

Preface

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Preface

This study consists of a set of research articles published by the author on various occasions during the last seven years. The author, who is basically a student of political science working on contemporary South Asian history, has tried to merge in this study three streams of research interest.

The first and foremost interest is in the search for an appropriate institutional framework that would guarantee that local governments meaningfully serve the basic needs of the local inhabitants. In light of the highly centralized and urban-biased mode of contemporary development, such a framework would premise reallocation of national resources in favor of local governments which work at the grass-roots level. South Asian states are undertaking trial efforts to provide local governments with financial resources through central transfers. This study assesses these efforts.

Secondly, the author has long been interested in communal problems and regionalist or separatist movements in South Asia and has studied the political and socio-cultural backgrounds of these conflicts. The subject taken up in this study, the mechanics of center-local financial transfers, is the most sensitive and delicate of the issues involved. Sadly it is all too apparent that such problems and movements are abundant in South Asia.

The third interest is in the institutional history. In this study the author has tried to pursue systematically the institutional development of center-local financial transfers from colonial times up to the initial years of the 1990s. Given the common heritage of colonial institutions, it is expedient to make a comparative study of post-colonial institutions in South Asian states, and readers will notice, especially in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 6, that political development in the Bengal region, i.e., West Bengal in India and Bangladesh, attracted much

of the author's attention. This also reflects his particular concern with the political history of the region.

With the exceptions of Chapter 1 and Conclusion, all the chapters in this study have been drawn from abridged versions of earlier published articles. Two of these were originally published in English. One which forms Chapter 2 was written in March 1987 and appeared in *Centre-State Financial Relations in India—A Focus on West Bengal*—(Joint Research Programme Series No.61 of the Institute of Developing Economies [IDE]). It was coauthored by Dr. Jayanta Kumar Ray of the Centre for the South and the Southeast Asian Studies, Calcutta University. The second article forms Chapter 3 and appeared in the December 1992 issue of *The Developing Economies* published by the IDE. The introductory section of this second paper was expanded to form Chapter 1 of the present study. The remaining three chapters are from articles published in IDE Japanese language publication and which appeared in March 1986 (Chapter 6), March 1991 (Chapter 4), and March 1992 (Chapter 5). Although abridged, the basic data and arguments of the original articles have been kept intact. In Chapter 6 a few additions were made to the figures and tables as a result of subsequent information.

The author owes a great deal of thanks to scholars and researchers in Japan and abroad whose advice and numerous suggestions helped make the completion of this work possible. Communication with scholars in Bangladesh and India was most beneficial. Perhaps the fairest way for the author to express his gratitude is to refrain from mentioning names for he is deeply indebted to all of these many individuals in equal measure, and trying to name them all would surely mean failing to name some. The author also wishes to thank the translators for their pains and ingenuity which made the Japanese sections of this work available to the many readers of English. However responsibility for any errors or shortcomings in facts, arguments, or expressions are entirely the author's. Last but not the least the author wishes to express his heartfelt gratitude to the staff of the IDE whose ungrudging support made this work possible. His thanks go particularly to the English Editorial Division of the IDE whose expertise and meticulous care brought this study to final publication.

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