1.0 Introduction

A bureaucratic [government] tradition is a set of inherited beliefs about the institutions and history of government (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Davis 1998, p. 158). Bevir and Rhodes (2003) also argued, elite actors’ beliefs about their governmental traditions shape public sector reform; traditions are embedded in the social contexts in which individuals exercise their reason and acting. Bangladesh administrative system is no exception to it. Its administrative structure is informed by multiple traditions and shaped by elite actors.

The formalised and highly centralised administrative structure in Bangladesh (PARC, 2000; Keuleers 2004; Khan, 2005), based upon the British colonial model (Huque, 2010) dates back to the 16th century when the Mughal emperor Akbar refined and imbued it with the spirit of an imperial service executing the royal command (World Bank, 1996). But it was in the nineteenth century with the imposition of the British colonial administration that today's Civil Service had much of its character shaped and still there is a strong British colonial administrative legacy that continues to mould the administrative systems in the post colonial Bangladesh (World Bank, 1996; Khan, 1998). Since then, it has remained static by acclimatizing itself to a series of political developments. From the beginning of the 18th century Bangladesh formed a part of India under British colonial rule until 1947. In 1947, the partition of India led to the birth of Pakistan. Bangladesh at that time chose to remain with Pakistan until 1971 when Bangladesh gained independence following a war. Thus, the evolution of public administration in Bangladesh was greatly influenced by the legacy of Mughal and British rule in terms of structure and ethos. Its administrative tradition is also embedded in the ancient ‘samaj’ (village society) (Jamil, 2007) that is again impacted on by the waves of public sector reforms including the ‘global megatrends’ in public administration, centred around the principles of NPM in the 1980s and ’90s (Massey, 1997). Following Heginbotham (1975), Jamil (2007) and Huque (2010) I argue in this paper that the bureaucratic traditions in Bangladesh are characterized as ‘postcolonial’, combining multiple features directly traceable to colonial institutions and ancient samaj with post independence adaptations and innovations based on the administrative reform prescriptions by the donor agencies, the latter essentially appearing as new ‘layers’ on the original bedrock. Therefore, it can be called hybrid traditions.

2.0 Legacies Remembered: Understanding the Bangladeshi Public Administration

Administrative tradition is also referred to as ‘historical legacies’. Administrative tradition can then be conceptualized in terms of governance structures that have come into being in the past and that still are present (Yesilkagit, 2010, 145, 151). Thus in this paper, legacies and administrative traditions will be used interchangeably. Painter and Peters (2010a, 19) grouped families of countries on the basis of some common administrative inheritance into nine traditions. According to their typology of traditions, Bangladesh belongs to the Postcolonial
South Asian and African tradition. They lumped together countries in Africa and South Asia mainly for the reason that these countries share a common history of colonisation and postcolonial development. Actually, Bangladeshi administrative traditions go beyond that. Its administrative traditions are rooted in Bengal’s (Bangladesh) ancient samaj and Mughal historical past that greatly predates the colonial rule. Also, we cannot deny the fact that the British colonial legacy has the long lasting effects on our administrative structure.

Bangladeshi bureaucracy has been portrayed as monolithic, rigid and resistant to changes. Jahan (2006) noted, it is generally considered as a closed system, which tries to resist change. According to the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC, 2000, 7) of Bangladesh, bureaucracy is “rigid, unresponsive, inefficient and ineffective, pre-occupied with process rather than results, driven by outdated rules”. Although the public administration in Bangladesh is badly in need of a complete overhaul in terms of transparency, efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and dynamism (PARC, 2000) the past reform experiences have shown little result (UNDP, 2007). It is also true at the same that the Bangladeshi government attaches due importance to reforms which can be understood by the following observation by a UNDP (2007, 16) study, “....., reform in the public administration... has been on the agenda of nearly every government in Bangladesh since the independence in 1971”. Despite its perceived importance, administrative reform in Bangladesh experienced failures (Sarker, 2004). It is generally held that bureaucratic resistance to change, lack of political will, and weak state capacity have all contributed to the failure of the administrative reforms (World Bank, 2000; UNDP, 2007; Khan, 1998). Naturally, questions arise: why the Bangladeshi bureaucracy is resistant to change or why there is a lack of political will and why steps to strengthen the weak state capacity are being thwarted? The Bangladeshi administrative ethos is elitist and centralised, thus narrow in outlook and unapproachable by the citizens that are still strikingly similar with the colonial ethos. How are we to theorise these two similar ethos occurring nearly 256 years apart? The reason is not far to seek. The legacy effect of British colonial rule from 1757 to 1947 has much to explain for this as the Bangladeshi administration is a direct legacy from the British Raj. In fact, the conquest of Bengal in 1757 laid the foundation of the British colonial rule.

The elitist and centralised nature of administrative establishment was made more elitist and over centralised in the post colonial Bangladesh. It is widely acknowledged that the colonial administration was extractive. Therefore all powers were vested in a select band of civil servants. The colonial civil servants were trained to rule and not to serve. This ruling spirit made them elitist. British Raj used the bureaucracy as a tool for mass rule and it was designed to protect the imperial interest only (Zafarullah & Huque, 2001) and aimed at the resource extraction (Damodaran, 2007). In post colonial Bangladesh as well, the governance is not centred on responding to stakeholders’ demands while bureaucratic actions always favour the elites with whom bureaucrats share economic and social backgrounds (Zafarullah, 1995).

Specifically, there are four more salient legacies of British colonial civil service that are passed down to Bangladeshi public administration. These four salient legacies are: a) the secretariat system and the dominant role of secretaries b) preference for generalists c) the cadre system d) the district as the basic unit of administration and the importance of office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) (Kennedy, 1987; Dwivedi and Mishra, 2010). Actually, district has its origins in the ancient past in the Mauryan Empire that I will be discussing shortly (Mughal and British modified it). DC still is a highly powerful post in Bangladesh like it was in the British colonial administration. DC is a post that executes three functions concurrently. As a district collector, DC is responsible for collecting land revenue, while as a
deputy commissioner, DC controls, directs, and coordinates all administrative and development activities. The third function of DC is to act as district magistrate.

Meanwhile, the colonial administrative tradition seemed to be inspired much by the Mughal administrative pattern especially in terms of the functions of the deputy commissioner. According to Mishra (1984, 11), the revenue, police, magisterial and judicial functions were vested with the District Collector or Deputy Commissioner, echoing the unified territorial system of the Mughal period. The British colonial administration inherited the concept of district from the Mughals who further developed it as an administrative unit. Subramaniam (2001, 85) posits that the district administration system, thus, is a sub-continental template adapted for subsequent re-export to Malaysia, Uganda, Hong Kong and elsewhere by the British.

However, one can trace many of its legacies rooted in Bengal’s ancient and also Mughal historical past that go beyond the colonial rule. They can be called older legacies. The ancient Bengal has rich cultural tradition and heritage that dates back 20,000 years. According to Sarker (2008), humans walked on Bengal’s soil 20,000 years ago. Those traditions are still at work in Bangladesh polity. For example, the concept of district as an administrative unit is still the basic unit in Bangladesh for the administrative purpose that had its root in Mauryan Empire (322–298 BC). It was the Mauriyan Empire that laid down the basic lay out of our administration based on the principle of consultation and clear division of duties and responsibilities. During the period of King Chandragupta Maurya (Kautilya was his prime minister) the kingdom was divided into provinces, and further into districts (Dwivedi and Mishra, 2010).

The Mughals carried forward the use of districts as the basic revenue collection unit. Reforms of the revenue administration was initiated and implemented under the reign of the Emperor Akbar that is remembered even today for its uniqueness. He categorised the land according to fertility. He developed a system which drew a balance between the demands of the state and needs of the subjects in that revenue was collected in times of plenty and reduced in times of paucity. For ensuring justice in land revenue he classified the land according to the produce and cultivability into four categories: a) Polaj- always in cultivation b) parauti – that had to be left fallow for one year or two to recoup the fertility c) chachar – which had to be left out of cultivation for three or four years to get back the fertility d) banjaar – barren land that had to be left fallow for five years or more (Sundaram, 2007; Jayapalan, 2008).

During the Mughal period, the character of administration was in the form of ‘a centralized autarchy’. Loyalty to throne guided administrative philosophy (Dwivedi and Mishra, 2010). Administration was hierarchic and centralised. The Emperor seldom delegated authority and kept a careful watch upon the activities of his subordinates (Rathore, 1993, 36–37). Revenue administration, especially the land revenue was one of the most important functions of the Mughals. British colonial rule also emphasised this revenue function as it was the most important source of government revenues (Dwivedi and Mishra, 2010, 44; Singh, 1993). Theocratic judiciary based on Islamic laws was introduced by the Mughals that was replaced by the Anglo-Saxon rule of law by the colonial rule (Dwivedi and Mishra, 2010).

Mughal emperor Akbar introduced the inter-faith cultural synthesis, i.e. the synthesis of Hinduism and Islam. Eventually, he introduced a new religious doctrine ‘Din-i-ilahi’ attempting a fusion of Islam and Hinduism. Together they (Hinduism and islamicist tradition) continue to act as influential traditions on our administrative ethos. During this time many
Hindus held key posts in the Mughal administration. Akbar’s governance was based on a social and religious toleration that ensured harmony between the two major religions – Hinduism and Islam. His philosophy of governance was based on his concept of sulh-i-kull (for the general good of all people) (Khan, 1997).

However, during the colonial period this communal harmony was not maintained by the colonial rulers. They adopted a policy of ‘divide and rule’ with a view to benefiting from the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims. The policy of ‘divide and rule’ was used as a strategy to maintain imperial rule. It was predicated on the belief that manipulating and fuelling the ethno-religious divisions in society would prevent subject peoples’ unified challenge to colonial rule. Many Indian and other scholars have maintained that the British adopted this strategy in order to strengthen the Raj (Sandhu, 2009). This type of segregation/partition was not only adopted in the Indian subcontinent but also in its other colonies. According to Christopher (1988), British colonial policies were rarely integrationist in spirit or reality. Policies were designed to create artificial walls among the native society leading to the chaos and conflict among them so that they were unable to minimise their differences and unite against the colonial rule. The geographical division of territory on ethnically defined lines through state partition is the heritage of many ex-British colonies. The colonial regime played the role of a patron. They patronised one community against another. This patron-client relationship is still being practiced in Bangladesh.

Subsequently, the divide and rule policy manifested itself in the form of the two nation theory that advocated that Muslims and Hindus should have two separate homelands based on their religions. Nehru who became the first prime minister of India (1946, 341) discarded the two nation theory:

“Mr. Jinnah’s demand was based on a theory he had recently propounded – that India consisted of two nations, Hindus and Moslems. Why only two …., for if nationality was based on religion then there were many nations in India.....”

Ultimately, Jinnah’s two nation theory resulted in the partition of the country into two separate states in 1947 – India and Pakistan. Bangladesh formed a part of Pakistan. In 1971, it separated from Pakistan. Pakistan at independence inherited the same British Indian bureaucracy highly centralised and elitist in nature. It was a lineal descendant of the British ICS in law as well as in spirit (Braibanti, 1963).

So, Bangladesh experienced colonialism twice, first under the British (1757-1947), followed by the so-called “internal colonialism” under Pakistan (1947-1971). The internal colonialism had also its effects for the independent Bangladesh. Like Pakistan, Bangladesh continued to be ruled by the martial law regime. Army/civil relationship became symbiotic in Pakistan especially during the Ayub Regime that thrived under a pseudo-democratic and military-led government (Islam, 1989; Zafarullah and Huque, 2001). Also, immediately after independence, Bangladesh was ruled by martial law regime and the military-civil bureaucratic coalition from 1975 to 1990 for long 15 years – a remarkable repetition of history. Surely, it can be called legacy effects – transmitted to its administrative philosophy. Thus, Khan (1998, 79) observed, “[M]ajor characteristics of civil service systems in British India and in Pakistan are very much present in the civil service system in Bangladesh”.

Bangladesh's separation from Pakistan in 1971 provided a good opportunity to liberate the country from an administrative system that was archaic and anti-people. There was an
opportunity to reinvent and revitalize the free Bangladesh efficiently and effectively to contribute to national development and welfare (Zafarullah and Huque, 2001).

3.0 Major Administrative Reforms: The Cosmetic Modernity

The independence heightened the expectations of the free peoples for better living. Thus, administrative reforms were considered to be the sine qua non to the countless problems of the public sector. Despite the reform initiatives, the desired change did not take place. According to a UNDP (2007) study, there is general agreement, even within government, that the Bangladesh has undergone very few modernizing changes since independence in 1971 and that most reform actions taken were merely for cosmetic purposes. The following section provides a brief outline of the major administrative reform attempts undertaken since 1971. Table-1 below shows the major administrative reform efforts.

3.1 Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC), 1971

Just after independence, Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC) was formed to fix priorities and ways for restoration of the administrative system devastated during the war of liberation. The CARC recommendations included a secretariat with 20 ministries and the reestablishment of field administration. Certain constitutional bodies were also recommended. Literature suggests that it was patterned after the Pakistani model and tradition (Khan, 1998; Huque, 2010). It was nothing innovative.

Table 1: Major Administrative Reform initiatives in Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Reform Committee/ Commission</th>
<th>Main Focus</th>
<th>Out come</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reform Efforts from 1971 to 1991</td>
<td>Civil Administration Restoration Committee (CARC), 1971</td>
<td>Restoration &amp; continuity of the government</td>
<td>Resume previous pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative Service Reorganizing Committee (ASRC), 1972</td>
<td>Structural change of bureaucracy</td>
<td>Report shelved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pay and Service Commission (PSC), 1976</td>
<td>Strengthening bureaucratic elites, services structure and pay issues</td>
<td>Elite class of bureaucrats created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martial Law Committee, 1982</td>
<td>Organization and Rationalization of Manpower in the Public Sector Organizations</td>
<td>Limited action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Committee for Administrative Reorganization/ Reform (CARR), 1983</td>
<td>Decentralisation</td>
<td>Central control continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform Efforts after 1991</td>
<td>Public Administration Reform Committee (PARC), 1997 (2000)</td>
<td>Administrative change and development based on New Public Management</td>
<td>Yet to be completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopted from: (Huque, 2010; Ali, 2010)

3.2 Administrative Service Reorganizing Committee (ASRC), 1972
The ASRC, in preparing its reform plan, was guided by the ‘new social philosophy of the state that focused on nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism’ (Khan & Zafarullah, 2005, 54). The ASRC recommended introducing pro-people civil service system by creating a single, classless unified grading structure which would consist of appropriate number of different pay scales corresponding to different skills and responsibilities. However, ASRC’s recommendation for a modern, professional and citizen-oriented civil service was shelved. The senior generalist civil servants opposed the recommendations of the ASRC. Also, the country was facing political opposition, near-famine situation and a breakdown in law and order by the time the report was submitted (Khan, 1998, Huque, 2010). Inevitably, the regime chose to maintain the status quo by compromising its earlier stance vis-à-vis the bureaucracy, especially the generalist corps (Zafarullah & Huque, 2001, 1385).

3.3 Pay and Service Commission (P&SC), 1976

The P&SC examined the existing pay and service structure of the civil service, method of recruitment, training and deployment. The commission was also entrusted with devising rational and simple principles for the amalgamation of the civil servants of the erstwhile Pakistani central and East Pakistani provincial governments, who performed similar duties and functions (GoB, 1977, p.7). The Commission recommended replacing systems of patronage with merit-based appointment through competitive civil service examination. Creation of a Senior Service Pool (SSP) following the recommendation of the Commission was a significant bureaucratic development as it further strengthened the generalist civil servants. This was quite in line with the expectation of the senior administrative figures who dreamed of assuming authority and prestige like that of the colonial rule (Azizuddin, 2011). This creation of SSP actually ‘gave generalists further opportunities for exercising control over the administrative system’ (Zafarullah and Khan 2001, 995).

3.4 Martial Law Committee, 1982

A second military regime that ruled the country from 1982 to 1990 appointed a Martial Law Committee (MLC) for examining organizational set-up of Ministries/Divisions/Directorates and other Organizations. The prime tasks of the Committee were: to review the charter of duties of the various public offices; to scrutinise the existing and sanctioned manpower; and to rationalise the organisations and functions of the Ministries/Divisions/Directorates and other Organisations (Khan, 1991; Khan, 1998). A few limited changes took place based on its recommendation: reduction of the number of ministries from 36 to 19 and that of departments/directorates and subordinate offices from 243 to 181 (Khan, 1998). During this regime, no initiatives were taken in terms of addressing the basic problems of bureaucracy apart from the above quantitative reductions. According to Huque (2010) the attention of the government shifted and there was no progress in this respect.

3.5 Committee for Administrative Reform/Reorganization (CARR), 1982

The military regime also looked at the local government. They constituted The CARR with a view to recommending ‘an appropriate, sound and effective administrative system based on the spirit of devolution and the objective of taking the administration nearer to the people’ (GoB, 1982, 1). The CARR was appointed for administrative reorganization and institutionalization of the local government system in the country (Azizuddin, 2011). It was related to the democratisation of the governance system at the local and sub national level.
The recommendations of CARR resulted in a program of decentralization under which an elected local government was installed at the upazila level (a field level administration unit). For the first time, democratic governance, though limited in scope, was introduced at the upazila level (Rahman, 1994, cited in Sarker, 2004). But, this decentralization reforms backfired as it was not properly conceived. Thus, “rather than leading to more local power or participation in order to overturn the tradition of centralized administration, it resulted in the extension of the central government bureaucracy through a new layer of administrative agencies at the sub district level” (Huque, 2010, 63).

3.6 Public Administration Reform Committee (PARC), 1997

PARC suggested reforms in line with the New Public Management (NPM). The PARC report indicated that previous reform efforts had changed little of the colonial inheritance, in spite of several attempts made over the years (Huque, 2010). Privatisation of public enterprises, public-private partnership, finalisation of citizen charter, meritocracy in the public service, results-oriented management, devolution, e-governance, combating corruption are some of the recommendations that reflect NPM spirit (GoB, 2000). It generated some novel and innovative ideas influenced by NPM, and submitted 70 short-term and 37 long-term recommendations (ibid). However, only a few of these recommendations have been implemented so far and in reality things stand more or less where they started (Jahan, 2006).

4.0 The Role of Donors in the Administrative Reforms

All the donor bodies, bilateral /multilateral, World Bank/the UN agencies, recognise the importance of the good governance reforms in the public sector (Parnini, 2009; Rahman, 2001, 150-151). Most of these recommendations made by the donor bodies were based on NPM spirit. For example, Public Administration Sector Study by UNDP (1993) suggested results-based management and strategic management in all public offices. Also, British ODA funded study recommended for merit-based recruitment and promotion, and performance-based management among others (Rahman et al., 1993). In Bangladesh, one of the influential studies of public sector reform is the 1996 World Bank report, Government That Works: Reforming the Public Sector. According to this World Bank report the most critical areas that needed to be reformed immediately were: unusually large size of the government; inadequate level and nature of accountability; regulatory overburden and poorly functioning legal system; weak policy formulation and implementation, and slow decision-making; and finally dysfunctional compensation and personnel management systems. UNDP (2007) conducted another important study. It observed, the civil service in Bangladesh needs to evolve: from being “hierarchical, centralized, and bureaucratic” into being “efficient, empowered, creative and responsive”; and “stakeholder-oriented, transparent and accountable” UNDP (2007, 7). The major issues covered by the UNDP (2007) study on civil service reforms are: managing change, human resource management, human resource development and organizational performance management.

All four reports highlighted in great detail the necessity to go for a comprehensive restructuring of the public administration. They acknowledged the difficulty of major administrative reforms. They also warned that the cost of doing nothing would be more dangerous (World Bank, 1996). They suggested ways for bringing about changes in the relationship between the political and administrative institutions, enhancing transparency and accountability, increasing efficiency, emphasizing performance and reducing generalist
domination (Huque, 2010). “Not unexpectedly, the response from the government to donor initiatives has been lukewarm” (Khan, 1998, 139-140). The government recognized the reports but did not act upon them whole-heartedly. The reports became ineffective in the face of resistance from the generalist bureaucrats and indifference displayed by the government (Zafarullah and Khan, 2001, 995).

5.0 Administrative Traditions as the Contributory Factor of Administrative Reforms: The Legacy versus Modernity

The effect of administrative traditions is often singled out as one of many causal factors in the process of administrative reform (Yesilkagit, 2010). The interaction of traditions shapes the administrative reforms. It is because of the role of traditions that different countries give different priorities to the same reform agenda. Hence, the same reform agenda can produce different results in different countries. For example, the outcome of NPM varied from its roots in the Anglo-American tradition to other administrative traditions (Painter and Peters, 2010b; Panozzo, 2000). According to OECD (2005), reforms usually fail because modernisation efforts must be tailored to each individual country’s context, needs and circumstances. The same reforms have very different effects in different countries as different countries have unique public administration systems.

Heginbotham (1975) between 1967 and 1968 researched the roots of Indian administration. His research finding is equally significant in the public administration of the then Eastern India (present Bangladesh). He identified four traditions of Indian bureaucracy – Dharmic, Gandhian, British Colonial and Community Development. Bangladesh public administration also evolved according to a hybrid set of traditions of governance that are partly inherited from the ‘Samaj’; partly rooted in Mughal and British colonial rule; partly learnt through administrative reforms by the international donors (Heginbotham, 1975, Jamil, 2007). Azizuddin (2011, 51) also noted, “the public administration in Bangladesh is the legacy of the past that travelled down from ancient Bengal via Mughul (1556-1757), British India (1757-1947), and Pakistan (1947-1971) to Bangladesh (1971 - )”. Below, the two most prominent legacies are analysed in terms of their interactions with the administrative reforms measures.

6.0 Samaj Versus Administrative Reforms Measures

Bureaucracy in Bangladesh is largely typified by centralisation of authority, patronage, authoritarian rule and hierarchism that has its roots both in the samaj tradition, Mughal rule and British colonial rule (Khan, 1998; Jamil, 2007). In order to be successful any administrative reform programmes have to take the varied traditions into consideration. Bangladeshi bureaucracy is undividable from the ethos of social life. For example, in the village the important authority is that of tradition. The authority of individuals plays less important role. Age and seniority are of importance. Children are taught to accept the authority of the elders with unquestioning obedience and deference. It denotes the discourse of hierarchy in the interpersonal relationship in the social level. In bureaucracy as well, age and seniority play significant role. According to Jansen (1990, 26), the principle of hierarchy in the interpersonal relationship is and for hundreds of years has been accepted as necessary and morally right in the villages of Bangladesh. People in Bangladesh society behave according to the age and seniority. This ethos of social life has tremendously impacted upon the administrative culture. According to Khan (1998, 37), there is still significant emphasis
on age and seniority in appointment and seniority. Those who are at the top of the hierarchy are regarded as the father-figure. The junior colleagues accept their authority without questioning the basis. Seniority Rules in Bangladesh Government Service also takes into account the issue of age in the fixation of the seniority. For example, if two officers join the service at the same day and if their merit position is also the same then their seniority will be fixed according to their date of birth – the older one will be given the seniority in the service. These deep structures of samaj (village life/society) are replicated in the bureaucratic structure as well.

The administrative reform initiatives often contradict these above points. While the samaj tradition is based on the hierarchic interpersonal relationship, family and kinship loyalty and represents stability (Jamil, 2007), the administrative reform agenda consists of changes based on decentralisation, delineation of governance role (World Bank, 1996) leading to a creative, responsive, stakeholder-oriented and transparent public administration (UNDP, 2007). The reformers believe that flexibility and ingenuity are necessary to adjust and adapt to changes in the environment. On the other hand samaj tradition prefers for maintaining status quo (Jamil, 2007). Bangladeshi samaj is characterised by complex kin, bangsho (family unit) and caste structures which underpin a pervasive system of patron-clientelism (Wood, 2000). Bangladeshi society is still patrimonial in the sense that rules are applied with partiality and some citizens get preferential treatment (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002). In case of Bangladesh there seems to be in place a destructive patrimonialism as state-approach redistribution tends to result in factions with a class context. Destructive patrimonialism is against the all-round concept of development. As in a human body, development of one limb does not automatically lead to the development of other limbs, so in a country, development of one district does not lead to automatic development of other districts. It can only be called a healthy body when all the limbs are developed and are proportionate to each other. Same is the case with a country. Development of one group of people at the cost of other groups results in inequality. In Bangladesh, a variation of destructive patrimonialism called “pork barrel” is in fashion. This slang expression refers to publicly funded projects promoted by local MPs to bring money and jobs to their own constituents and districts, as a political favour to local politicians or citizens (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002). In case of Bangladesh, examples include monopolising state distributed resources like irrigation pumps or Food for Works contracts, distribution of VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) Cards or construction of bridges in the geographically targeted areas (Khan, 1989). In a patrimonial society the reaping of benefits by the elites is widespread. Hartman and Boyce (1990, 256) showed how a deep tube well project co-financed by the World Bank and the Swedish and Canadian governments for irrigation in northern Bangladesh ended up with the rich people.

So, there is an inherent tension between the two leading to the maximum failure of the reform programmes. The pre-modern values contradict the modern values. Organisations are often personalised by the top bureaucrats. Rules are often bent the way a leader wants – or rules are framed according to the way the vested interest group wants. The patrimonial society of Bangladesh is characterised by power maintenance where the structure is patriarchal and the operational mode is discretionary. On the contrary, the modernisation reform programmes aim to change the patriarchal structure to team-based and operational mode to organic. Literature reveals that the Bangladeshi society is influenced by the Samajik bidhi (social order norms). When a person joins the bureaucracy he tries to reproduce the samajik bidhi in the bureaucracy as he is moulded by the culture of the samaj. Cultural theories suggest that culture serves as a social order (Haugland, 1991). Thus, culture is the software of the mind (Hofstede, 1991). Abedin (1973) commented that the authoritarian and paternal social values of the subcontinent partly account for the authoritarian and the paternal behaviour of the
bureaucracy. But the reformers’ aim is the total overhaul of the patrimonial system based on transparency and accountability to ensure a results-oriented public sector. Thus, the major conflict between the samaj and the administrative reform measures is noted by Jamil (2007, 13): “In a bureaucracy influenced by the samaj tradition..... creativity....innovation are not expected to be appreciated. .....New ideas and new ways of doing things may threaten the stability system. These are foreign values. ....... One does not strive to achieve results rather one follows the established norms”.

6.1 British Colonial Rule Versus Administrative Reforms Measures

The colonial administrative inheritance has a powerful presence in contemporary Bangladesh (Huque, 2010) in terms of centralisation, elitism and preference towards generalist bureaucracy (Zafarullah and Huque, 2001; PARC, 2000). The colonial rule not only created purposeful aloofness between the bureaucracy and the citizens based on the concept of ‘master and the subject’ but it also produced and perpetuated elitism within the bureaucracy. The colonial bureaucratic tradition was characterised by issuing directives and imposing rules and regulation with the purpose of control and command. A central tenet of the British colonial model was to rule and collect tax through a very small number of elitist officials. Power was centralised and vested in a band of covenanted officials. The colonial administration preferred for the generalists. According to Hakim (1991), the British needed such a generalist civil service as resource development was not their priority. They were bent on resource extraction. The British ICS (Indian Civil Service) was a highly generalist cadre in the sense that its members were recruited on the basis of an excellent general education and intelligence rather than on the basis of their specialized and technical knowledge. This legacy of ‘generalist’ has taken a serious turn in the present day Bangladesh. The generalist versus specialist conflict, i.e. a conflict between hierarchy and professional norms and knowledge is a major tension in the public administration (Jamil, 2007; Zafarullah & Huque, 2001). The administrative reforms emphasised the role of professionals and recommended for a single, classless unified grading structure of civil service (GoB, 1972). But the generalist-elitist administrative cadre successfully resisted the recommendation.

The elitist and centralised colonial civil service demanded blind loyalty from the natives and acted as the ‘master’. In post colonial Bangladesh as well, public servants have not acted as ‘servants’ of the people but rather as their ‘masters’ (PARC, 2000). It is a relationship marked by ‘master-subject’ approach that smacks of servitude, quite common in feudal-colonial set up. But, the governance reforms require the administrators to treat the citizens as the customers. They are to reflect that it is because of the citizens’ tax that their salary is paid. Thus, Jamil (2007) asserted, the major contrast between the British colonial administrative system and the administrative reform measures concerns the role of the civil servants: ruling attitude versus serving attitude. The administrative reform measures require focusing on citizen-orientation in terms of effective and efficient public service delivery.

7.0 Current Governance Trends

In 2008, a new government came to power with a broad platform to reduce poverty as well as improve governance through e-governance strategy in all government agencies. ‘Digital Bangladesh’ was proclaimed a high priority of the Government in the pre-election manifesto (BAL, 2008; BEI, 2010). The inherent objective of Digital Bangladesh is ‘connecting citizens’ in terms of pro-poor service delivery. The attempts to use e-governance to transform traditional public administration landscape to a modern, transparent, and citizen-centred
public administration in terms of effective delivery of public services has been much appreciated (Bhuiyan, 2011) nationally and internationally. The international donors including CIDA, ADB, DFID and UNDP have also come forward with much enthusiasm in supporting the development of e-Government in the context of a larger initiative on administrative reform (BEI, 2010). Some tasks related to the creation of the basic components of e-Government have been implemented. For example, there have been a number of successful e-Government initiatives, such as birth registration project of Rajshahi City Corporation (Haldenwang, 2004), Chittagong custom house automation (Mursalin, 2009).

8.0 Hybrid Tradition

The experiments with the e-Governance, public-private partnerships, market-led approach, local government decentralisation in the context of a highly resistant bureaucracy now look like small islands of experimentation. As has been mentioned before, the four strong legacies inherited from the colonial rule have made the reforms limited to marginal changes. The present government is now aware of the inherited institutions, trying to adapt them to modern values of public administration by supporting good governance reforms through the e-Governance strategy.

The major call for reforms started in 1980s by the international donor agencies as part of their engagement with Bangladesh. Since then, there have been a number of reforms activities labelled under structural adjustment programme, sector-wide approaches, NPM, and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) that have been field-tested in Bangladesh (Parnini, 2007; Sarker, 2006). The present buzzword is good governance reforms. The change, although slow to stimulate and permeate various layers of resistant bureaucracy, mainly addressed administrative capacity building, institutional reforms, transparency and decentralization. These administrative reform initiatives, though had limited success (Parnini, 2007; Sarker, 2006) left some imprints. For example, with the re-introduction of upazila system of administration (local government decentralisation) signs are already visible that local government bureaucracy has taken a back seat. The upazila system has brought bureaucracy under the complete control of an elected functionary (Ali, 1987; UNDP, n.d.). Bureaucratic dominance is now eroded to a significant extent. Their roles have changed from one of issuing directives in British colonial rule to one of negotiation and bargaining as is evident in upazila administration (Jamil, 2007). It has revolutionised the politico-administrative relationship at the local level in terms of empowering the elected upazila chairman to exercise control over and coordinate the work of the upazila-based central government officials (UNDP, n.d.)

Subsequently, a degree of layering became evident as new values and practices became superimposed on the old (Huque, 2010). A hybrid tradition is increasingly noticeable. Despite the resistance, modernisation programmes are having its effects though slowly. It is hybrid tradition in the sense that different traditions coexist. Merit-based recruitment and promotion has been introduced yet public servants are promoted on the basis of length of service and Annual Confidential Report (ACR). The general rule followed for the promotion of civil servants is seniority and then merit (Ali, 2004). Theoretically, civil service recruitment is done on the basis of competitive examinations. But in reality, things are a little different. Osman (2010, 12) observed, “... but political choice gets preference in viva voce (oral) examination. This kind of political influence over recruitment is accomplished through politicizing the Public Service Commission (PSC), the central personnel agency”. Thus, the
civil service recruitment is characterised by both patronage and merit-based appointment although according to the 1981 BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) Recruitment Rules government is supposed to stick to merit-based recruitment. So, there is a strange co-existence of modernity and legacy in the public administration – mixture of authoritarian and democratic principles, i.e. democratic rule, versus dynastic rule, merit versus patronage, competency versus ‘tadbir’ (personal lobbying) (Huque, 2010; Jamil and Haque, 2007). Thus, Bangladeshi administrative system can be regarded as a hybrid tradition – traditional/ancient legacies and samaj intermingled with foreign legacies that again are impacted by modern reforms. Huque (2010, 66) noted, “[M]onarchy and colonial rule were replaced with a modern democratic system, but the tendency toward personality-based or dynastic rule continued. The result is a curious mixture of authoritarian and democratic principles”.

9.0 Conclusion

Bangladesh is still an agrarian society. 71.9 per cent people live in the rural area (World Bank, 2010). Village life is highly fragmented and hierarchically structured along distinctions in rank and status. Bangladesh society is based on a network of interpersonal patron-client relations (Kochanek, 1993). Bangladesh public administration is an account of the interaction between traditional and modern administrative norms and practices. ‘Traditional’ part consists of the Samaj (old legacy) and the Mughal and British colonial rule (new legacy) and the ‘modern part’ consists of the administrative reforms. The incongruities and inconsistency between samaj and colonial bureaucratic notion reflects differences in Bangladeshi and western approaches to organisation. There are tensions inherent in the administrative traditions of Bangladesh – ancient tradition of samaj and colonial rule. Also, modernisation programmes are also affecting it. Post-independence innovation and adaptation with modernisation programmes tend to lead the country to new development. Thus, it points to the fact that there are strong undercurrents towards the hybridization.
Reference

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