

#### **4.0 Three Tier versus Four Tier Debate**

Think-tanks may opine that all the local government laws enacted so far in Parliament or outside the Parliament are deliberately made to undermine the local government so that power users have not to devolve or share power with them. A pro-people, outcome-oriented, serviceable, accountable, responsive, functional and transparent local government is yet to be enacted. But rural development think tanks and policy makers are very reluctant to recommend four-tier local government structure including village body. Minus it they would be outside the mainstream of development. Local government is meant for service of villagers. Services of public offices will be beyond their reach in three-tier local government. Because villagers are individually very helpless to voice the demand of service to public agencies.

Think tanks on rural development in Bangladesh have lukewarm interest in the formation of any village body –much less autonomous . Possibly they may think union body is enough to dispose village issues.To set up village body will entail the construction of separate office building like UP Complex which is undoubtedly much expensive. Should it be so. Alternative office accommodations may be thought of. School rooms may be used at night shift or any other houses may be rented on temporary basis. There are also other options.

Why can we not think of open air village office under the shade of banyan tree, neem tree or mango tree ? The answer is the same

and it is highly comprehensible that these are the lame excuses. We were making the same mistakes in recommending three tier local governments.

Structure in different seminars, symposia or workshops on the issue of rural development during the previous caretaker government barring any concrete village body. We should keep one thing uppermost in mind that rural people do not live in upazila or union, practically they live in villages. People generally live either in towns or in villages, not in elsewhere. Union is nothing more but sumtotal of some 20 to 30 villages. So is the case with upazila in greater dimension. Three tier local government structures is a total negation of village. This has rendered the villagers helpless and powerless. It is likely to make them just voting animals to uphold poverty industry. Because in it they will vote somebody to power but can not vote their mandate down through recall or any other mechanism for any misdeed or corruption. It is likely to be also a kind of trading of mandate in the name of democracy something like five year lease. What is the use of massive awareness programmes of thousands of NGOs for empowerment of villagers without any pronounced village body? Will it be worth any value?

The following issues may come up in their agendas; population, health, primary education, secondary education, enrolment, dropout, maternity, conjugal conflict, dowry, cruelty to women, gender, women and children trafficking, social security. Disability, unemployment, fertilizer, price hike, poverty reduction. VGD issues. Infrastructural development, literacy, petty civil disputes. petty criminal disputes, corruption, birth, death, marriage, burial. nutrition, agriculture, livestock, poultry, small business, small industry, microcredit, sanction and recovery of bank loan, sanitation, divorce, community policing, survey, census, research, social maladies etc. A village body can be a diagnostic complex of village problems. Only this tier can be operational tier of rural development. Other tiers might be command tiers. We can not expect any transparent governance without the participation

from the bottom up. Vocality is also a manifestation of participation and empowerment. Villagers should be given villagers charters. Village body should be allowed and authorized to discuss any issue as touches their life whether there is any solution to it or not . Their discussion power can not be barred by law. It should be left to the discretion of village body. This body may form various problem solution committees from among the villagers so that they may achieve sufficient problem solving capacities through discussion. Village body will ensure the engagement of all the villagers linking them to various village issues so that nobody can idle away-their time. Nor can they feel alienated. They will continuously learn by doing.

## **5.0 Village Autonomy in Regional Countries**

### **5.1 Bangladesh Experience**

The Bengal Village Chowkidari Act of 1870 was the first British attempt to revive the traditional Panchayet system. It authorised the District Magistrate to appoint a Panchayet at the village level, consisting of five members. The Panchayet was given authority to appoint chowkidars(watchmen). No real welfare functions other than maintaining law and order were assigned to it. Subsequently The Bengal Local Self Government Act of 1885 and The Village Self Government Act of 1919 abolished that village body creating Union Board consisting of a set of villages. In April, 1980 Swanirvar Gram Sarkar was introduced without any election headed by a Gram Prodhan at the village level amending Local Government Ordinance ,1971. This was also abolished by a Martial Law Ordinance in July ,1982.Each Union was—composed of 3 wards' by the President's Order No. 22 of 1973.

Palli Parishad Act 1989 was enacted. But no Palli Parishad which was supposed to comprise one elected Prodhan and 8 elected members and 2 women members, has yet been created in the country. (Siddiqui Kamal,1992, Page 143,144, 150,152)

No village body constituted under those acts was autonomous in the real sense. There was a predominance of nomination elements rather than election elements. They were working as an administrative unit without any horizontal accountability framework. Participation and empowerment aspects did not have their due position in the formulation of legislation.

## **5.2 The Indian Experience**

The Village Panchayet (VP) is the grassroot unit of the PRI hierarchy. The jurisdiction of VP is not uniform. Each state has adopted its own criteria in defining the VP's territorial jurisdiction. States like Uttar Pradesh, Gujrat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Assam and West Bengal have opted for a small sized Panchayet, the average population being about 1000 people. On the other hand Tamil Nadu and Kerala have constituted giant sized Village Panchayets with populations of more than 15000. VP is a corporate body. Besides being a unit of rural local government, it also acts as an agency of community development programmes. The entire membership of the VP, with the exception of co-opted members is directly elected by the village people. The election is mostly by the secret ballot of the Gram Sabha (except in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh where it is by show of hands) divided into several wards, and each ward electing one member. However, in Bihar, the nomination system still exists. There, out of a total number of nine members (including the head of the VP), five are elected directly, the remaining four being nominated by the head of the VP.

The head of the VP is directly elected by all voters within a VP in Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Haryana, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In other states the head of the VP is indirectly elected by elected members of VP from among themselves. He may be removed from office by two-thirds majority votes of no confidence by VP members. The head of VP occupies a cardinal position in socio political life of the village. He summons meetings, prepares agenda, and presides over the meetings, signs

all resolutions and papers. He is an *ex officio* member of the next higher tier of PRI i, e, the Panchayet Samity(PS). This membership fetches him a variety of privileges and positions, both formal and informal.(Siddiqui Kamal,1992, Page 29, 30)

There is no uniformity in their village governance. Election elements have been underpinned in their rural power structure. Their rural governance is deliberately institutionalized with a considerable autonomy and authority of rural public. Citizen participation and empowerment aspects have been wellknit in their enactment. This is one of the best role models in South Asia. This is replicable in Bangladesh with some qualification.

### **5.3 The Nepalese Experience**

With the political change in 1960, Village Panchayets were established throughout the country. A Village Panchayet have two parts: an executive body known as Panchayet and a legislative body the village assembly .The basic unit of the Panchayet system is the village. Any rural area of approximately 2000 population is a village panchayet area. The Village Panchayet is divided into nine different wards,each of which selects one representative known as Pancha or a Panchayet member. The nine Panchas, one Chief Pancha and one Vice- Chief Pancha constitute the Village Panchayet. The total 45 members elected from the nine wards plus the Prodhan Pancha and the Upa Prodhan Pancha constitute the Village Assembly. The VA meets twice a year. The VP is to meet at least twice a month. Gram Sevak (Village Development Officer) is only government employee and secretary to the Village Panchayet. (Siddiqui Kamal, 1992, Page 242,243)

This is the prototype of Indian village body with a slight change. It is the breeding centre of democratic values. It is enjoying considerable autonomy. It is also in the track of institutionalization.

### **5.4 Sri Lankan Experience**

The Gramodaya Mandalayas formulate development plans for their own areas, after considering the available resources, the needs of the local' people and the priorities.Experience suggests

that through people's participation , the Gramodaya Mandalayas have been able to accomplish projects at lower than the estimated costs . Available information reveals that a number of projects completed so far required one-fifth of the estimated costs. The GM not only proposes projects but also directly participates in implementation. The mechanism which it has devised in the implementation of the project envisages that part of the local cost of projects has to be financed by local resources (which includes land, labour and other donations) on a self help basis . (Siddiqui Kamal ,1992 ,page 206 , Dhaka)

Grants may also be received by the Gramodaya Mandalaya (GM) from the Gramodaya Mandalaya Fund which was established under the Gramodaya Fund act of 1982 .(Siddiqui Kamal ,1992 ,Page 210)

Village body of this country has already achieved sufficient resource mobilization capacity, planning ability, project management efficiency and integrity. There is a risk of replication of their culture in Bangladesh at the outset because of the recent moral degradation at the grass roots. Village bodies are not so institutionalized and authorized as in India. But their self help spirit is acceptable.

### **5.5 The Philippines Experience**

"There are around 42000 barangays in Philipines . During *barangay* assemblies or meetings , *barangay* residents can personally ventilate their demands and needs . The function of the *barangay* officials, would be to collate and concretize such demands and needs which could be regularly presented to higher authorities for proper action. The assemblies could also be used for voicing out their sentiments about any government operation and project in their localities . In effect, the *barangays* become the sounding board of the national government for its activities." (Hye H. A ,1985 ,page 143)



"The **barangay** (village) brigades are organizations of **barangay** based volunteer groups which render services corresponding to the specific needs and aspirations of the residents in the community. It is founded on the spirit of volunteerism, self reliance and initiative. The program aims to organise seventeen **barangay** brigades in every **barangay**". (Hye H. A. 1985, page 155,156)

"To provide a broader base for citizen participation in a democracy, the minimum age requirement for membership in a **barangay** assembly has been lowered from 18 to 15. The **barangay** represents the lowest tier of governmental administration. Through the referendum the people may react to vote against or for certain issues of local and national concern that are referred to them. The town mayor and the local officials have utilized certain strategies which have succeeded in eliciting the participation of the people in the process of making decisions on project planning and implementation. ".(Hye H. A, 1985, page 167)

Citizen participation which has been effectively mobilized by the municipal officials has yielded concrete- results in terms of development projects succesfully implemented. (Hye H. A, 1985, page 168)

#### Constitutional Mandate on Local Autonomy and the Local Government Code

"Local autonomy is guaranteed by the Constitution and local government units are given the power to create their own sources of revenues and to levy taxes. The Local Government Code was enacted on Feb. 10, 1983.It retained the basic structure , which is a major council type of local government, and incorporated certain innovations that were introduced during the martial law period. It clearly defined the role and functions of the local government units and the degree of supervision by the central agencies. It also provided for a system of recall of the local" officials . (Hye, 1985,page 151,152)

Best practices of the Phillipines are replicable in Bangladesh. Their village bodies can exercise their freedom of opinion through

criticising government policy in the form of referendum so that **government** can readily have the feedback of their policy decision to take the next corrective steps. Bangladesh may frame Village Autonomy Code according to their Local Government Code. System of recall may be included in the proposed village autonomy act. Seventeen issue brigades may be formed like **seventeen barangay brigades** in every village on the spirits of volunteerism .

## **6.0 Recommendations**

1. A coalition comprising the politicians, ex-civil servants, ex military officials, academics media personalities , business leaders and NGO leaders may be formed on the issue of village autonomy to provide advisory and consultancy services to all village bodies. It will act as a single purpose village autonomy think tank.
2. The cases of some select villages may be taken as pilot projects before the formulation of a draft village autonomy act.
3. One time leadership may be introduced rigorously. No office bearer will be allowed to hold any office second time so that everybody's participation in the leadership may be ensured to discourage power mongers.
4. A Village Data Bank where all information on village profiles would be available with regular updates.
5. Any public or private university, any public or private organization, any public or private bank as a part of their corporate social responsibility(CSR), any cadre service association, any business association and any association of any other professionals may act as a consultant of any village or a set of villages voluntarily subject to the confidence of village people with the permission of **government** .
6. System of vote of confidence and **vote** of no confidence may be introduced at any stage of leadership in order to change the leadership.

7. Even any government officer may be allowed to volunteer to work as a consultant on a particular village without any remuneration subject to the confidence of village people with the permission of government.
8. Tenure of leadership should be as short as possible to keep village touts aloof from it .
9. Various issue based committees may be formed to discuss and resolve the respective issue on the basis of one person one responsibility like ; law and order committee, conflict resolution committee, public service procurement committee, agricultural loan management committee, poverty alleviation committee, health committee, disaster management committee etc.
10. Some powers may be vested in the village body to mobilize their own resources from within the periphery of village without any external help at the outset.
11. Financial involvement of village body would be as minimum as possible to maintain highest integrity.
12. Income transparency of all villagers will be visible.
13. No secrecy in any name in any affair will be allowed. Everything would be open to all villagers without any discrimination.
14. Free flow of information will be ensured.
15. There would be an exquisite blend of participation; empowerment and capacity build up in the formulation of autonomy act.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

It would be more effective as a watchdog institution. It would be an incarnation of rural hope. Villages are the command areas of almost all NGOs. So quite reasonably they may be made accountable to village bodies. In fact all the activities of GO and NGO may be brought under the sharp gaze of all villagers through these bodies where enthusiastic participation of all villagers will be

easy and spontaneous. .But the fact is that it is a device of some, intellectuals to distort and discard any good idea which will go against their interests. Why will all villagers participate in local governmental affairs if they are not proved useful for them? If useful why will they not participate? Is it not a paradox? How to resolve this dilemma? , Village body will be an embodiment of village interest to counter the move of vested quarters. These village interests will be the building blocks of total national interest.

Some thinkers may think formation of any village body will trigger village politics which will result in chaos and confusions among the villagers. This rationale is not plausible. This may so happen if partisan politics is not strongly prohibited in village body election. Partisan politics may be allowed right from union level upto national level. Village body should be free from party politics for its proper and intact institutionalization. Village politics will be politics of economic emancipation to make the village social formation corruption and exploitation free . Economic issues discussed and addressed stakeholdernise will unite people and non economic issues will divide them. *So* economic consideration can be instilled in the mindset of a villager as a cardinal value which may result in radical reform in village politics.

Vigilance of all the villagers are needed for good governance in a village . Nobody should be neglected even if he or she is handicapped and disabled. This is why every citizen should be given a well-defined role to play in consideration of his or her ability. Autonomy act is this legal instrument which gives the foundation of citizen value highlighting dignity , integrity and self esteem. On average every village has more than two thousand population. It is possible to give attention to each and every citizen by the village body which would be a community dialogue forum. It does not require any government block grants at the preliminary stage. Because it may tempt greedy people towards village leadership. It should not be project based. At the initial stage it

should not undertake any construction and repair projects. It should be voluntary and programme based. It should not take any remuneration or fee for rendering any service. It would just receive legal recognition to discuss all village issues and find out solutions within its jurisdiction. It would be an open discussion forum or voice house. It would prove abortive if it **cannot** show zero tolerance towards corruption from the very beginning of its operation. Leadership should be decided by rotation. Autonomy unbars all the barriers to development provided checks and balances mechanism is included in the autonomy act in consideration of fragility and vulnerability of human nature. The domination of rural elites may be balanced in the formulation of act. Participation in the LG activities should be obligatory by legislation.

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