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সংখ্যা: ৫১

জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৪১৮/জুন ২০১১

# লোক প্রশাসন সাময়িকী



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সম্পাদনা পরিষদ

মোঃ নূর উদ্দিন আহম্মেদ

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মোঃ সানোয়ার জাহান ভূঁইয়া

সহযোগী সম্পাদক

সামসুল আলম খন্দকার



## লোক-প্রশাসন সাময়িকী

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## Refugee Problem in South Asia: A Threat to Security

Saifuddin Ahmed\*  
Anurug Chakma\*\*

**Abstract:** Migration is an age-old phenomenon of human civilization. But forced migration and displacement is new which origin dates back to the emergence of nation state. Today, there is a large and significant literature on forced migration and refugees, the products of political oppression, economic adversaries, environmental degradation, conflicts and war. The scholars have recognized refugee problem, the outcome of forced migration, as one of the major threats for regional and global peace and security in the 21st century. In this paper, we focused on the South Asian context. We tried to show how refugees are a threat for peace and security of South Asia.

### Introduction:

"We live in a rapidly changing and basically violent world. We watch as millions of people are forced into exile, looking for food, for safety, for hope for the future. Refugees are everywhere, a by-product of every crisis (Loescher & Monahan, 1989).

Intellectuals, politicians and scholars have recognized the refugee problem as a global phenomenon. There are now millions of refugees especially in Africa and Asia. The countries of the South Asia, like other regions of the contemporary world, are experiencing this greatest problem which has now been recognized one of the major threats to peace and security of South Asia. The refugee issue is not merely related to human rights violation, and is not only an issue of repatriation or rehabilitation of refugees. It is directly related to numerous problems. Both the country of origin and refuge face many critical problems owing to refugees. Refugees contribute to create political instability, economic insecurity, inter-state conflict, disorder and anarchy in the host country. They are also viewed as the economic burden and they are not, therefore, welcomed by the local community of the host country. On the contrary, they are also equally threat for their country of origin. It has been observed that the refugees give shelter the so-called freedom fighters that are fighting against their country. In the context of South Asia, it is argued that the refugee problem has added a new security dimension. The

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presence of Rohingya refugees is posing threat for Bangladesh, the presence of Tamil, Bhutanese, Nepal, Tibetan, and Burmese refugees for India, the presence of Taliban, Somalian, Iraqi and Iranian refugees for Pakistan. According to the available refugee statistics for 1993, South Asia was fourth in ranking with its 2.14 million refugees (Baral & Monahan, 1989). Before going to discuss regarding how refugee problem is posing a threat to peace and security in case of South Asia, we should have some basic ideas as to who are refugees by international law.

### **Who are Refugees?**

The term 'refugee' is very innocent has derived from the Latin word 'refugium' meaning to shelter, security or heaven.<sup>1</sup> The basic concept of refugee has laid down in the 1951 UN Convention on the status of refugees. The Convention defines;

"Any person who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself for the protection of that country....."<sup>2</sup>

The OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa adopted on September 10, 1969 defines;

"every person, who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself for the protection of that country, or who, not having and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return it."<sup>3</sup>

The term 'refugee' has been defined in the Statue of the United Nations

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from Anthony J. Beviacqua, "Who is a Refugee? Distinction between Economic and Political Determinants of Refugee Movements in Joseph M. Kitagawa (ed.), *American Refugee Policy: Ethical and Religious Reflections* ( New York: Fund for World Relief, 1983),p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 28 July, 1958 United Nations Treaty, vol. 189, no. 2545, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Collection of International Instruments and Other Legal Text Concerning Refugees and Displaced Persons, vol. 2, Published by the Division of International Protection of the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva, 1995.

High Commissioner for Refugees as;

"any other person who is outside the country of his nationality, or if he has no nationality, the country of his former habitual residence, because he has or had well-founded fear of persecution by reason of race, religion, nationality or political opinion and is unable or, because of such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the government of the country of his nationality, or if he has no nationality, to return to the country of his former habitual residence (Rashid, 2000)."

These three definitions do not cover a few important groups of people uprooted by forces beyond their control. The 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs) and economic and environmental refugees have been excluded in these three definitions.<sup>4</sup> In addition to, a refugee can be defined in three ways; legally (as stipulated in national or international); politically (as interpreted to meet political exigencies); and sociologically (as reflecting an empirical reality (Astri, 1983; 157-162). There are three essential elements in the legal definition of the term 'refugee'; (i) the person is outside the country of his nationality, or in the case of stateless persons, outside the country of habitual residence, (ii) the person lacks natural protection, and (iii) the person for protection (Khair, 1991; 336-366).

On the basis of the definitions above, it can now be said that refugees are those who have been displaced because of being persecuted, or owing to social and economic insecurity and environmental degradation and crossed international border for seeking refuge outside the country of their origin.

### **Refugee problem in South Asia:**

Migration is an age-old phenomenon but forced migration in this region is new which emerges particularly in post-colonial period. Partition, riots and communal violence in many parts of the sub-continent in post-colonial period led to the rise of massive population outflows. The refugee problem actually came into being when the states of this region faced the question of national integration after achieving independence from the British imperialists. The process of national integration failed and the subcontinent was divided into two parts- Pakistan for Muslims and India for non-Muslims. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of

<sup>4</sup> Cited from Ferris, Elizabeth G. "Refugee", in Encyclopedia of Government and Politics, Vol. 2, P. 1342.



Muslim migrated to Pakistan from India and Hindus to India from Pakistan. West Bengal was the largest refugee-receiving region in India. It received more than 73 percent of the refugees because of having a certain degree of cultural and physical proximity between West Bengal and East Pakistan. A month-wise break-up of refugee influx into West Bengal was provided in the following table I.

Table 1: Month-wise break-up of refugee influx into West Bengal

| Month     | 1953   | 1954     | 1955     | 1956     |
|-----------|--------|----------|----------|----------|
| January   | 5,248  | 4,077    | 156      | 17,011   |
| February  | 5,961  | 5,710    | 22,848   | 42,360   |
| March     | 7,507  | 5,821    | 26,503   | 15,167   |
| April     | 6,900  | 6,002    | 15,070   | 18,039   |
| May       | 6,032  | 6,656    | 18,190   | 34,657   |
| June      | 4,798  | 6,354    | 21,146   | 24,734   |
| July      | 5,026  | 6,208    | 22,957   | 27,442   |
| August    | 4,147  | 8,127    | 13,813   | -        |
| September | 3,223  | 10,644   | 9,371    | -        |
| October   | 4,379  | 10,352   | 13,757   | -        |
| November  | 3,212  | 11,037   | 11,535   | -        |
| December  | 4,214  | 22,776   | 18,709   | -        |
| Total     | 60,647 | 1,03,800 | 2,09,573 | 1,79,410 |

Source: Relief and Rehabilitation of Displaced persons in West Bengal (Calcutta: home (pub:) Dept. Govt. of West Bengal, 1965) p.17.

Three districts-Parganas, Calcutta, and Nadia together accounted for around two-thirds of displaced persons. According to the Rehabilitation Minister, 2,509 Pakistani Muslims crossed the borders and entered into the West Bengal who had no valid protection of entry in 1955 alone. From the West Bengal a large flow of refugees generated in the post-colonial period. Refugees from West Pakistan, only 24 lakh settled themselves in East Panjab while 40 lakh fled to Pakistan for seeking refuge. The table 2 indicates the number of refugee camps, and population for period of 1953-55.

Table 2: Number of Camps and Population

| District     | No. of camps | Population | Per camp average |
|--------------|--------------|------------|------------------|
| Nadia        | 8            | 62,068     | 7,758.80         |
| 24 -Parganas | 55           | 54,059     | 982.89           |
| Burdwan      | 31           | 51,802     | 1,671.03         |
| Hoogly       | 15           | 25,421     | 1694.73          |
| Howrah       | 6            | 9,844      | 1644.66          |
| Bakura       | 7            | 15,373     | 2196.14          |
| Birbhum      | 17           | 27,188     | 1599.29          |
| Murshidabad  | 40           | 16,282     | 1628.20          |
| Midnapore    | 9            | 13,962     | 1551.33          |
| W.Dinajpur   | 1            | 1,297      | 1297             |
| Coach Bihar  | 1            | 1,528      | 1528             |
| Calcutta     | 1            | 6,185      | 6185             |
| Total        | 161          | 2,85,009   | -                |

Source: ibid. PJ.8.

During British period, a good number of Indians entered Burma in search for jobs, and business opportunities. After independence, the authority of Burma took some deliberate policy i.e., Emergency Act-1947, Citizenship Act-1948, and Land Nationalization Act-1948 etc. have led to the rise of exodus of Indian settlers from Burma throughout 1950s and picked up after 1962 military coup. Many tribesmen who lived in the Chin Hills, the Arakan Pradesh and the Kachin state took refuge in India. Some 3,24,000 Indians entered India only in the year of 1928. Among these people who came back from India, more than 90 percent are Tamil origin took refuge especially in the North-east Indian states. The following table 3 points out year-wise of Burmese refugees and who have been given UNHCR status.<sup>11</sup>



Table 3: Burmese Refugees in India

| Year | Burmese Refugees Entering India (as per Government of India Records) | Burmese Granted UNUCR Refugee Status in India |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1988 | 904                                                                  | Nil                                           |
| 1989 | 1103                                                                 | 1                                             |
| 1990 | 613                                                                  | 16                                            |
| 1991 | 271                                                                  | 27                                            |
| 1992 | 514                                                                  | 73                                            |
| 1993 | 426                                                                  | 68                                            |
| 1994 | 313                                                                  | 103                                           |
| 1995 | 293                                                                  | 74                                            |
| 1996 | 313                                                                  | 157                                           |
| 1997 | 372                                                                  | 122                                           |
| 1998 | 389                                                                  | 153                                           |
| 1999 | 149                                                                  | 149                                           |
| 2000 | 323                                                                  | 172                                           |
| 2001 | 295                                                                  | 130                                           |

Source: UNHCR and Ministry of Home Affairs

According to the report of the US Committee for Refugees, there were some 1, 57,000 displaced persons in north-east India. The Norwegian Refugee Council reports that the number of IDPs in the state of Assam in the period of 2000-2001 varied from 87,000 to more than 200,000 persons; Reangs from Mizoram were between about 31,000 and 41,000; 80,000 Bengalis took refuge in Tripura since 1993; 180,000 Kukis, Piles, and Nagas from Manipur; 3,000 Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh Buruah, 2003; 44-65).

The Genocide of 1971 committed by the Pakistani military forces produced a large flow of refugees who took refuge in the bordering Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, and Meghalaya towards the end of March, 1971 (Saha, 2003; 211-245). The East Pakistan had population of 75 million in 1971. About 10 million took shelter in India as refugees. The trends of influx of refugees during 1971 have been provided in the table 4 below:

Table 4: Trends of Influx of Refugees

| Month (for the year!971)  | Daily Average (in thousands) | Monthly Average (in thousands) |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| April (1th to 10th April) | 57                           | 1,221                          |
| May                       | 102                          | 3,158                          |
| June                      | 68                           | 2,056                          |
| July                      | 26                           | 797                            |
| August                    | 34                           | 1,055                          |
| September                 | 27                           | 804                            |
| October                   | 14                           | 425                            |
| November                  | 8                            | 217                            |
| Backlog                   | -                            | 16                             |
| Total                     | -                            | 9,899                          |

Source: Bangladesh war of Independence Documents, op. cit, p. 82

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, south-eastern part of Bangladesh with an area of 14,200 square kilometers including river and reserve forest areas, has borders with the Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram and the Arakan state of Burma. The people of the CHT were uprooted from their ancestral land twice- first in 1960s when the Pakistan government made the Kaptai Dam on the river Karnafuli and later in the 1980ss when the Bangladesh government started to persecute (Chowdhury, 2003). In 1964, some 1, 00,000 people were uprooted and displaced from their ancestral land. Around 40,000 uprooted people entered India for seeking refuge, especially in Tripura, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh. In Bangladesh period, a series of massacres committed by Bangladesh Security Forces in hundreds of villages in Panchari, Matiranga, Lakshmichari, Khagrachari, Dighinala in 1986 and the massacres in Bagaichari in 1988 and in Longudu in May in 1989 produced a large flow of some 70,000 Jumma refugees who took shelter in six camps established in Takumbari, Pancharampara, Karbook, Lebachara, Shilachari, and Kathalchari of Tripura by the Indian government in the 1980s decade.<sup>5</sup>

There is also another category of refugees in Bangladesh who have become uprooted owing to environmental insecurity and entered India. The table.5 indicates the high percentage of environmental refugees.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Life is not ours: Land and Human Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, Report of the CHT Commission, the Netherlands, 1991, and its update2, 1994.



Table 5. Reasons for Leaving Bangladesh.

| Response lack of Environmental Security                                 | Khulna Sathkhira | Rajshahi | Dinajpur | Nilphamari | Total |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------|----------|------------|-------|
| Poverty                                                                 | 19               | 29       | 12       | 33         | 23.25 |
| For Better Accommodation                                                | 16               | 23       | 15       | 19         | 18.25 |
| Ecological                                                              | 7                | 8        | 4        | 5          | 6.0   |
| Livelihood                                                              | 42               | 10       | 2        | 24         | 19.5  |
| Insecurity of the MINORITIES                                            | 0                | 11       | 19       | 0          | 7.5   |
| Social Reasons (property related violence; marriage; prostitution etc.) | 16               | 11       | 16       | 14         | 14.25 |
| FOR SMUGGLING                                                           | 0                | 8        | 0        | 0          | 2.0   |
| FOR BETTER EDUCATION                                                    | 0                | 0        | 8        | 5          | 3.25  |
| FOR RELATIVES                                                           | 0                | 0        | 24       | 0          | 6.0   |

Source: Imtiaz Ahmed, the Plight of the Environmental Refugees: Time for Reinventing Bangladesh Security ( Dhaka: Grameen Trust).

Bangladesh is a state of refugee-receiving as well as refugee producing state. It is experiencing the Rohingya and Bihari refugee problems as a refugee-receiving country. According to the local NGOs, more than 500,000 Rohingyas are living in the border area. The UN estimates that 300,000 Rohingyas are living outside the camps.<sup>6</sup> There are approximately 160,000-200,000 Urdu speaking people in 66 camps in 13 regions across the country. In May, 2008, Bangladesh High Court confirmed the citizenship of Biharis who had been stateless since Bangladesh's independence in 1971.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See the website: [http://www.kaladenpress.org/v3/index.php?Option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2033:rohingya\\_issue\\_remains\\_unresolved\\_bangladesh\\_home\\_minister](http://www.kaladenpress.org/v3/index.php?Option=com_content&view=article&id=2033:rohingya_issue_remains_unresolved_bangladesh_home_minister).

<sup>7</sup> See the website: [http://www.refugeesinternational.org/where\\_we\\_work/asia/Bangladesh](http://www.refugeesinternational.org/where_we_work/asia/Bangladesh)

Migration of Indians to Nepal started long time ago. The flow of migration was limited until the Muslim rulers invaded in India. A significant number of Indians migrated to Nepal from Rajasthan because of being persecuted by the invaders (Upriti, 1999). The new phase of movement of people across Indo-Nepal border achieved new form in post-colonial period. There has been an agreement in the name of India-Nepal Treaty in 1950. The Treaty has entitled Nepalese to have freely access to residence, property, trade and commerce in India just an Indian can do in Nepal. Today, Indian immigrants constituted majority people in the Tarai region of Nepal (Baruah, cited opt.; 44-65).

Sri Lanka, one of the states of South Asia, is viewed as one of the principal source of producing refugees in South Asia. It has been characterized as 'an island of refugees' by the US Committee for Refugees.<sup>8</sup> The prolonged conflict between Tamil people and Sinhalese since 1983 has resulted in displacement of Tamil people within and outside the country. These displaced people fled from Sri Lanka and entered especially in Tamil Nadu, an Indian state which is considered as the safe haven for Tamil refugees. The Tamil refugees came to Tamil Nadu in three waves. The first refugee flow began on 24 July, 1983; second in 1990; and third flow in April, 2002. Today about 800,000 people are living as IDPs in Sri Lanka, while several hundreds of thousands as refugees and migrants outside the island (Brun, 2003).

Fazena Hossain in his article "Bhutan's Ethnic Problem: A Case of a Fragile Ethnic Mosaic in South Asia" argues that new ethnic tensions also emerged because of migration of ethnic groups that has continued for decades, from one territory to another in search of better economic opportunities. The process of accommodation and assimilation of the migrants with the local people is most often very complex and leads to various tensions. We can see this common scenario in case of Bhutan. After 1988 population census, the Bhutanese government began to view the increased number of Nepali immigrants as a threat to their survival and felt that the 'Sikkimese syndrome' may once again be repeated. In the year of 1993, several thousands of immigrant Nepali people crossed into Indian states of West Bengal and Assam because of being persecuted by the Bhutanese authorities (Hossain, 1993; 13-47). On the other hand, the

<sup>8</sup> US Committee for Refugees, Sri Lanka; Island of Refugees, Washington, 1991.

number of refugees in Jhapa and Morang Districts of Nepal reached 85,000.<sup>9</sup>

For more than two decades, Pakistan hosted the largest single refugee population in the world. It was anticipated that 1.1 million refugees remained in refugee camps at the start of 2003 after more than 1.5 million repatriated in the previous year. In addition to, there are Somalis, Iraqis, and Iranian refugees.<sup>10</sup>

From the analysis and information provided before, it is very clear that the countries of South Asia are experiencing the refugee problem especially since 1947. Most of the states of this region are receiving as well as producing refugees. In the next section, we provided explanation regarding the threats produced by refugees for South Asia.

### **Refugee Problem: A threat to South Asia**

South Asia is composed of eight developing countries- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka each of which has a lot of internal problems i. e., population illiteracy, malnutrition, lack of good governance, lack of democratic institution and culture, food insecurity, environmental degradation, and ethnic conflicts etc. This region is also one of the poorest regions in the world. Most of the people of this region are living under poverty line whose income is very poor and who have no access to basic needs. Briefly speaking, establishing peace in this region is nothing but a far cry. The refugee problem has made this critical situation more complex and added a new security dimension. Forced migration and refugees are, of course, the question of human rights, peace and security. Therefore, the issue of refugee problem has drawn the attention of scholars and world leaders. As most of the developing countries of Asia and Africa are witnessing this problem. The refugees are contributing to create numerous internal problems in all the countries of South Asia. It has been observed that the refugee issue has security implications. They are the threats for internal security of both the home as well as host country-Susan, F. Martin one of the prominent scholars, has discussed the relationship between forced migration and human security. According to him, forced migration can threaten human security in five broad categories of situation.

<sup>9</sup> Cited from Baral, Lok Raj, "Bilateralism under the Shadow: the Problems of Refugees in Nepal-Bhutan Relations", in Verinder Grover (ed.) *Encyclopedia of SAARC Nations*, vol. 6, DEEP and DEEP Publications, F-159, Rajioure Garden, New Delhi-110027.

<sup>10</sup> Visit the following website: <http://un.org.pk/unhcr/about.htm>



'First, when forced migrants stand against the government of their home country. Second, when forced migrants are conceived as a political threat or security risks by the government of the host country. Third, when forced migrants are perceived as a threat for local culture of the host country. Fourth, when forced migrants are social and economic problem for the host country. Fifth, when the host country uses forced migrants as an instrument of threat against the home country.'<sup>11</sup>

In the view of John K. Akokpari regarding the security implication of refugees, refugees are often perceived as a threat by the host country if they use their sanctuary as a base for attacks on their home government. Military adventurism by refugees against their home government can produce two negative consequences;

"First, it strains relations between the host and home country. Second, rebel military attacks on the home government encourage the involvement of foreign mercenaries who have added new complexities to local conflicts in recent years (Akokpari, 1998)."

Many prominent scholars have studied the refugee problem of South Asia and identified the security implications of refugees. Lok Raj Boral and S. D. Muni in their classical work (ed.)

'Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia' have focused on the security implications of refugees in the context of South Asia. According to them, the security implications of the refugees in the host country are far-reaching and multi-dimensional. The implications are as follows;

- Refugees are considered as a threat for the internal security of the host country. The presence of large number of refugees contributes to destabilize and disrupt the political, economic and social systems of the host country. For instance, the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, during their peak phase, needed more than US \$ 1 million even at the rate of 30 percent per capita which was an economic burden for Pakistan.
- Refugees also deteriorate law and order situation of the host country in many ways. As the armed militant refugee groups engage in fight with each other with an eye to establish their respective dominance and leadership of the struggle back home.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Myron weiner, " the global Migration Crisis; challenges to States and to Human Rights, Chapter. 6, Harper Collins College Publishers, 1995.

- Refugees are also involved in many types of petty crimes. The poorer section of South Asian refugees including the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and the southern Bhutanese in Nepal and India, are contributing in the trade of trafficking in arms and drug.
- Refugees also introduce 'gun culture' in the host country as we can see this scenario in the Pakistan society. The Afghan refugees have proliferated large quantities of sophisticated arms in Pakistan Society which has a significant contribution to rise of militancy in Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan.
- Refugees may destabilize the host country. It has been observed that refugees sometimes involve in conflict with the local community on common property as we can see this scenario in terms of Pakistan society where the Afghan refugees have taken the control on the transport network of Peshawar.
- Refugees also politicize ethnic groups which may result in destabilizing the host country. In Assam, there has been instability because of presence of the people of Bangladesh and Nepali origin.
- Refugees are a threat for the host country themselves. They can stand against the host country when there is a sharp conflict of jobs, economic opportunity, and ethnic identity between the local people and refugees. For instance, LITE is suspected behind the assassination of Rajib Ghandi.
- Refugees are generally live in the border areas. Their movement creates border tension which may lead to inter-state conflict. The refugee factor has played a significant role behind major bilateral conflicts took place in South Asia (Baral & Muni; 1993).

Refugees significantly, according to Druba Kumar, contribute to deteriorate the relationship between the home and host country. In addition to, for a country which is overpopulated, and which has a high incidence of unemployment and extremely limited resources, the increasing number of refugees could become socially and economically destabilizing. In Nepal, the presence of Tibetan and Bhutanese refugees really matter<sup>12</sup> In the opinion of David T. Graham about the impacts of forced migration on the security, "People move because of some threats

<sup>12</sup> Kumar, Dhruba, "Thinking through Nepal's Bhutan Problem" in Verinder Grover (ed.) Encyclopedia of SAARC Nations, vol. 6, DEEP and DEEP Publications, F-159, Rajioure Garden, New Delhi-110027.

to their security or to improve their security. In doing so, they are often seen as a threat to the security of the destination country, especially if the movement is large and not managed.<sup>13</sup>

Ramkant B. C. Upriti has studied, like other scholars, the security implications of migration in the Himalayan region and produced a rich article in the name of "Inter-state Migration, Ethno-Politics and Security in the Himalayas." In this article, he argued that the migration and ethno-politics can result in disrupting law and order situation and weakening the social foundation of peace and harmony in the society. It can also lead to generate inter-state conflict. He has discussed how refugees can be a threat.

"The immigrants capture economy and job fields that createtensions among the local people. As a consequence, the local people demand the repatriation of the immigrants. Even they stand against the grant of any privileges to the immigrants entrepreneurs. This reality can be seen in the Southern Bhutan or Tarai region of Nepal. The large flow of migration can create threat to culture of the host country. Because migration involves not only a shift of population from one place to another but also involves transformation of new values, ideology, and culture and so on. For instance, the immigrants of Nepal! origin in Bhutan are posing threat to Drukpa Culture, the traditional culture of Bhutanese People. Because the immigrants are Hindus and practice Nepali culture while the Bhutan is mainly a Buddhist country and practices Drukpa culture. It is also worth mentioning that Indian immigrants are posing threat to local culture of Tarai region of Nepal. Migration has also long-term security implications. Since immigrants contribute to rise of social tensions. They disrupt social harmony as we can see this critical reality in Southern Bhutan and Tarai region of Nepal. Besides, migrants are not welcomed by the host country because they create the problems of population pressure, society of resources, lack of employment opportunity, environmental degradation and so on (Upriti, 1999)."

### **Why and how are refugees a threat to peace and security?**

Peace in the past refers to absence of war. Where there is no war, there is peace. But today peace has been redefined which involves equality, equity, social justice, ecological balance, human rights and human dignity

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Haque, Md. Shahidul , " International Migration and Human Security: Exploring the Nexus" , PP. 423-453, vol. 26, no. 3, Biiss Journal, Asiatic Society, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



which obviously covers the issue of refugee problem. And the term 'security' used in our daily lives means the absence of external attack in narrow sense. But in broader sense, it refers to such a condition in which everybody can enjoy his or her basic rights and freedom in a healthy environment. In the post-colonial period, security of any state is not being threatened, except some cases, by the external factors. Rather it is being threatened by internal factors. In the context of the South Asia, the security of the states is being threatened by internal factors among which refugee problem has captured an important place. Because, refugees are creating a lot of problems that are threatening the regional security in various ways. The problems are- creation of gun culture and widespread violence, disorder and anarchy, political instability, economic insecurity, underdevelopment, increase in ethnic conflict and insurgency, trafficking in arms, drugs, and women and children. It can also destabilize the region by increasing the probability of inter-state armed conflict. The literature of refugee involves that refugee problem in the South Asia is really a major obstacle for ensuring peace and security of this region.

**Conclusion:**

The issue of refugee problem in South Asia demands for resolution for the greatest interest of regional peace and security. It is true that we the people of this region cannot think of a peaceful and secured South Asia until we can address the refugee problem. Therefore, we should proceed all together towards this goal. We have to recognize that South Asia can come out from this critical and worse situation if all the states of the region act from their own position. Since the problem is not merely for Bangladesh, India or Pakistan, it is for all.

We can be hopeful that making a joint adventure for the great purpose of resolution of refugee problem can be possible because regional cooperation is presence under the SAARC. We can establish a specialized organ on the refugee problem under the SAARC which will be designed to address this problem. Let us resolve this problem and ensure peace, development and security in South Asia.

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## Development Strategy Based on the Psychophysical Processes for Climate Change in Bangladesh

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Fatema-Tu-Zohra Binte Zaman<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Nazmul A. Khan<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** The chain effects of the climate change and global warming have been discussed in many aspects throughout the world. Scientists have significantly taken in account these giant-global consequences of the climate change. Unfortunately, one of the biggest affected countries is likely to be the Bangladesh. Such consequences for Bangladesh can be multiple because of its level of poverty and the nature of geographical setting. Many strategies and initiatives are under consideration by the peoples, organizations and institutions concerned. It is however, important to consider some psychophysical factors when preparing the strategies in this regard. Without considering such factors when making the strategy, the goal can't be achieved as much as expected. The five-dimensional factors are: i. Mass perception; ii. Cognitive development; iii. Temporal dynamism; iv. Psychophysical health; and v. Action mechanism. The paper strongly suggests herewith that to consider the above five-dimensional factors when the principles of the development strategies for Bangladesh regarding climate change will be prepared.

### Introduction:

Climate change is the change in climate over a time period that ranges from decades to centuries. The term refers to both natural and human-induced changes. To understand the significance of climate change variability should be discussed. The term 'climate variability' refers to shorter term (years to decades) fluctuations in climate such as those caused by El Nino/ Southern Oscillation. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as: "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural-climate variability observed over comparable time period" (1). In other words, the UNFCCC uses the term climate change to mean only those changes that are brought about by human activities. The Earth's climate changes in responses to external forcing, including greenhouse gases, variations in its orbit around the Sun (orbital forcing),

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changes in solar luminosity, and volcanic eruptions, all examples of the Earth's own variation in temperature, for which the UNFCCC uses the term climate variability.

The phenomena climate change likely can bring about for Bangladesh a massive permanent flooding over the low laying coastal areas. Because of the phenomena of global warming leads to an obvious rise of normal sea level. No doubt, whether such massive submerge under sea water can be called as natural disaster. Such a great natural disaster can be defined differently by different people: to some 'disaster is a summative concept' (2) or a 'sponge world' (3). Some researchers mentioned disaster as a 'collective stress situation' (4) while identified it with 'social crisis period' (5).

However, it is the time to realize the up-coming disaster over Bangladesh and to take proper initiatives to prepare scientific and effective strategy. Most of the initiatives ongoing are mainly based on the physical properties. That could be successful partially but, should introduce other non-physical concept to the maximum efforts. That is the psychological and/ or psychophysical factors. Below are some discussions over mainly five factors on psychophysical processes necessary for making development strategy against the mass-effects of global-climate change.

## **2.0 Five-Dimensional Factors**

### **2.1 Mass Perception**

Human perception toward climate change is very much important, making and implementing development strategy to overcome the future challenges. When we try to develop such strategy it should be understand what we introduce in the strategy able to make the people understood about the environmental phenomena concern. That is environmental perception should be enriched by which the inhabitants can deal with the natural environment effectively and friendly. A harmonic interaction should be developed in between randomized form of nature and the randomized form of brain waves (6,7) of the individuals. It means that the individual should understand the normal and polluted particles in the natural environment. And they must be conscious about the differences effectively. That's why the individual of collective perception process over environmental pollutants should be learned enough (Figure 1.1). The effective mass-learning process should be taken under practice in which five sensory channels are included.



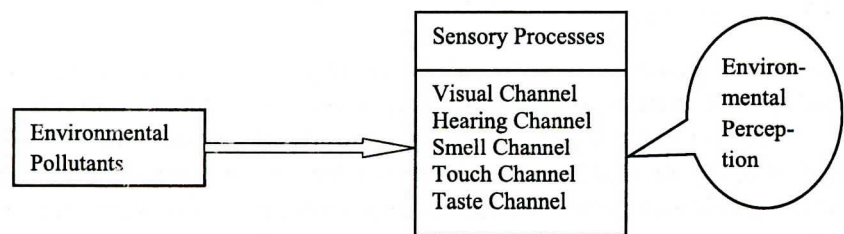


Figure 1.1. Environmental-perceptual process through five-sensory channels in which, higher level cognition can be affected by environmental pollutants.

2.2 Cognitive Development

Environmental perception and cognition are very important to take any action over environmental degradation. If a massive disaster take place over the Bangladesh for the longer period of time different types of initiatives must be taken. But it should be remembered that all of the initiatives will come from the cognitive process of human which also will influences the cognitions of other peoples concern. So the strategies of working activities should consider the psychological processes by which the necessary cognitive development can be successful (8). In this regard, the cognitive behavior therapy as a learning process or we can say behavior-modification process should be used to make expected action (or response) to the environment (Figure 1.2).

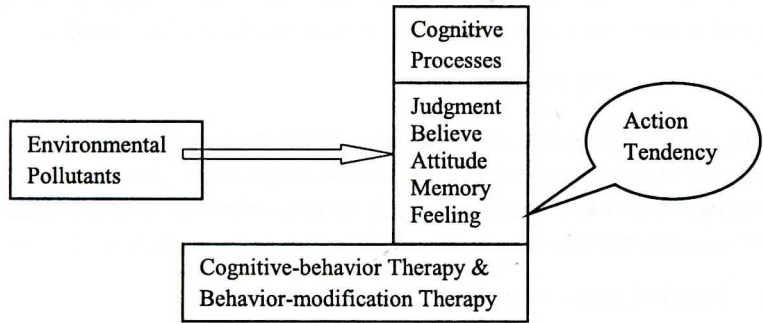


Figure 1.2. Environmental-cognition processes through sensation and perception in which, cognitive processes are concerned about the environmental pollutants to make behavioral action by using cognitive-behavior therapy and behavior-modification therapy.

### 2.3 Temporal Dynamism

The term 'temporal dynamism' is an important factor when the development strategy of climate change is to be formulated. Normally, a time frame is used at any type of planning for development work. But the 'time' is not a universal concept. We using the time in everyday life is in fact the mechanical time. There are so many verities of time in the reality such as psychological time, circadian time, etc. In this connection, we can discuss time as 'life' a dynamic existence which is mainly three types (9) as below:

- a. Life of body;
- b. Life of mind;
- c. Life of idea.

The 'life of body' means the life span of the human being, including other physiological activities which are responsible well to exchange with the changing environment. The 'life of the mind' means the individual perception and judgment which are changing with a special rhythm over mechanical time. And the 'life of idea' meaning here the durability and effectiveness of the knowledge and experience which is going to apply in the practical field. However, these three changeable factors should be taken with each other under brilliant consideration. Any type of environmental planning strategy should consider such three ever changeable factors to make itself more sustainable and acceptable.

### 2.4 Psycho-physical Health

The important exposures of the natural disaster can be obtained through psycho-physical processes (10,11). In this connection, significant results of investigations were found in which, psycho-physical consequences of natural disaster are classified into mainly two types as below (12,13):

- a. Psychological symptoms (Figure 1.3); and
- b. Psycho-somatic symptoms (Figure 1.4).

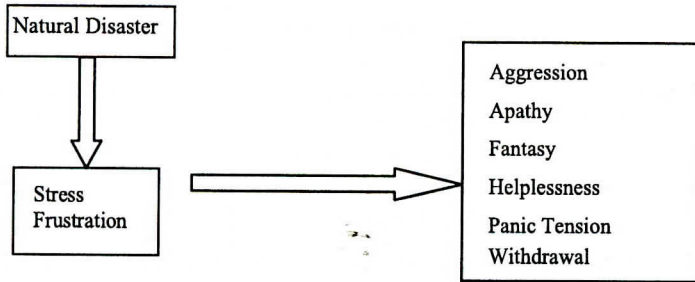


Figure 1.3. Psychological reactions as abnormal symptoms to the stress extracted from that mass-natural disaster.

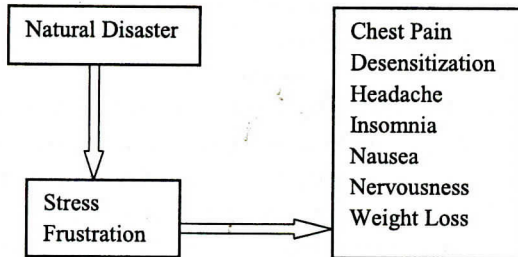


Figure 1.4. Psycho-somatic reactions as abnormal symptoms to the stress extracted from that mass-natural disaster

The psychological and psycho-somatic symptoms related to that of such natural disaster can be divided into two types when considering their intensity and duration. The types of the symptoms are as follows:

- a. Chronic symptoms (longer duration but lower intensity); and
- b. Acute symptoms (shorter duration but higher intensity).

## 2.5 Action Mechanism

Action mechanism is related to that of the behavioral spectrum of the individual with the environment. This mechanism is however, important for the individual and the group to have a successful interaction with the changing event in need in a disaster environment. In this action mechanism individual uses different strategies cited below (Figure 1.5). If the action mechanism is operated by cognitive process and executed by the habitat that could be the higher level effective measures.



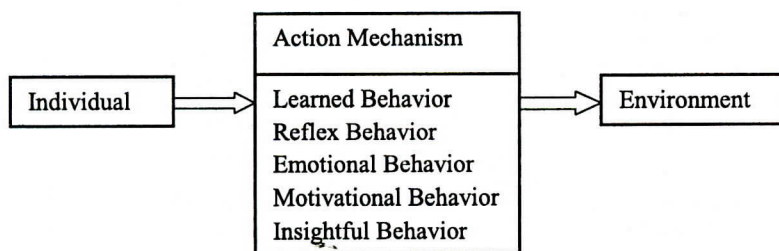


Figure 1.5. Individual and the group using the learning strategies to cope with the environment, when, it is labeled as natural disaster.

## 2.6 Bangladesh Perspectives

When preparing the national-development policy for Bangladesh against the massive effects of climate change above scientific phenomena should be taken in account. Obviously, unlike those advance countries that are still under treat by the same environmental events Bangladesh should prepare its own strategies inclusively based on the same psychophysical phenomena and others. Usually, psychophysical phenomenon is neglected when such of developmental strategy is prepared. And that's why the strategy can not be sustained up to expected level. However, those psychophysical phenomena can be adopted with the making mechanisms of the development strategies as shown below.

- a. Environmental education (perceptual approach)
- b. Environmental education (cognitive approach)
- c. Environmental movement (social approach)
- d. Environmental movement (health approach)
- e. Environmental movement (survival approach)

The environmental education should be introduced in the school curriculum of Bangladesh in which the new perception of the learners towards environment is grown. The perceptual process then goes through the deep cognitive process and then makes the individual understand and raise the realization for proper responses. The environmental movement will be organized on the basis of the environmentally educated people through social and health approaches. Social approach meaning here the individual existence in the group and the health approach meaning the biological coexistence in the living world. All the approaches will maintain two ways of inter-changing system in between the individual

and the environment that is obvious, the survival approach which in effect is the real existence of the human from the devastating threat of the global climate change.

The strategic development process of the country under LDC status a "7-A Strategic Diversity Process" is found highly effective for achieving the development goals (Figure 1.6). To making the development strategy for Bangladesh the 7-A strategic diversity process can play vital role in this regard which, corresponds well with the psychophysical phenomena. The whole process grossly indicates the behavioral modification and the modification of the cognitive process of the people living in such of countries like Bangladesh. However, the 7-A strategic processes are no doubt corresponding with the psychophysical processes. Those processes are described below in brief.

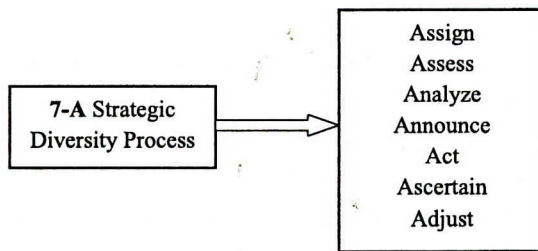


Figure 1.6. Diagramed presentation of the seven components of associated with the development strategy (<http://www.basicdiversity>).

#### 1) Assign (Titling)

- Assign key roles and responsibilities as a citizen when disaster appearing.
- Identify your business drivers to achieve the final goals.
- Map out where you want to be with the temporal framework.

#### 2) Assess (Measuring)

- Audit your current diversity features of the climate change.
- Select & train diversity teams as part of the management system for emergency.

#### 3) Analyze (Planning)

- Determine stepping-stones as part of the mass design.
- Build on existing strengths for the proper placement of the weaknesses.

- Eliminate weaknesses when, where and how much ever possible.

#### 4) Announce (Communication)

- Engage & inform key stakeholders individually and as part of the team itself.
- Motivate the members by circulating necessary masses as in need.
- Develop a clear & concise diversity statement by using latest available knowledge.
- Weave the diversity message throughout every mainstream communication vehicle.

#### 5) Act (Implementation)

- Adjust internal processes, practices and systems as considering the social behavior.
- Custom design educational programs institutionally as well as individually.
- Conduct proper training as per need assessed purposefully in the mean time.
- Diversity improvement process concerning with the behavioral modifications.
- Organize, develop and facilitate diversity councils and/or tasks forces (optional).

#### 6) Ascertain (Measure)

- Measure the achievement which is acquired from each step of objectives.
- Measure the impact of programs and activities in respect of the practical approach.
- Analyze, explain and describe numerically the compile data and present reports.
- Celebrate the successes by making confirmation of the achievements.

#### 7) Adjust (Modify)

- Modify the processes as necessary when and after the evaluation in each step.



- Adjust areas that fell short of success and readjust as part of the evaluation process.
- Determine new stepping-stones for further advancement of the treatment approaches.

### 3.0 Conclusion

It is the time for us to conduct a massive study that how much vulnerability can take place if the sea-level is raised, significantly, by the chain effect of global warming and climate change. Then, on the basis of the findings of the study, we need to prepare a master plan to save the possible victims across the coastal areas of Bangladesh. The master plan of action should be made giving special consideration on the psycho-physical processes of the individuals habitually living around the coastal areas. Among the many, five important psycho-physical factors should be considered at first. Then the knowledge on those areas should be applied by the five learning-action mechanisms stated above (see 2.5) which are mainly based on the cognitive-action theories of psychology. The paper discussed about these mechanisms and theories in brief can bring significant results in this regard.

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## Indigenous Coping Strategies of the Cyclone-Affected Farmers in Coastal Areas of Bangladesh

Md. Ibrahim Khalil\*

**Abstract:** Bangladesh is a cyclone-prone country and affected by frequent devastating cyclones. Historical trend shows that a severe cyclone hits Bangladesh in every three years. Of late, this gap is reducing with the advent of human induced climate change. Cyclone causes huge loss of life, property and infrastructure of the people living in the low lying coastal areas of Bangladesh. Although all occupational groups are affected by the cyclonic devastation, but farmers are the worst sufferers as their economic loss is higher than that of any other occupational groups living in the area. They lose houses, crops, livestock, fisheries, and instruments associated with their livelihood which makes them more vulnerable that force them to accept many diversified ways for their survival. Farmers adopt indigenous strategies ahead of cyclone including house construction, response to early warning and food preservation. They undertake indigenous strategies during cyclone to save their dwelling places, crops, livestock, and fishery resources. Farmers adopt mechanisms to restore their livelihood soon after the cyclone in addition to receiving organizational and community supports. This paper is an attempt to explore the indigenous practices of the coastal farmers to cope with the ever increasing cyclonic devastation in the coastal areas of Bangladesh.

### Introduction:

Bangladesh is prone to tropical cyclones. The low-lying coastal areas are most vulnerable. For centuries, due to its location at the tip of the northern Indian Ocean, the coastal areas are frequently hit by severe cyclonic storms generating long tidal waves aggravated by the shallow Bay. It causes huge losses of lives, property and agricultural production. Historical trends of cyclonic hazard in Bangladesh coast are very alarming. Over a period of 100 years, 508 cyclones have formed in the Bay of Bengal region, of which 17 percent made landfall in Bangladesh. During the period of 1797 to 1991, Bangladesh faced sixty severe cyclones killing around one million people along with other damages and losses.<sup>1</sup> A severe cyclone occurs once almost in every three years,<sup>2</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup> GoB, "Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh: Damage, Loss, and Needs Assessment for Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction. A report prepared by the Government of Bangladesh and assisted by the International Development Community with financial support from the European Commission, 2008", Dhaka: ERD, 2008. [http://reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesBy/RWDocUnidFilename/PANA-7K8GT8-full\\_report.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2008.nsf/FilesBy/RWDocUnidFilename/PANA-7K8GT8-full_report.pdf), [accessed October 12, 2010].

<sup>2</sup> Anwar Ali, "Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Assessment in Bangladesh," Climate Research 12 (September 1999): 121.

span of time seems to be narrowing. Super cyclone SIDR struck the coastal region in 2007, and within two years, two more cyclones—Bijli and Aila hit the region. The regular cyclonic hits and the narrowing gaps of cyclone occurrence evince to the fact that the lives and livelihoods of the coastal people are endangered. Human-induced climate change further exacerbates the problem in terms of increasing intensity and velocity of cyclone, and sea level rise.<sup>3</sup> The life and livelihood of the people of coastal areas are expected to be faced with monumental challenges in the years to come.<sup>4</sup>

All the occupational groups of the coastal areas are affected by tropical cyclones and tidal surges. The farmers are, however, one of the most vulnerable groups as they hardly get opportunity to evacuate crops from their fields and lose almost all assets and instruments associated with their livelihood. Besides geo-environmental vulnerability, low level of education and lack of media access, fragile housing condition, inadequate infrastructure, and subsistence economy of the farmers, make them more vulnerable than any other occupational group living in the coastal areas. Unveiling farmers' coping is important in the socio-economic context of Bangladesh as they are considered the heart of rural economy. If farmers' existing coping strategies are unveiled properly, appropriate planning on the basis of research findings may help reduce vulnerability of the coastal farmers. Moreover, it is widely believed that strengthening coping capacities can enhance resilience of a community to withstand the effects of hazards. Therefore, clear understanding of the coping mechanism is essential for building resilient farming community in the coastal areas of Bangladesh.

A number of studies carried out in the relevant field were thematically reviewed which include Islam (1995), Rahman (1999), Alam (2003), Hoque and Islam (2003), Hutton and Haque (2003), Hasan and Baten (2008), Parvin, Takahashi and Shaw (2009), Akhter (2010), Alam and Collins (2010), Islam (2010) and Paul and Routray (2010). These studies, in general, covered different aspects of flooding, cyclones and storm

<sup>3</sup> Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change, "Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Contribution to Working Group-II to the Third Assessment Report, 2001", UNEP, [http://www.grida.no/publications/other/ipcc\\_tar/?src=/climate/ipcc\\_tar/wg2/619.ht](http://www.grida.no/publications/other/ipcc_tar/?src=/climate/ipcc_tar/wg2/619.ht), [accessed October 19, 2010].

<sup>4</sup> This is particularly true taking into account of the IPCC forecasts. The IPCC in its third assessment report predicted that half a metre sea level rise by 2050 will permanently inundate 11 percent of Bangladesh territory.



surges. Few studies emphasized on the coping strategies of occupational groups living in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Moreover, systematic documentation of indigenous knowledge and practices, and identification of how different underlying factors influence coping behavior of the coastal farming community involved in agriculture is still lacking. In addition, most of these studies were conducted on geographical consideration. Sociological research on disasters, especially on the cyclone, is scant. Clearly, there exists a research gap concerning indigenous coping strategies of the coastal farmers that needs to be explored from sociological point of view.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The objective of the study is to explore pre, during and post-cyclone indigenous coping strategies of the farmers living in the coastal areas of Bangladesh.

### **Methodology:**

The study has been carried out in two villages of Barguna district. Multi-stage cluster sampling has been used to find out the study locale. Previous cyclone track record reveals that among the 19 coastal districts,<sup>5</sup> Barguna is one of the most cyclone-prone areas of Bangladesh. The area was hit by the last three cyclones i.e. SIDR in 2007, and Aila and Bijli in 2009. All the five Upazilas of the district are almost equally vulnerable as such the study has been carried out in Barguna Sadar and Pathorghata Upazila. A village from Barguna Sadar Upazila named Garjanbunia under Naltona union and another village named Padma from Pathorghata Upazila of Sardar union has been selected considering their vulnerability. The earlier village is located at the confluence of the river Paira and the Bay of Bengal and the latter is located at shore line.

The study makes use of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data for the study have been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. Along with the secondary literature review, questionnaire survey, focus group discussions (FGDs) and Key Informants Interviews provided relevant information germane to this study. Before conducting face to face interview a reconnaissance survey was carried out in both the study villages to identify the *bona fide* farmers

<sup>5</sup> The districts are Bagerhat, Barguna, Barisal, Bhola, Chandpur, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Feni, Gopalganj, Jessore, Jhalkati, Khulna, Laksmipur, Narail, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Satkhira and Sariatpur.



on the basis of some predetermined criteria which are i) Farmers who have minimum 0.5 decimal or more cultivable land; ii) Farmers who are personally involved in agricultural activities; iii) None of the family members are employed in formal sector; and iv) Farmers who have cyclonic experience at least once during their life time.

About 380 households were available in the two study villages after conducting household survey. According to sample size determination formula ( $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$  where  $n$  = sample size,  $N$  = population and  $e$  = deviation level/error accepted)<sup>6</sup>, for a population size of 380, the sample size is 121 at 92.5 percent confidence level with 7.5 percent deviation. Besides, 16 participants for two FGDs have been purposively selected from among the randomly selected farmers to get in-depth knowledge on farmers' indigenous coping strategies. In addition, 6 KIs, who include farmers, local public representative and block supervisor were interviewed to get in-depth information.

### **Indigenous Coping Strategies:**

Indigenous coping strategies entail the ways by which people use the available resources and abilities to face adverse circumstances. In general, this involves managing resources, both in normal times as well as during crises or adverse conditions. It is believed that strengthening coping capacities can enhance resilience of a community to withstand the effects of hazards.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, understanding community coping mechanism is essential to build a resilient community. Undertaking indigenous coping strategies by cyclone affected community depend on a number of issues viz. early warning, media access, level of awareness, availability of shelter centre and approach roads to shelter centre. In Bangladesh, an increased number of people have better access to electronic media including private radios and more recently wide coverage of cell phones to come across weather forecasting. Globally weather warning technology has improved greatly particularly with developed satellite imaging and analysis of global weather systems.

Despite technological advancement, available physical facilities, improved early warning and better access to media; survival strategies of

<sup>6</sup> Taro Yamane, *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis* (2nd edn.), (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 886.

<sup>7</sup> UN, *Words into Action: A guide for implementing the Hyogo Framework*, UNISDR, 20 April 2007:127; [www.preventionweb.net/files/594\\_10382.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/594_10382.pdf) [Accessed February 12, 2011].

the coastal farmers are subject to their social and economic circumstances. But the indigenous knowledge that the farmers apply to face cyclone is hardly known. So there exists a knowledge gap that needs to be explored. As such, farmers' pre, during and post-cyclone indigenous coping strategies with respect to their socio-economic condition have been discussed in this article. Farmers adopt different strategies to construct houses, take preparation to save cattle, fish, and standing crops ahead of cyclone. If available, some of them use shelter centre while others stay in their villages, and try to save themselves by adopting various means during cyclone. Soon after the cyclone, they had to meet immediate demands, ensure safe drinking water, and find alternative sources of livelihoods.

### **Preparedness at Pre-Cyclone Stage:**

Disaster preparedness is the most important phase of disaster management. It involves forecasting and taking pre-cautionary measures prior to an imminent threat. Preparedness help minimize loss of life and property.<sup>8</sup> As part of their cyclone preparedness activity, coastal farmers undertake numerous measures. They consider plinth height, house height and design, planting trees around house and facing of houses as the main strategies of house construction. In addition, they preserve food, seed and valuable items. They also try to save cattle, fish and standing crops by adopting different measures.

### **House Construction:**

Indigenous techniques of the coastal farmers begin with the construction of houses. In this respect, house construction materials, design of the houses and other protective measures that may save the houses from the wrath of cyclone are worthy of consideration. Damage and loss could be significantly reduced if houses are constructed considering the geographical and environmental conditions of the locality. Housing site, settlement pattern, design, facing of house, materials used and plinth height are taken into account by the farmers in the coastal areas of Bangladesh.

Plinth height in coastal Chakoria is about five feet, and in Sandwip and Kutubdia Island it is around six feet above cropland. If the plinth is high

<sup>8</sup> M. Safiur Rahman, "Disaster Management and Public Awareness in Bangladesh" in Disaster in Bangladesh: Selected Readings ed. K. Nizamuddin (Dhaka: Disaster Research Training and Management Centre, 2001), 182.

enough, house owners are more likely to save family members and belongings from severe tidal surges.<sup>9</sup> There was no doubt that high plinth gave the most effective protection; the Maghs, who built their houses of timber upon piles six or eight feet high, found themselves far better in 1876 than the people who inhabited the tract on the low surface which suffered the extreme fury of the wave.<sup>10</sup> FGD participants (conducted between February-March 2011 in Garjanbunia and Padma village) maintained that houses constructed on machan are better prepared to face cyclone. Around one tenth (10.1%) of the respondents said that building houses on high plinth gives protection from cyclone ("in table 1"). This technique is prevalent among the Rakhine community who usually build their houses on raised platforms made of wood. The plinth heights of present study respondents' house found 3-3.5 feet above the cropland. Some of the Bangalee respondents are replicating the technique applied by Rakhine people considering its cyclone resistance capacity.

Table 1: House Construction Strategy

| Strategy to construct houses                   | Number of Responses | Percent of cases |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Building house in special design               | 71                  | 59.7             |
| Building houses in special direction           | 24                  | 20.2             |
| Building houses on <i>machan</i> (high plinth) | 12                  | 10.1             |
| Planting trees around houses                   | 62                  | 52.1             |
| No strategy                                    | 19                  | 16.0             |
| Others                                         | 13                  | 10.9             |
| Note: Multiple response (N=121)                |                     |                  |

Source: Field survey, 2011

Plantation of trees around the homestead is another important adaptation technique for saving life, houses and properties in wind and sea surges.<sup>11</sup> About half of (52.1%) of the respondents said that they plant trees around their houses. The trees include Mehogini, Akashmoni, Rain tree and Gab tree that create barrier against strong wind and reduce losses during

<sup>9</sup> Edris Alam and Andrew E. Collins, "Cyclone Disaster Vulnerability and Response Experiences in Coastal Bangladesh," *Disasters* 34 (October, 2010): 946. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2010.01176.x/> [accessed October 15, 2010].

<sup>10</sup> Md. Habibur Rashid, ed., *Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Bakargonj*, (Dacca: BG Press, 1981), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Alam and Collins, 946.



cyclone. Planting trees around homestead resembles the idea that the Sundarbans saves Bangladesh from severity of cyclone. The idea proved to be true during the cyclone SIDR that swept over the area in 2007.

Height of house and direction of houses is another issue of consideration while constructing houses said FGD participants. Constructing houses with medium height- chowchala house is another technique that save house of the coastal farmers during cyclone. The study finds that majority of the respondents (59.7%) said that they constructed chowchala houses with medium height (15-20 feet) so that flow of wind pass over the roof of the houses without damaging much. One fifth of respondents (20.2 %) told that they took direction of houses into consideration while erecting houses. FGD participants added that south facing houses are more suitable in many respect including resisting capacity of wind pressure, in most of the cases, wind flows from the south- eastern direction during cyclone. Besides, constructing houses with strong and durable wood logs like palm tree or placing cement made pillars under wooden pillars are better prepared to face cyclone.

The study finds that about one sixth of the respondents (16%) did not undertake any strategy while constructing houses. However, they were thinking of constructing houses taking into account the recent changes in the global climate and occurrence of frequent cyclone, said majority of FGD participants.

### Cattle Saving Strategies:

Along with protecting houses, farmers try to save cattle. Usually they try to send their cattle to a raised place, set cattle free or keep in the cow shed to save those from the devastation of cyclone.

Table 2: Cattle Saving Measures

| Strategies to save cattle     | Number of responses | Percent of cases |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Set cattle free               | 66                  | 56.4             |
| No measures                   | 40                  | 34.2             |
| Keeping cattle in the cowshed | 10                  | 8.5              |
| Others                        | 5                   | 4.3              |

*Note: Multiple response(N=117)*

Source: Field survey, 2011

Cyclone affected people try to save poultry and livestock as these are the most valuable assets for rural communities.<sup>12</sup> The study finds that one third of the respondents (34.2%) were not well prepared ahead of cyclone that struck the study village (Garjanbunia and Padma) in 2007. As such, they did not think of any strategy to save their cattle. Although the study area was vulnerable to frequent cyclonic devastation, there were no kills for cattle in either of the villages. Finding no alternative ways majority of the respondents (56.4%) set their cattle free so that they could save their lives by their own ways. But very few cases they survived, maintained FGD participants. However, about one tenth (8.5%) of the respondents kept their cattle in the cowshed as they were busy saving their own lives and could not take any extra measures to save their cattle. Few fortunate respondents (4.3%) could send their cattle on highland places near the houses or neighbors house.

### **Preserving Food, Seeds and Deed:**

Storing seeds and food before cyclone help reduce sufferings of the of cyclone affected farmers immediately after the cyclone. Besides, Jewelry and deeds of land are considered most valuable household belongings. Considering the issue in mind, farmers in the study areas try to preserve those items in their own ways so that these could be retrieved when cyclone is over.

In the present study, one third of the respondents (30.8%) ill preparation is divulged in respect to saving food, seed and deeds. FGD participants said most of the respondents did not receive early warning well ahead of cyclone to prepare themselves. In addition, they could not realize the severity of cyclone that swept over the area in 2007. Another one third of the respondents kept deeds in the trunks but in most of the cases, those were washed away by surge water. However, half of the respondents (50.1%) kept seeds and food inside plastic containers said FGD participants.

### **Protecting Fisheries and Crops:**

Protections of fisheries are almost impossible when severe cyclones

<sup>12</sup> Alam & Collins, 947; Parvin, Takashi and Shaw, 188; Shitangsu Kumar Paul and Jayant K. Routray, "Flood Proneness and Coping Strategies: The Experiences of Two Villages in Bangladesh," *Disasters* 34 (April 2010): 498. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2009.01139.x/pdf> [accessed July 21, 2010].

accompanied by a surge strikes.<sup>13</sup> The present study discloses the similar findings and none of the respondents could save their fish resources as well as standing crops. FGD participants maintained that they did not imagine that such devastation could happen to them. Moreover, they did not get enough time to catch fish or harvest standing crops. However, they usually try to use bamboo fence, fishing net and mosquito nets to save pond fishes at the initial stage or if the cyclone is not severe in nature. When cyclone struck the area, they remain busy with saving their own lives, they added. However, Alam's study reveals that responding to "saving seed" and "cutting crops from fields" as preparation for an imminent cyclone were only 27.8 percent and 12.6 percent respectively.<sup>14</sup>

### **Response During Cyclone:**

Farmers pass a very tough time during the cyclone especially when it is severe in nature. Usually they try to protect their own house and stay there. At the extreme stage, they either evacuate themselves in a safer place or stay in their own houses. Those who stay in their own houses adopt different measures including observance of religious rituals, clinching trees and plastic container.

### **Protecting House:**

Farmers who do not have access to shelter centre or did not evacuate in some other safe places stay in their houses. During cyclone, they try to save their houses especially if the houses are in fragile condition and feel threaten against the strong wind and storm surges. The commonly undertaken measures are attaching delicate parts of the houses with rope, fasten houses with strong trees, putting off fences and using additional supports.

For cyclones, one-third of the people apply their indigenous knowledge.<sup>15</sup> The present study finds that an overwhelming majority of the respondents

<sup>13</sup> Shitangsu Kumar Paul and Jayant K. Routray, "Household response to cyclone induced surge in coastal Bangladesh: Coping strategies and explanatory variables," *Nat Hazards* 57, no. 2 (October 2010): 498. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/a1857633p96427ut/fulltext.pdf> [accessed March 13, 2011].

<sup>14</sup> Edris Alam, "Coping with Cyclone: An Occupational Group Perspective," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh Humanities* 48, no.2 (2003): 64.

<sup>15</sup> Gulsan Ara Parvin, Fumito Takahashi and Rajib Shaw, "Coastal Hazards and Community-coping Methods in Bangladesh," *Journal of Coastal Conservation* 12 (2008): 187. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/78400583630p27g1/fulltext.pdf> [accessed July 22, 2010].



tried to save houses by applying local knowledge. In their effort to save houses, more than one third of the respondents (37.5%) attached fragile parts of their house with rope. About one fourth of the respondents (23.3%) put off fence so that strong wind could pass through the houses. They think that the measures will save their houses. Binding houses with adjacent large trees i.e coconut tree, rain tree and gab tree is another way the respondents try to save their houses. About one tenth said they save their houses using additional support with strong bamboo and wood logs.

### Use of Shelter Centre:

As mentioned earlier, using shelter centre by the farmers in cyclone-prone areas to a great extent depended on availability and suitability of shelter centres, issuance of early warning, level of awareness about early warning and destructive power of cyclone, distance of shelter centre from the dwelling places of the farmers etc. Almost half of the people (46%) take shelter at cyclone centers.<sup>16</sup> The present study finds that about two third of the respondents (77%) did not use shelter centre. There are many reasons behind their refraining from using shelter centre. The main causes are distance of shelter centre, low level of awareness, fear of theft in the house, early warning incredible, fear of space shortage in the shelter centre and non-availability of killas for the livestock etc.

Table 3: Causes behind refraining from visiting shelter centre

| Causes of not visiting shelter centre   | Number of response | Percent of cases |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Non-availability of shelter centre      | 60                 | 65.2             |
| Could not realized severity of cyclone  | 47                 | 51.1             |
| Non-availability of killas              | 40                 | 43.5             |
| Fear of heft                            | 30                 | 32.6             |
| Fear of washed away by surge water      | 31                 | 33.7             |
| Early warning was not credible          | 23                 | 25.1             |
| Shortage of space in the shelter centre | 9                  | 9.8              |

*Note: Multiple response(N=92)*

Source: Field survey, 2011

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

### Distance of Shelter Centre:

Shelters centres established in the cyclone-prone coastal districts are located at a distance of more than 3.5 miles (5.6 km) apart.<sup>17</sup> Haque's study finds that locations of the nearest centres lie between 1 to 3 km.<sup>18</sup> Studies have shown that unless a cyclone shelter lie within 1 mile (1.6 km) of human settlements, it may be too far for coastal residents to travel during an emergency.<sup>19</sup> Distance of shelter centre from the respondents' homes was the main reason for their non-evacuation.<sup>20</sup> The present study finds that majority of the respondents (65.2%) did not use shelter centre due to distance of shelter centre from their houses ("in table: 3").

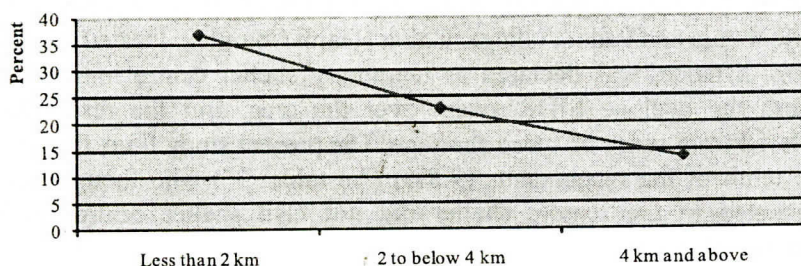


Figure 1 Percentatge distribution of shelter distance and its use

The present study further finds that with the increase of distance of shelter centre from the dwelling places of the respondents, the tendency of using shelter centre decrease ("in figure 1"). However, distance is not the only factor that influences use of shelter centre by the farmers. The other reasons that influence farmers' use of shelter centres are as follows:

### Fear of Space Shortage:

Soon after the independence of Bangladesh, a program was initiated to construct shelters centre with a view to protect coastal residents from the affect associated with cyclones and storm surges. There are more than 2,000 cyclone shelters along the coast of Bangladesh, but these can

<sup>17</sup> Bimal Kanti Paul, "Why relatively fewer people died? The case of Bangladesh's Cyclone SIDR" *Natural Hazards* 50 (2009):292. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/76500g0581u03782/fulltext.pdf> [accesses September 29, 2010].

<sup>18</sup> Abdul Hoque and M. Shahidul Islam, "Local Wisdom in Disaster Management: Case Studies of Chakaria and Moheshkhali," *Journal of Bangladesh National Geographical Association* 31, no.1 & 2 (2003): 40.

<sup>19</sup> Paul, 292.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

accommodate only one-fourth of the population in high-risk area.<sup>21</sup> Another study reveals that the number of shelter centres established in the cyclone-prone coastal districts is not enough to accommodate all people in these areas.<sup>22</sup>

The scenario is quite similar in Garjanbunia and Padma village. There are around 2,890 people in the two villages but there were no shelter centres in the villages before 2007 so that the people could take shelter before the cyclone strikes. The villagers were supposed to visit shelter centre located at more than 2 km distance. When early warning is issued, respondents think that cyclone shelter centres located at remote area are overloaded with the people of adjoining areas, said participant of FGD conducted in Garjanbunia and Padma village. Union Health Complex, located at within 2 km distance, was declared as temporary shelter centre immediately before the cyclone SIDR swept over the area. But the respondents suffered from sense of space shortage. The present study finds that about one tenth of the respondents (9.8%) ("in table: 3") who thought to be evacuated in the remote shelter did not visit shelter centre fearing shortage of space.

Besides, there are some others reasons which discouraged the respondents to visit shelter centre. About one third of the respondents (33.7 %) did not move lest they are washed away by tidal bore on their way to shelter centre. About half (51.1%) of the respondents did not realize the strictness of cyclone and they did not go shelter centre. Another one third of the respondents did not use shelter centre due to fear of theft (32.6%) in their houses. Yet another one third did not use shelter centre because there were no killa for the cattle. About one fourth did not visit as early warning was not credible to them ("in table 3").

### **Alternative Shelter Places:**

As there is no formal cyclone shelter centre in the study village, during cyclone of 2007, majority of the respondents had to stay places like own house, neighbours house and union health complex. In disaster-prone localities, coping measures immediately before hazard event start with the saving of human lives.<sup>23</sup> Paul and Routry finds that a majority of the

<sup>21</sup> Parvin, Takashi & Shaw, 187.

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<sup>23</sup> Paul, 292.

household members do not take shelter in traditional cyclone shelters.<sup>24</sup> The present study finds that more than one third (42.4%) of the respondents stayed in their own houses and about one third (29.3%) of them stayed at neighbours house. Union Health Complex was declared as temporary shelter centre apprehending severity of cyclone immediately before the cyclone but it did not get much attention of the respondents and attracted only one fourth of the respondents (26.1%) to take shelter during cyclone.

### Strategies Adopted at House:

Respondents who did not go shelter centre or other safer places and stayed at their own house, adopted some mechanism which include staying at machan, clinching trees and staying with plastic container. They also observed religious rituals during cyclone.

It is evident that majority of the respondents (56.41%) stayed on machan of their own houses. About half of them (51.8%) climbed or attached strong trees like gab tree, rain tree, akashmoni and mehogini until the severity of cyclone was reduced. FGD participants said that when their house was collapsed they, along with their family members, float on surge water with some plastic container which was tied together beforehand.

In the event of any disaster, the immediate response is to prying God and offering Ajan.<sup>25</sup> In the present study about half (48.71%) of the respondents, who stayed in their houses, offered religious rituals like offering Ajan and Towba (seeking divine blessing) so that Allah could save them from the wrath of cyclone. People of Muslim community strongly belief that Allah(God) has given the cyclone which could be reduced if He is satisfied with offering religious rituals. In reality, offering religious rituals has no practical implication but it has psychological affects on them during crisis moment.

### Recovery at Post-Cyclone Period:

As soon as cyclone is over, affected farmers become helpless losing crops, cattle, and agricultural equipments. Their houses are torn and tossed and they suffer from dearth of food, shelter and drinking water. Community or organizational assistance from outside contributes to some

<sup>24</sup> H. Rasid and Bimal Kanti Paul "Flood problems in Bangladesh: is there an indigenous solution? Environmental Management 11, no. 2 (1987):166; P Thompson & I Tod, "Mitigating flood losses in the active floodplains of Bangladesh, Disaster Prevention Management 7, no. 2 (1987):118.

<sup>25</sup> Paul and Routray, "Household response to cyclone induced surge in coastal Bangladesh, 485.

extent to meet emergency needs. But outside help does not last long and those are not adequate as well compared to the need of farmer families. They strive to restore their livelihood but face difficulties due to of acute crisis of seed, salinity, cattle and agricultural equipments.

### Restoring Livelihood:

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the study area especially of food grain production. All the respondents were from farming community. Agriculture suffers most whenever cyclone affects any part of coastal areas in Bangladesh. During the cyclone of 2007, farmers of Garjanbunia and Padma lost almost entire standing crops which were the main source of food supply for rest of time of the year. Most of the agricultural farmers lives on subsistence economy. Cyclonic devastation further increases their vulnerability. Although relief and rehabilitation program are initiated by NGOs and GO soon after the cyclone, but the farmers fall in distressed situation as the relief materials are very often inadequate compared to their needs, said FGD participants. That is why it is very urgent to start the agricultural activity. Every year, two crops are grown in the area i.e Robi and Amon. After the cyclone of 2007, majority (61%) of the respondents could not cultivate robi crop as farmlands are covered with high level saline sediments. As they fail to get any harvest during robi crop, farmers had to wait for the cultivation of amon crop to resume their living. Meanwhile farmers overcome primary shock and losses and they start again amon cultivation. Almost all the respondents cultivated amon crops, but they had to face difficulties with respect to cattle for tilling land, agricultural equipments, seed and cost of agricultural activities. In spite of that they cultivated land by borrowing tractor, cattle and taking loans.

Table 4

| Ways cultivated land             | Number of responses | Percent |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| Borrowing tractor                | 103                 | 88.0    |
| Borrowing cattle from relatives  | 18                  | 15.3    |
| By the surviving cattle          | 12                  | 10.2    |
| Note: Multiple responses (N=117) |                     |         |

Source: Field survey, 2011

It is estimated that livestock will face fodder crisis in the coastal areas. Production of livestock will decrease considerably with increasing



intensity and frequency of shocks such as cyclone and storm surges.<sup>26</sup> The present study reveals that almost all the respondents lost their cattle during the cyclone of 2007 and an overwhelming majority (88.0%) of them had to borrow tractor to cultivate their lands ("in table 4"). However, one tenth of them (10.2%) cultivated land with surviving cattle.

### **Collecting Seed:**

Supply of seed is very crucial for restoring agricultural activities. Few respondents can save seeds unless those are preserved taking special measures since surge water swept away everything. Present study reveals that majority of the respondents lost seeds during the cyclone of 2007. As such, collecting seeds was a major challenge for them. They collected seeds from various sources viz. market, NGOs, Government organization and relatives.

The study reveals that majority of the respondents (87.9%) collected seeds from market followed by NGOs (38.8 %) and Government offices (26.7%). Relatives and kin had also made some contribution (19.8%) in supplying seeds. Both GO and NGOs contribution in reinvigorating agricultural activities in respect of supply of seed was lower than the market. As a result, farmers had a hard time to keep their agricultural activities continued, maintained FGD participants.

### **Coping with Salinity:**

High level salinity intrusion has been considered potential source of human sufferings due to its adverse effect on agricultural practices.<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that about 8.5 percent of the nation's agricultural output originate from the area with elevation up to 1 meter from the sea level. Estimated agricultural output originating seaward of the 3 m scenario line amounts to 21 percent of the nations agricultural output. A major consideration for agricultural productivity is the intrusion of saline water into the fresh ground water resources. Current estimates suggest that saline water intrusion now extends as far as about 240 km inland. Assuming an extreme scenario, the wedge of saline water could be driven another 240 km northward. If the rivers are effectively dammed, the whole country would be affected by the intrusion of saline water.<sup>28</sup> Impact of saline water on cropland is also evident from the citation enunciated in

<sup>26</sup> Haque & Islam, 40.

<sup>27</sup> GoB, Ministry of Environment and Forest, National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), Dhaka, August 2009, 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 38.

the Bakerganj district Gazetteer which portrays that, "Bakerganj was hit by a devastating cyclone in 1965. Saline water got into agricultural land which did not allow any crop to grow for some time to come."<sup>29</sup>

The present study finds that majority (61%) of the respondents could not cultivate robi crop due to salinity intrusion in the cultivable lands. Those who cultivated (39%) did not get any crop due to high level of salinity ingress which continued until rain water washed away salty level of soil during monsoon said FGD participants. Rice production in saline areas is very low due to lack of suitable saline tolerant varieties, limited seed availability, and unavailability of appropriate technology. The indigenous rice varieties like Bouari, Dignamoni, Dudhkalom, Girmi, Haitta, Rajashail etc are gradually disappearing due to sea level rise and salinity ingress in the cropland. However, farmers are increasingly cultivating Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) innovated BR-47 of rice variety, which can tolerate up to 7- 8 ppt of salinity. FGD participants said that they are getting good harvest if they cultivate B-47 variety of rice in the croplands where saline water enters frequently.

### **Coping with Diseases:**

The post-cyclone effects on the survivors can be as severe as the immediate impacts of the cyclone itself. Spread of diseases among the human being and livestock in Garjanbunia and Padma village after the cyclone of 2007 was major concern for the respondents. Human beings are attacked by typhoid, fever, dysentery, diarrhea and cold related disease while Anthrax, diarrhea and homorganic septicemia spread among cattle population.

### **Human Diseases:**

Coastal hazards like cyclones and tidal surges are often followed by skin diseases, fever, and diarrhea.<sup>30</sup> Low level of awareness, economic constraint, and lack of medical facilities make their life very difficult. Cyclone increases the sufferings of the affected people manifold during and after the emergency period. Although medical team works after the cyclone, but its coverage remain small with respect to their need. Relief distributing agencies lays emphasis on rescue, emergency food supply and shelter related activities. As a result, spread of diseases among human

<sup>29</sup> Jyotirmoy Talukder, "Living with Cyclone," (Dhaka: Community Development Library, 1992), 25.

<sup>30</sup> Md. Habibur Rashid, 21.

being and livestock become major concern; and typhoid, fever, dysentery, diarrhea, cold related diseases and malaria spread out among the respondents. Diarrhoea broke out in large-scale immediately after cyclone in the island (Sandwip).<sup>31</sup> The study finds that about half of the respondents (47%) were attacked by diseases like typhoid, fever, diarrhoea and cold related diseases. Among them about one third (35%) of the respondents were attacked by typhoid followed by fever (26%), dysentery (26%), diarrhoea (23%) and cold related diseases. But diseases did not spread in epidemic form due to intervention of GO and NGOs especially due to ensuring supply of potable water and activities of health team, said FGD participants.

Human sufferings, after the occurrence of any natural disaster draw attention of all concerned. The outbreak of various disease and sufferings during cyclone, need medical support.<sup>32</sup> Being rural poor, people usually do not seek treatment until the illness becomes severe. If needed, most of them take herbal treatment using indigenous knowledge and those who cannot afford it seek treatment from Local Medical Assistant and Family Planning (LMAF) workers. Seeking religious treatment is not so common.<sup>33</sup> The respondents in this study took medical treatment from different sources like Union health complex, mobile team of both GO and NGOs, private doctors and Upazila health complex.

Most of the respondents got medical services from the government facilities which include union health complex (75%) and Upazila health complex (11%). Soon after the cyclone both the government and NGOs run more than one mobile team to provide door to door medical service to the affected people. NGOs health team and government mobile health team served about one third (35%) and one sixth of the respondents (14%) respectively. A few of them depended on LMAF (9%) and indigenous healing system (2%) for treating diseases.

### **Cattle Diseases:**

Spread of disease among the surviving cattle population is another concern of farmer community. Soon after the disaster, the surviving cattle

<sup>31</sup> Parvin, Takashi & Shaw, 188.

<sup>32</sup> Md. Soyeb Uddin Haider, "Surviving the Apocalypse: A Case Study of Cyclone Disaster Management in Sandwip, 1991," Bangladesh Sociological Studies 3, no. 1 (March 2007):83.

<sup>33</sup> Haque & Islam, 42.



had a hard time due to scarcity of fodder and drinking water.<sup>34</sup> Decomposed corpses and carcasses polluted grazing fields and sources water. The study come across that majority of the respondents lost their cattle during cyclone of 2007. The surviving cattle were attacked by numerous diseases after drinking polluted and high saline water and new grasses that grown after receding the surge water. All these made the life of the surviving cattle very difficult aggravated by spread of diseases. The study finds that about one third of the surviving cattle were attacked by diseases like anthrax, diarrhoea and Homorganic Septicemia (HS). Most of the cattle population were attacked by anthrax (48%) followed by diarrhoea(41%). About one tenth of them were attacked by Homorganic Septicemia(HS). However, almost all the respondents treated their cattle from government veterinary hospital, ayurvedic doctor and LMAF.

The study finds that majority of the respondents (70.3%) got their cattle treated from government run veterinary hospitals. However, they had to pay extra money for this, said FGD participants. A few of them went to Ayurvedic Doctor (7.4%) and LMAF (11%). Low level of awareness was observed among the respondents regarding cattle disease. They make delay to take their cattle to veterinary hospital if cattle are attacked with diseases. Initially they try to treat by themselves or with the assistance of local quacks. The farmers feed mixture of biskathali for cattle disease especially FMD. Besides, they also practice religious medicine like Tabiz, Pani para, and Jharfuk etc which indicate that farmers still lack awareness to accept modern veterinary facilities due to low level of awareness and education. As result, unfortunately some of the cattle died before taking them to veterinary hospital for treatment, said FGD respondents.

### **Safe Drinking Water:**

Ensuring safe drinking water is very important soon after the cyclone. Tube wells become inoperative, and pond and river water remain contaminated with carcasses and debris. Under such circumstances, safe drinking water source is very crucial to deal with post cyclone situation. The respondents had to collect safe water from a number of sources viz. NGO supplied water, using water purification tablet, water from unaffected tube well and boiling pond/rivers water.

Storing pure drinking water before hazards or disasters and the use of

<sup>34</sup> Parvin, Takashi & Shaw, 188.

water purification tablets are common practices among the people in the cyclone and tidal-surge-prone areas.<sup>35</sup> The present study finds that NGOs had a major contribution in supplying drinking water in the cyclone affected areas and majority of the respondents (97.5%) received pure drinking water supplied by NGOs for a period 3-4 months after the cyclone. In addition to NGO supplied water, they also used water purifying tablets (83.3%). After the cyclone that hit the study area in 2007, all the tube wells of the locality became inoperative which made availability of drinking water very acute. Respondents had to collect drinking water from unaffected tube wells (57.5%) or community based water purification plants located at 4-5 km distance.

Ponds were the major source of sweet water, but most of the sweet water sources including ponds were contaminated by saline water soon after the cyclone SIDR. Farmers in the study area tried in many ways to clean up pond water. Some of them used lime to get the pond water cleaned while others dried up their ponds, re-excavated, and raised embankments of the ponds to avoid further intrusion of saline water during tidal surge which yield better results and about one third of the respondents (37.5%) used to drink pond water after boiling.

Harvesting rain water was another source of drinking water. Indigenous technology of harvesting rainwater is easy to use and maintain. Rainwater runs down the slope of the CI sheet made roof which is harvested by fixing a plastic half-pipe to the edge of the roof. The pipe flows down to the pots/tanks which could be stored for couple of weeks. In such a ways, farmers harvest rain water to meet their demand of drinking water, said FGD participants.

Historical evidence enunciated in the East Pakistan District Gazetteer portrays that, 'the country was covered with the corpses of men and animals, and the water supply was polluted. Cholera broke out with appalling intensity. In Kutubdia alone, it was estimated that 11 per cent of the population perished during the epidemic. The total mortality of Cholera was 18,000.'<sup>37</sup> FGD participants said that, in the past, cholera broke out due to intake of unsafe water. But during the cyclone of 2007, none of the respondents and their family members were attacked by

<sup>35</sup> Alam, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Parvin, Takashi and Shaw, 188.

<sup>37</sup> S. N. H. Rizvi, ed., East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Chittagong, (Dacca: East Pakistan Govt. Press, 1970),

cholera as safe drinking water was ensured from different sources especially NGOs as such no casualty was observed due to outbreak of cholera.

### Alternative Livelihood Strategies:

Although cyclone affected farmers got assistance from different sources to meet their immediate needs, they had to find sustainable ways of livelihood for their survival.<sup>37</sup> They took different profession, took loan from relatives, NGOs and Banks, sold household items, used savings and migrated to cities for living.

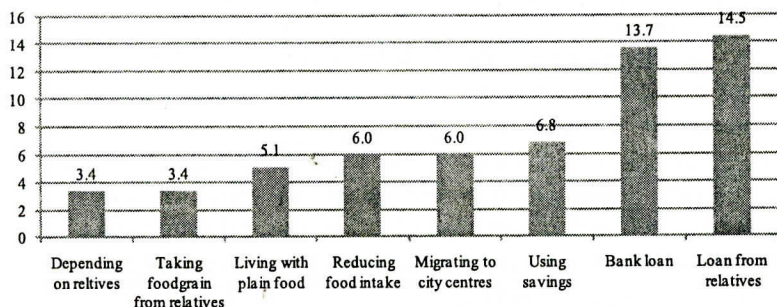


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of alternative livelihood strategies

### Alternative Occupation:

There is a process of occupational mobility of the cyclone affected farmers. Most occupational changes took place from agriculture turning peasants into day labourers.<sup>38</sup> The present study finds that majority of the respondents (83.8%) were engaged in different profession which include day labour. They worked in road repair, removing debris from roads and ponds, earth and sand filling, cleaning houses and working as helper of mason. They also worked as carpenter and rickshaw/rickshaw van puller to eke out their living. In the study villages, farmers are used to rear poultry birds including ducks and swans. Although they have lost almost all the poultry birds during the cyclone of 2007, they collected swan and poultry birds from kin, relatives, and local market. The female family members reared those, and subsequently get more poultry and eggs which are sold in the local market. The farmers now days are giving more emphasis on swan rearing than ever before as swans can survive in moderate saline water. They clean weeds of the crop lands and have good market price as well. Considering the issues, the farmers are rearing swan said FGD participants.

<sup>38</sup> Alam, 69.



### **Taking Loan:**

Borrowing money is a common coping measure.<sup>39</sup> The present study finds that about two third (70.9%) of respondents took loan from different sources and NGOs (42.7%) are the highest loan providers followed by relatives (14.5%) and government banks (13.7%). Most of the respondents borrowed money to meet food consumption and restart agricultural activities. It was observed that most of the borrowers took loan from more than one credit providers.

### **Disposal of Assets:**

Disposal of assets is also a common coping strategy for rural households exposed to shocks in order to meet consumption requirements or acquire the means to purchase food.<sup>40</sup> The study reveals that during post-disaster period about one fourth (25.6%) of the respondents sold assets that comprise trees and jewelry. FGD participants said that some of the respondents also leased out or pledged farmland, etc. Very few respondents had cattle and poultry birds to sell out in the market. However, Paul and Routry find that selling of cattle and chickens are most common in the study villages.<sup>41</sup>

### **Using Savings:**

Among the different coping methods related to livelihood or income sources, people primarily try to use whatever savings they have.<sup>42</sup> The study reveals that 6.8 percent of the respondents used savings to cope with the post-cyclone financial crisis especially to meet immediate food demand and restart agricultural activities. Actually farmers in the coastal areas live on subsistence economy and has least scope to save money to meet future crisis.

### **Migration:**

Migration after a cyclone is not so common in the study villages.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand leaving one's village for a job is also very common. After any

<sup>39</sup> Paul and Routry, Household response to cyclone induced surge in coastal Bangladesh, 487.

<sup>40</sup> C Del Ninno & P A Dorosh, "Public policy, markets and household coping strategies in Bangladesh: avoiding a food security crisis following the 1998 floods." World Dev 31, no. 7 (2003):1228.

<sup>41</sup> Paul and Routry, Household response to cyclone induced surge in coastal Bangladesh, 487.

<sup>42</sup> Parvin, Takashi and Shaw, 188.

<sup>43</sup> Paul & Routry, Household response and coping strategies, 487.

coastal hazards or disasters, many people go to cities for job opportunities.<sup>44</sup> The present study reveals that very few respondents migrated from Garganbunia and Padma village to city centres for job opportunities. Migration trend depend on the land ownership pattern of the people, contiguity of the city with the settlement of prospective displacees and job opportunity for those in the cities. Migration to city centres is common among those who are either landless or have some educational skill. As most of the respondents had land of their own, the tendency of migration among the farmers is less, said FGD participants. And few of the respondents (6%) went to city centres for alternative source of income ("in figure 2").

### **Relatives/Kin's Help:**

Disaster affected people's coping strategy includes assistance from relatives.<sup>45</sup> The study also reveals that about 6.8 percent of the respondents received help from their relatives in the form of food grain aid, and food and lodging assistance. Neighbours also played a crucial role. They helped each other during and after the cyclone especially evacuation, reconstruction of houses, lending cattle and cash money, food, and agricultural equipments.

### **Conclusion:**

The techniques that coastal farmers employ to cope with pre, during and post cyclone crisis are diversified in nature. Before cyclone the farmers undertake various protective measures; during cyclone they try to save lives using shelter centre or staying at their own houses. They also strive to save moveable properties and livestock. After the cyclone, they struggle for immediate needs and drinking water. They cope with human and cattle diseases. In addition, they try to regain livelihood along with searching alternative ways to face the aftereffects of cyclone. As part of long term preparedness, the farmers construct house with indigenous knowledge to make it durable and strong to face cyclone. They try to save house, cattle, food, seeds and valuable household items. But none of the respondents could save fish and standing crop.

<sup>44</sup> Parvin, Takashi and Shaw, 188.

<sup>45</sup> Mahbuba Nasreen, "Coping with Floods: Contribution of Women in Bangladesh," *The Dhaka University Studies* 55, no. 2 (December 1993):155.

Timely early warning and availability of shelter centre influences indigenous coping strategies of the farmers. Although early warning has improved, and a considerable number of shelter centres have been constructed in the cyclone-prone areas, these are still insufficient with respect to number of vulnerable people. The present study finds that there is no shelter centre within the 2 km distance of human settlement of the study area. Some of the respondents went to temporary shelter centre but majority of them stayed in their respective houses. When their houses were washed away they took shelter on strong trees or float on the tidal surge attaching with a plastic container.

Visiting shelter centre they can save their lives, but there is no provision to take cattle, valuable household item and agricultural equipment with them. It deters the respondents to visit shelter centre. Moreover, in many cases, shelter centres are not suitable for the affected people in respect of space and gender segregated separate sanitary facilities. In addition, confusion and credibility over early warning prevails among the rural farmers due to low level of education, awareness and lack of farmer friendly early warning. Furthermore, prejudice and ignorance of the farmers is also worthy to mention.

Restoring livelihood is a major challenge for the cyclone affected farmers. Most of the farmers could not cultivate robi crops due to salinity ingress. However, all the respondents cultivated amon crop borrowing tractor as most of the respondents (90%) lost their cattle. Majority of them (87.9%) had to collect seeds from the market. Other sources of seed include NGOs(36.8%), government office(26.7%) and relatives(19.8%).

Spread of diseases among human being and cattle is another issue of consideration while thinking of indigenous coping strategies of the farmers. Although some diseases spread both among the human being and cattle but these were not in epidemic form. In the past, cholera broke out due to lack of safe drinking water. But effective measures of both GO and NGOs helped ensure safe drinking water in the area after the cyclone of 2007. The respondents undertake various measures including taking alternative profession, selling out trees, jewelry and valuable item and taking loan from NGOs, Nationalized Commercialized Banks(NCBs) and relatives to meet immediate demands.



The present study finds that indigenous knowledge and techniques varies from ethnic group and location of the area. While some people still use them, many see these as "old fashioned" knowledge. Elderly people are more knowledgeable on indigenous knowledge than younger ones. Uncovering the indigenous methods to cope with the post-cyclone situation and disseminating among the new generation is important to build a cyclone disaster resilient community. Besides, community knowledge is crucial in formulating cyclone preparedness and post-cyclone management policies in Bangladesh.

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## **Zila Parishad as an Organ of Local Self-Government in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects**

Dr. Md. Habibullah<sup>1</sup>

***Abstract:** The local self-government is considered as the most effective instrument to empower the local people and to ensure multidimensional development of the locality if that organ is formed properly and that perform accordingly. The Union Parishads (UPs) are, least or best, functioning throughout Bangladesh. The Upazila Parishads (UZPs) are formed through election but facing a dilemma of power and authority to satisfy the UZP Chairmen-Vice Chairmen and the local MPs. To satisfy the local MPs in terms of exercising power and authority on the local development activities, there is a prospective alternative proposal to form an effective Zila Parishad at the district level with the elected Chairman and Members. In this arrangement the local MPs would enjoy an ex-officio post of an Advisor as a Member of the Advisory Council of the Zila Parishads. The present proposal offers some other ideas to proceed for an effective people-friendly local self-government organ at the district level in Bangladesh.*

### **Introduction:**

Zila Parishad, a century old organ, is an important and significant local self-government at the district level in Bangladesh. But it is not active at all from the view point of self-governance and unfortunately no steps are found or endeavored by the respective authority for its development. It is a fact that democracy may be meaningful and fruitful only when local self-governments are nursed properly. Needless to say that such type of practice is not observed in Bangladesh. Recently it has been proved that the Upazila Parishads (UZP) has failed to fulfill the demand of public expectations due to the unnecessary interference created by the central authority though it has formed by the elected public representatives. At the same time nobody can ensure what would be the actual picture and functions of the Upazila Parishads (UZP) of Bangladesh in the future. Such type of possibility is thought due to the conflict among the UZP Chairmen, the Local MPs and the UNOs. There is a debate already has been raised that how to ensure coordination among them. In the mean time it is learnt that all the powers and authority of the UZP would be directed in favor the local MPs under the legal frame work what will not be positive sign for local self-governments of Bangladesh at all. On this backdrop a discussion has been started about the Zila Parishad as an effective local self-government at the district level. In this case, it is

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desired that, the Zila Parishads will have to be formed in a democratic way as well as it will have to get financial liberty so that it will be directed by the public representatives for their (public) betterment. All the local MPs in respective district shall be considered as the advisor of that Zila Parishad. Obviously they should get legal right to raise demand for their constituency and it would be considered positively and strongly for the fiscal budget of the Zila Parishad. In this way existing complexities of the UZPs may be abolished and the UZPs can play its effective role in local area as per its Ordinance and public demand. As a result all the local self-government organs (Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad) would be effective if Zila Parishad is formed.

### **Importance of the Problem:**

Development of local self-government in Bangladesh is not running smoothly and positively due to various types of complexities and obstacles some of which have been created intentionally. So the local self-governments are not getting strong foundation. It is a matter of regret that most of the obstacles have been created during the democratic regimes, not expected from the democratic point of view at all. Additional degrees of negligence for the local self-government have been experienced during the democratic age. In fact, democracy could not be strong and powerful without the empowerment of mass people of the root level. This reality is not being accepted by the Bangladeshi politicians. As a result democracy has taken a new shape which is treated as Bangladeshi democracy where the more democracy is running the more local self-government is being ignored. The lack of proper nursing and empowerment of local self-government as well as sheer political commitments of politicians are responsible for this. Here the democracy is being weaker due to unstable and unsettled local self-government. For this reality all socio-economic and political developments in Bangladesh are being hampered. The democracy is going to fall in a deep crisis. Eventually doubt, disrespect, mistrust etc are increasing in politics which are going to destroy the political culture. So there is no way without the stability of a meaningful local self-government for the entire development process in Bangladesh. For this reason Bangladesh needs to work for reaching in its advanced stage of democracy- local self government.

Powerful local self government is indispensable and significant for empowerment of mass people as well as root level society. Democracy



should be established at the root level and responsibilities must be shifted from the central authority to the local leadership. Meanwhile a debate has been raised about the Zila and the Upazila Parishads. Should government need to establish Zila Parishad in spite of existing Upazila Parishad? Why Upazila Parishad is equally necessary if Zila Parishad is formed? What will be the role of local MPs in local self-governments? Can they exercise the Veto Power in local self- governments? Will they become a catalyst of central allotments or investments? Will the structure of local self-governments be centralized? Can the central government abolish the elected local self-governments? Should local self-governments be directed by the appointed administrators? Such type of questions have been raised in this context.

Union Parishad is a historically animated tier of Local self-government though its effectiveness is being hampered due to miserable condition of its budget. At the same time conflicting situation has been activated in Upazila Parishad and it is not being effective. So, if both of the local self-governments are accepted as associated institution of Zila Parishad, all the local self- governments can be more effective and powerful which has been considered by the intellectuals and the civil society. In that case the Zila Parishad can be an ideal tier of local self-government in Bangladesh.

### **Objectives of the Paper:**

The main objectives of this paper are:

- i) To uncover the historical background of the Zila Parishad;
- ii) To offer the present situation of the Zila Parishad;
- iii) To observe the future of the Zila Parishad as an effective local self- government; and
- iv) To suggest steps for an effective Zila Parishad.

### **Research Methodologies:**

Necessary information and data related to this work have been collected from the secondary sources like published books, articles, unpublished research works and government documents.

### **Limitations:**

Firstly, the Zila Parishad has not been established through the election. So providing observation, evaluation and suggestions would be risky as there is a little proper exercise.

Secondly, This research has been directed on a small scale. So, it may be considered as insufficient for generalization.

### **Historical Background of Zila Parishad:**

The existing pattern of the district administration of Bangladesh is a direct inheritance from the British rule in India, but the British adopted many elements of the Mughal's rule in their administrative system. The Mughal government divided the whole empire into a number of Subhas (Province) for the efficient administration. The Subhas were divided into a number of Sarkers and each Sarker into a number of Parghanas. The Sarker is corresponded to the modern District. During the time of Emperor Shahajahan, the Primer Shadullah Khan established a new administrative unit called Chakla which included a number of Parganahs. But in 1722 the Sarker was transformed into Chakla unit. The Chakla was a revenue unit. Only a half century ago the district was a revenue unit only, because India was primarily an agricultural country and land revenue was the main source of income of the Government. Therefore, the district firstly originated as the revenue unit but gradually it became the unit of general administration.

### **The Bengal Local Self-Government Act 1885:**

The introduction of the local self-government in country (British-India) all along had been an idea from the 'District Road Committee 1871' which had been introduced by Lawrence and Mayo. There was a very little demand for it from the intellectual class of the country and had no demand for it at all from the general people. Lord Ripon was a liberal reformer. He, Ripon, was always in favour of introducing the representative system of local government in the rural area in order to ensure the people's participation. He also suggested that more unit of local self government with definite functions should be set up throughout the country. His policy was declared in a Resolution, adopted on 18 May, 1882. On the basis of the resolution of Lord Ripon a Bill was introduced in the Bengal legislative council in 1883 for the extension of local self government. It became the Act iii (B.C.) 1885 in the same year. The act was actually inspired by Ripon's Resolution of 1882.

The Act iii (B.C.) of 1885 titled as an act to extend the system of local self government in Bengal was passed by the Bengal legislative council of the 6th Governor General on the 11th July. The objective of its enactment was to give the people of Bengal a substantial interest and

responsibility in the management of their own local affairs. The Act was applicable and effective in every district, except in the district of Singbhum, the Sautat parghana and the Chittagong Hill-Tracts.

According to the provision of the Act a three tier local self-government system was introduced in rural Bengal: Union Committee at the village level, Local Board at the sub-division level and District Board at the district level. Under this Act, 15 District Boards were constituted-Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Jessore, Faridpur, and Pabna from the present Bangladesh and the remaining from West Bengal of India. The number of the members of a district Board would be determined by the government from time to time but it must not be less than nine. A Board would be wholly appointive or partly appointive or partly elective. Where there was no Local Board, all members of the district Boards would be appointed by the government when full quota of the local Boards was instituted, not less than one half of the total number of the members of the district Board would be elected by the members of the local Boards in a district. Section 22 of the Act laid down that the Chairman should be appointed by the government or should be elected by the members of the Board from among their own members, if the government should so direct. But up to 1920 the District Magistrate was the ex-officio member and its Chairman. The term of the District Board was 3 years. There was a provision for a Vice-Chairman. According to the provision he should be elected by the District Board from among its own members. A District Board might elect another of its member as a second Vice Chairman provided that if District Board would fail to elect a vice chairman duly, the government might appoint the Vice Chairman accordingly. During this time the constitution of the District Board was undemocratic. Though there was provision for election of the member, yet all were nominated by the government. As the Chairman the District Magistrate had unlimited control over the Board. For the reorganization of the local bodies the government constituted a commission, known as the Royal commission upon Decentralization in India. Hob house was the Chairman of the commission. The commission started functioning in 1907 and submitted the report in 1909. In the report, commission suggested that there should be more elected members in the District Board and also suggested that the Chairman should not be an official. The Bengal District Administration Committee was also in favor of introducing representative system of local self-government in Bengal. Montagu-Chelmsford Report was issued in 1918. The Report emphasized that the district Board should have



substantial number of elected members. The proportion of nominated members should not exceed one forth. In response to the above recommendations, a Bill was introduced in the legislature by S.P. Shinha on 24th April 1918. In due process the Bill became the Bengal Village self-government Act V of 1919 in the same year. The Act created a two tier system of local self-government i.e. the District Board and the Union Board instead of earlier three tier system. The Act democratized the constitution of the District Board. It provided that the Chairman of the District Board should be elected by the public representative. In 1936, the Bengal local Self-government Act of 1885 was again amended. In 1936 the Local Board was abolished. According to the provision of the amended Act of 1936, two thirds of the members were elected and one third was nominated. When the Local Board was abolished, the two-thirds members were elected by the qualified voters.

On October 27, 1959 a system of Basic Democracies was introduced by President Field Marshal Ayub Khan, by a presidential order. According to the provision of the new order, a four tier system of local self government was introduced in East Pakistan i.e. the Union Council, the Thana Council, the District Council and the Divisional Council with the objective to "organize the people to take care of problems of their own areas and inculcate in their spirit of self help." Under the new order former District Board was renamed as the District council. A District council consisted of such number of official and elected members as it was fixed by the commissioner. Provided that the total member of elected members would not less than the total number of official members. The official members were the ex-officio members appointed by the government. The elected members of the District council were elected by an electoral college consisting of the Chairman of the Union Councils and the Town Committees within the jurisdiction of the district. The Collector was the ex-officio member and the Chairman of the District Council. The council elected one of its elected members as its Vice-Chairman. The term of office (5 years) of the Vice-Chairmen was co-extensive with the term of office of the District Council. He performed the delegated functions of the Chairman and such other functions as were prescribed by rules.

#### **Local self-government at the District level in independent Bangladesh:**

At the beginning of independent Bangladesh, Basic Democracy Order was abrogated by the president's Order no. 7, 1972. Under this order, all

Local Councils were dissolved and administrators were appointed to perform the functions of the dissolved bodies except the Divisional Council. Immediately the name of the Union Council was changed as Union Panchayat and an administrator was appointed to manage the affairs of the Panchayat. The name of Thana council was changed as the Thana Development Committee while the District Council was named as Zila Board or District Board. Again in 1973, Union Panchayat's name reverted to Union Parishad. A more significant change in the local self-government system was brought about in 1976 by the local government ordinance. This ordinance provided 'Union Parishad' for a Union, 'Thana Parishad' for a Thana and 'Zila Parishad' for a district. The Zila Parishad was to consist of elected members, official members and women members whose numbers were determined by the government. Its term of office was five years. However, no elections were held and government officials ran the Parishad. A major change was initiated in the local self-government system through the introduction of the Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganization) Ordinance in 1982. This ordinance was followed by the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance in 1983, the Local Government (Zila Parishad) Act in 1988 and the three Hill District Act and Palli Act in 1989. The Upzila Parishad Ordinance (1982) was particularly significant as this was supposed to help for the implementation of the decentralization programme of the government. In the Upazila system, the elected chairman would have the principal authority in running the affairs of the Upazila and his tenure would be five years. After nine years of reasonably effective implementation, the government of Khaleda Zia, who came to power through a fair election, abolished the upazila system in 1991. During her five years tenure, the government could not provide an alternative democratic form of local self-government. When Sheikh Hasina government came to power in 1996, they constituted a Local Government Commission and came up with a Report on Local Government institutions strengthening in May 1997. The commission has recommended a four tier local self-government structure including Gram/Palli (Village) Parishad, Union Parishad, Thana/ Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad.

At the last part of Khaleda Zia led 2001 government, initiated a change in the local self-government structure. Gram Sarkar in place of Gram Parishad has been introduced. There has been recent legislation to create Gram Sarkers. These bodies will be created at the ward levels. This way



has been criticized by different sections of the society. In the same way the issue of reestablishing Upazila system has come into extensive discussion among intellectuals, citizen organizations and civil society leaders.

After January 11, 2007, when Dr. Fakhruddin government came into state power took the issue with due importance and amended the Upazila Parishad Act. According to the previous Law, the Local Government Minister was responsible to schedule election for Upazila. New Act gave the Election Commission (EC) to do so while it was engaged to prepare a voter list for the Parliament poll. In that period the constitutional body was requested to conduct upazila poll on the same date. As a result of a tug of war between emergency government and political parties, the Upazila Parishad poll has been scheduled on January 22, 2009, nearly after three weeks of Parliament election.

The newly elected Sheikh Hasina-led grand alliance government is also committed to reactivate the Upazila system as it was on of the commitments cited in this election manifesto. Experts said that to ensure better democracy and good governance members of parliament (MPs) should not take part in the local level development activities, but the present law protects the MPs rights to advice the Upazila Parishad. Now the challenge for the government would be balancing the authority of the local MPs and Upazila Chairmen. If government fails to do so, the administrative and development system could be a total mess. Presuming the situation many of local self-government experts said that the Zila Parishad must be furnished by a political personality who would be responsible to oversee the causes of Upazila in terms of development and governance. The Zila Parishad Chief would enjoy the status of a Deputy Minister.

In the mean time it has been planned to appoint administrator for 61 Zila Parishads of those districts of Bangladesh. Deputy Commissioners (DC) will be appointed as administrator and this responsibility will be an additional to their responsibility. Meanwhile Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has approved this proposal for appointing administrator in Zila Parishads sending from LGRD Ministry. Deputy Commissioners (DC) will be appointed as the Administrator of Zila Parishads for a provisional time. According to the source, Government will appoint political leaders as administrator for the Zila Parishad at the very beginning of next fiscal year. Meanwhile qualified and promising leaders are being searched in



district to district through the local Members of Parliament (MPs). According to the existing Zila Parishad provisions the government would appoint an interim administrator for doing its functions until a Zila Parishad is formed. According to the provision Zila Parishad is headed by a Chairman. Experts said, "Government has power to appoint administrator as per law. But election is the best way for that. Finance Minister AMA Muhith emphasized that it (Zila Parishad) should be formed as a district based government for reduction of local discrimination. District based government is also needed for the reduction of local inequality. If district based government is formed, power of secretariat will be decreased. As a result economic development will be balance and dynamic all over the country. Such type of initiative of government already has been appreciated by the experts and the civil society. The Zila Parishad would be active and effective is expected by all of them. But that Zila Parishad will have to elect its own authority and not be directed or operated by the nominated or appointed officers. Therefore, at first, the government should decide whether the local self-government will be active or not. If their decision is positive, necessary laws and provisions will have to frame in favor of it. So, initiatives to form Zila Parishad should be taken through an election, not by an unfair way.

### **Democratic Process at the Zila Parishad:**

The District Magistrate was the Chairman of the District Board before 1920, but the Boards were given the privileges of electing their own Chairman from among their members offered in 1920. But if the District Board would fail to elect a Chairman within the prescribed time; the government might appoint the chairman. In 20 Boards the elective element was raised from one half to two-thirds while the Board was enlarged in 1920-21. The post of the Vice-chairman was an important matter before 1920, but it became less important after 1920. The nominated members were nominated by the commissioner before 1932 and after 1932 they were nominated by the minister in-charge of ministry of local government.

Before 1936 the election of the District Board was in fact indirect. The local Board acted as the Electoral College from 1885 to 1936. The Local Board was not large in size. The number of the members of the Local Board was to be fixed by the government but it was not less than six. There were 84 Local Boards and the average number of the members varied from 8 to 17. They were electing the members of the District

Board either from their own members or from outsiders. On an average about 50 percent of the members of the Local Board were the members of the District Board. This system of indirect election was criticized from several points of view. There was no direct contact with the primary voters and it violated the very nature of local self-government in a true sense. On an average 12 to 20 members of a Local Board could elect a member of the District Board. It was very easy to influence such small number of voters. It encouraged the double membership. The Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) was the ex-officio Member and the Chairman of the Local Board and worst kind of influence was exercised by the SDO in case of election of members of the District Board by the members of the Local Boards. Usually he used to influence the members of the Local Boards to cast their votes in favor of his chosen candidates. The members who would refuse to carry out the decision of the SDO, there was every possibility of losing his membership. Nominated members were of two categories i.e. the officials and non-officials, of them, nominated members were not more than one-half of the officials. There was reservation of seats for the minority community. The qualification of the voters before the abolition of the Local Board was high but since 1973 the franchise was extended. Every male person of 21 years of age and more having a place of residence within the area and who paid eight annas as cess and six annas as chowkidary tax and who was a graduate or passed the matriculation examination, or middle English or middle vernacular examination or a registered medical practitioner or a pleader or a muktar, was eligible to vote in the election of the District Board. But the amendment Act of 1936 did not make any provision for the enfranchisement of the women. The Rowland committee of 1944-45 strongly recommended for the abolition of the system of nomination. But the Committee put forward no suggestion for the vote of the woman folk. Though the Committee suggested abolishing of the nomination system, one-third of the nominated members were not abolished during the British period. The government of Pakistan decided to introduce adult franchise in all local bodies. Government appointed a Committee in this point of view under the Chairmanship of S.D. Khan. Former District Board was renamed as the District Council under the Basic Democracies Order. Though elaborate provisions were made for the election of the District Council, at the beginning, there was no elected member. The District Council was completely devoid of any elective or representative character, because 50% of its membership was government officials, 25% was public representatives and 25% was nominated from the Chairmen of



the Union Council and the Town Committees. The composition of the District Council of that time was very undemocratic. There was no flavour or any trace of democracy. It was worse than the District Road Committee of 1871. The system of appointing members was abolished under the amendment order of 1962. Then The District Council consisted of elected and official members. In actual practice 50% was elected and remaining 50% was officials. The system of election was very indirect. General voters had no say to it. The Chairmen of 4032 Union Council and 38 Town committees were the electors of the members of the District Council. The Deputy Commissioner as the Chairman was the key figure of the Council. Since 1920 almost all the Chairmen were non officials. In this respect the system of Basic Democracy had put the "clock back." The elected members were the ineffective spectators. The Deputy Commissioner was the controlling authority of the district, as well as of the District Council. It proved that the official control and spoon-feeding over the local institution had greatly increased under the Basic Democratic system. The people of East Pakistan claimed for the elected chairman in the District Council from long before. The Zila Board was renamed as the Zila Parishad under Zia Regime. A Zila Parishad shall consist of such number of elected members, official members and women members as may be fixed by the Government. The elected member shall be elected by direct election on the basis of adult franchise. But in 1980 the Government appointed one Member of the Parliament (MP) in every District as the District Development Coordinator. This program came to an end when the Government changes in 1982. An Administrative Re-organization Committee was set-up during H.M. Ershad regime. The Committee has strongly recommended for the creation of the Zila Parishad of the newly formed district levels democratically. Bangladesh Zila Parishad Employees Federation has demanded to the Government to form the Parishad immediately on the basis of the adult franchise. A meeting took place under Chairmanship of President H.M. Ershad on November 4, 1986 for the formation of the Zila Parishad. The President had ordered to the National Implementation Committee for Administrative Re-organization (NICAR) to frame the policies, structure and model of the future Zila Parishad. The Government could not take any step for Zila Parishad composition as local self-government during five years tenure of BNP regime (1991-1996). When the Bangladesh Awami League came to the power in 1996, it constituted a Local Government Commission and came up with a report on Local Government Institutions strengthening in May 1997. The Commission



had recommended a four tier local self-government along with a Zila Parishad. According to the recommendations of respective Commission, two to four members will be elected from each Thana and one Chairman will be elected for the Zila Parishad. But election process was not crystal clear. The Zila Parishad Ordinance have been passed in 2000. According to this Ordinance Electoral College will be formed with about 150 electorates and they will elect 21 representatives. One Zila Parishad Chairman, five women members and 15 other members will be elected by all Chairman and Member of Union Parishad and the Chairmen and Commissioners of Pourosova and City Corporation and UZP Chairmen in respective district. This indirect election process of Zila Parishad was criticized by the experts. BNP led four parties Alliance, came to power in 2001, and initiated a change in the local government structure. Gram Sarker in place of Gram Parishad had been introduced. This government did not give any attention for establishing the Zila Parishad as well as Upazila Parishad. So, it is true that no government of Bangladesh (democratic or non democratic) could from the Zila Parishad as an organ of local self-government though various types of steps has been taken for that. But all those initiatives were undemocratic and against the spirit of local self-government. Moreover the Zila Parishad was not active and effective to protect bureaucratic power and authority at the district level as well as lack of fore sightedness of politicians is equally responsible for that. The Zila Parishad was nothing but a petty department of the district administration. Already some steps have been taken by the present Awami League led Grand Alliance government to activate the Zila Parishad which are appreciated by the experts, the civil society and the mass people.

### **Local self-government in the Constitution:**

The constitution of Bangladesh was framed in 1972, within a year of the country's independence, categorically emphasizes the need for establishing local government with a representative character (Chapter 3, Article 59). It also implies direct participation of the people in constituting the local bodies. However, in the years following the adoption of the Constitution, the spirit of people's participation in local bodies was not always adequately maintained. Frequent changes in the local government structure are partly responsible for this. The extent and quality of people's participation have also been varied. The best participation was the opportunity of casting votes during the election of local bodies. But the elections were not held at regular intervals. Moreover the election was never held for the Zila Parishad.

### **Necessary Policies for Effective Zila Parishid:**

The Zila Parishad is a century old local government. Recently it has been changed as a rhetorical organ of local self-government due to various types of tests by the government in different tenures. Actual formation of Zila Parishad has failed in spite of different initiatives taken by different governments. All of these initiatives had limitations in making laws and provisions which were not activated in spite of its necessity. Who will lead and how will he lead to the Zila Parishad? What will be the election process to elect the leaders of the Zila Parishad? Whether the power would be decreased or not or the authority of the government at the district level would be responsible for the formation? How the local MPs would be managed (those who dose not want to establish the Zila Parishad.)? Different kinds of questions come in front when any government wants to take some initiatives in this regard. But there is no debate among the civil society, the intellectual, the experts and the mass people about the Zila Parishad. The Zila Parishad was to be established with a absolute power and authority. The representatives of the Zila Parishad must be elected as well as must be directed by the electing authority in that case. Thus an effective government can be formed at the district level and at the same time responsibilities of central government would be decreased. But in the mean time debate has been raised about the election process of the Zila Parishad. The election process of the Zila Parishad Chairman should be direct, not to be indirect to maintain the process of the parliamentary form of government, emphasized by some experts. They suggest that the members of the Zila Parishad will be elected by the local voters. And the Chairman of the Zila Parishad will be elected by those elected members. In fact the Chairman of the Zila Parishad will be an elected leader by the public representative. But this indirect election process of the Chairman of the Zila Parishad can not be free from faults and failure. For that reason this process is not supported by some other experts. To them the whole Parishad will have to be elected by the local voters. Apart from that the Zila Parishad can not be accepted and appreciated by the mass people. But the question has arisen whether is possible? Moreover how this poll will be arranged? This arrangement may be expensive and free and fair election could be difficult because of its large area and huge population. In that case, the way of solution is to be provided. One alternative is the parliament election and the Zila Parishad election can be arranged on the same date to manage both the elections under the supervision of the Election Commission (EC) and to

ensure a free and fair election. Nobody would complaint to hold the Zila Parishad election if this process is maintained. Sheer political determination, commitment and unity are necessary for that.

### **Composition of the Zila Parishad:**

The Zila Parishad shall consist of the following positions, according to the present provisions, namely:

- a. The Chairman
- b. 15 Members and
- c. 5 Women Members for reserve seats (Article 40, Zila Parishad Ordinance-2000)

All of above positions will be elected by electoral vote which will be formed by Mayor and Commissioner (now treated as councilor) of City Corporation (if exist), Chairmen of Upazila Parishads, Chairmen and Commissioners (now treated as Councilor) of Pourosova and Chairmen and Members of Union Parishads.

Such type of indirect election process of the Zila Parishad has been heavily criticized. As there are no alternatives without a free and fair election for the formation of the Zila Parishad, the Zila Parishad may be formed as following;

- i) The Chairman
- ii) Two Members from each Upazila of respective district.
- iii) One Woman Member from each Upazila of respective district for reserve seat.
- iv) All of the representatives of the Zila Parishad (above mentioned) would be elected by the local voters on the same arrangement of the Parliament elections.
- v) All the Mayors and Chairman (City Corporation, Upazila Parishad, Powroshava) shall have an ex-officio Members without voting rights in the Zila Parishad.

### **Advisory Council:**

Each Zila Parishad will have an Advisory Council. The Members of the Parliament (MP) of the district shall become an Advisor of respective Zila



Parishad and they can provide advice to Parishad for doing its functions properly.

So, all the Members of the Parliament (MPs) in respective district will be an advisor of that Zila Parishad. They can give advice related to the Parishad, if necessary. But such type of advice may be accepted or not by the Parishad. The Zila Parishad will distribute all development budgets for each Upazila according to the demand of the area. This demand will be submitted by the UZP Chairman with a direct consent of local MP within a stipulated time frame before the budget of the Zila Parishad. But if they do not reach on an agreement of this point, the Zila Parishad will be empowered to declare the budget for that Upazila. Such type of obligation will make sure the good relation between UZP Chairman and the local MP, as both of them sincerely want development for their local area. They would oblige to prepare a welfare budget for their respective area reflecting their commitment toward local development. Thus UZP can be an effective and powerful organ of local self-government. The Zila Parishad can be a catalyst for all kind of development and the focal point of local self-government, if it is formed through the public representatives with the spirit of local self-government which is maintained all over the world.

#### **Status of the Zila Parishad Chairman:**

Some experts think that the Chairman of the Zila Parishad would enjoy the status of a Minister, while others in favor of a status of a State Minister.

#### **Jurisdiction of the Zila Parishad:**

Each organ of local self-government of Bangladesh needs a specific jurisdiction for its effectiveness. But if that power and authority is limited in Ordinance, it will be chained in lieu of effectiveness. Reality of local self-government of Bangladesh is as much pathetic as we see. However, there is no alternative except giving the specific powers and authority to the local self-government for its effectiveness. Unlimited control is the main cause of failure of local self-governments in Bangladesh. Such type of control comes from the central authority and the bureaucracy. Financial control is the most important control about this issue as local self-governments obliged to be controlled by central authority. This control must be decreased as early as possible for effectiveness of local self government. The central authority should give financial power to the

Zila Parishad according to the constitutional commitments. Two essential elements for effective local self-government are the planning and budgeting. Opportunity and capability of its implementation and establishment of self administration for performing their duties properly are included of them. Such type of tier of local self-government in Bangladesh has been ready made and that is nothing but a district. So, the power of planning and budgeting for the local area should be given to the Zila Parishad. And that will be free from all kinds of obstacles created by the central authority. But financial liberty can not be considered as absolute until Parishad gets financial power and authority like necessary and sufficient allocations and asset from the central government and also the power of imposing tax for a self-reliant powerful Zila Parishad. Planning will be of two types; district will make plan on the ground of national policies while UZP will make a plan for root level. So that balance would be maintained between the both sides. All the planning of Upazila would be coordinated at the district level and finally the Zila Parishad will make a budget for the whole district where the demands of Upazila Parishads will be reflected. According to the Zila Parishad Ordinance some taxes, rates, tolls and fees which may be levied by Zila Parishad. These are;

- 1) Tax on the transfer of immovable property.
- 2) Tax on advertisements.
- 3) Tolls on roads, bridge and ferries maintained by the Zila Parishad.
- 4) Rate for the execution of any works of public utility by the Zila Parishad.
- 5) School fees in respect of schools established or maintained by a Zila Parishad.
- 6) Fees for the use of benefits derived from any work for public utility maintained by the Zila Parishad.
- 7) Fees for special services rendered by a Zila Parishad.
- 8) Any other tax of the Zila Parishad has been empowered to levy by the government.

These are not sufficient for a powerful and effective Zila Parishad. For this reason some more power should be given to the Zila Parishad for imposing tax and rates such as all types of license fees, vehicles tax, business tax, arms tax, professional tax and so on. Any recreation related charge may be collected by the Zila Parishad. The Zila parishad will be

responsible to collect all land revenue where the property hand over or purchase or gift registration fees or charge of record transformation will be included.

According to this way sufficient revenue collection will be possible. Power of collecting the value added tax (VAT) and its administration may be shifted to the Zila Parishad. In the same way service charge of health and education may be collected by the Zila Parishad. Various service charges may be fixed and collected by the Zila Parishad, but national policy will have to specify and fix up the highest and lowest rate for that. A percentage of national revenue would be the principal source of revenue for the Zila Parishad. This proportion will have to distribute on the basis of area, population, communication condition, backwardness, opportunity of asset derive, success and failure of development implementation etc. In present time only 4% of national budget are spent at local level, if this would be increased 60%, the Zila Parishad can make good plan, budget and implement properly. Needless to say that Zila Parishad would be a self-reliant local self government in this process. Thus the Zila Parishad will be transformed as an effective organ of local self government.

For a financially capable and effective local self government the Zila Parishad needs some specific powers and responsibilities which are being mentioned below:

- i) Local land administration and land revenue.
- ii) Law and order and police administration.
- iii) Primary, secondary and vocational education.
- iv) Public health, Sanitation and Population.
- v) Local agriculture.
- vi) Local forestry resources.
- vii) Local livestock resources.
- viii) Local fisheries resources.
- ix) Local public works and housing.
- x) Local communication and vehicles.
- xi) Local water resources.
- xii) Medium, small and handy craft.
- xiii) Food preservation and distribution.



- xiv) Recreation.
- xv) Social security and social service.
- xvi) Relief management.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

A self-reliant, powerful and effective local self government is essential for the empowerment of mass people. There is no fair and better system for responsible administration than that. Above all local self-government is more important for providing service and achieving capability in development functions. But the present system of local self-government in Bangladesh is under a severe control of the central government. It is hoped, however, that the ongoing process of empowering local government by the present regime will be able to bring about a significant change in its structure. Even though it is a partial success, there would be some gain in favor of local autonomous bodies. In fact a powerful Zila Parishad will enable to empower the people. In addition, this government (Zila Parishad) has an important and significant tier for maintaining good governance and necessary development initiatives. The central government and large administration generally create obstacles to the development initiatives. So, there is no other better way for proper development unless establishing a powerful Zila Parishad. In that case bureaucracy must accept all the functions and initiatives if political unity and commitment is strong enough to set up a meaningful Zila Parishad. For this reason government will have to form a Zila Parishad through a free, fair and transparent election.

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## Sexual Harassment—A Glass Ceiling and Job Satisfaction of Nurses: A Case Study on the Selected Public Hospitals in Dhaka City

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**Abstract:** This study delved into the extent of sexual harassment of the female nurses in their workplace. To be specific it assessed job satisfaction of female nurses in the public hospital of Dhaka city in relation to sexually harassment by their male colleagues, patients, and visitors. With a view to having an insight on this issue, the study also takes into consideration Kanter's notion (1977) implying that workplace behaviors and attitudes are determined by social structures in the workplace. 138 surveys were administered to female nurses as per sampling framework and systematic random sampling procedure visiting their hospital in the three public hospital of Dhaka city in 2011. Results show that 67% respondents reported that they face physical violence in their hospital, 76% respondents reported that they face sexual harassment on the way to their hospital. The findings also reveal that 37% of the respondents reported that they got sexual harassment by the hospital staffs, doctor (21%), visitors (7%). Findings also suggest that the most of the respondents of this study (67%) are not satisfied with the hospital administration system and the most of the respondents of this study (68%) want to change their profession. The most of all the respondents (41%) want to change their profession due the job related physical harassment. Based on the bi variate analysis, this study suggests significant association of frequently night duty, sexual harassment on the way to work place, the sexual harassment by male colleagues, doctors, visitors and patients with the job satisfactions.

### Introduction:

Job satisfaction is an important component of nurses' lives that can impact on patient safety, productivity and performance, quality of care, retention and turnover, commitment to the organization and the profession. Moreover the shortage of nurses nationwide and locally has been well documented and extended to the long term care industry (Fletcher, 2001; Mark, 2002; Mitchell, 2003). As a growing segment of the population ages and strains the capacity of these institutions, most are having difficulties in finding and retaining qualified nursing staff (Gohen & Van Nostrand, 1995). Employees' job satisfaction and their commitment have always been important issues for health care

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administrators. Thereby, it is a public health concern too for the present time. After all, high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover can affect the administrators' bottom lines, as temps, recruitment, and retaining take their toll (McNeese-Smith, 1996). Satisfied employees tend to be more productive, creative, and committed to their employers, and recent studies have shown a direct correlation between staff satisfaction and patient satisfaction in health care organizations (Al-Aameri, 2000). The traditional model of job satisfaction focuses on all the feelings that an individual has about his/her job (Lu, While, & Barriball, 2005). However, what makes a job satisfying or dissatisfying does not depend only on the nature of the job, but also on the expectations that individuals have of what their job should provide (Spector, 1997). Looking forward, almost all surveyed nurses see the shortage in the future as a catalyst for increasing stress on nurses, lowering patient care quality, and causing nurses to leave the profession. High nurse turnover and vacancy rates are affecting access to health care (Best & Thurston, 2004). Continuously hiring new employees is costly, and frequent staff turnover affects employees' morale and impairs patient care (Sofie, Belzar & Young, 2003).

According to Borda and Norman (1997) and Lu, While, and Barriball (2005), the retention and recruitment of nurses have shown that low wages and poor job satisfaction are the primary reasons why nurses leave their positions. Their dissatisfaction is often attributed to heavy workloads, leadership styles, motivation, inadequate training, and lack of respect (Lu, While, & Barriball, 2005). Professional nursing is a significant component of quality health care and nurses are vital to the National Health Services System of a nation. They make a real difference to people's lives as far as health care is concerned. Yet the nursing profession is facing a crisis today all over the world. There are positions lying vacant due to non availability of qualified nurses (Gardner and Johnson, 2001). The steady stream of brain drain to the developed world makes the situation still worse in developing countries. From the days of mere caretakers, the nurses have emerged in the role of an envoy between a physician and a patient. Many a times they fulfill a large number of functions of a physician. But unfortunately, we, in Bangladesh, do not have many good qualified nurses for quality health care. The Nursing services are vital for attaining health and development. They form the backbone of health care. Health care in Bangladesh is in a sad state, with insufficient doctors and nurses being available to serve its people.



Moreover, due to the demand of skilled nurses to give life to the health sector in Bangladesh as well as over the world, Nurses are getting dissatisfaction toward their profession; they are, hence, tending to leave their profession.

"Women's work environment in Bangladesh doesn't begin and end at the workplace. In all the public spaces they inhabit - inside the factory and on the streets - they must negotiate culturally embedded and highly gendered codes of spatial use and respectability. Consequently, working women face a double jeopardy with respect to sexual harassment. Not only are they vulnerable to physical, verbal and sexual abuse inside the workplace, they are frequently subjected to harassment once they leave their work premises, in the public spaces they must traverse before reaching home (Siddiqi, 2003)".

There is a plethora of literatures showing that female nurses are facing such dual crisis in terms of sexual harassment, as shown by Siddiqi (2003) in the context of industrial labor. Another survey by the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), based on news reports in 12 national dailies, reveals that at least 51 women working in the industrial and service sectors were raped in the first six months of the past year (The Daily Star, Tuesday August 6, 2002, p.2 cited in Siddiqi, 2003). Several were murdered brutally in the aftermath of rape. Similarly, Sexual harassment is a major problem in healthcare; it is a pervasive, disparaging, social, legal and ethical problem. It is a form of sex discrimination that affects both sexes, although, the majority of sexual harassment is perpetuated by men against women, and few working women have not experienced sexual harassment. Only ten percent of the sexual harassment complaints are filed by men and researchers theorize that this may reflect that fewer women hold powerful positions or men may be embarrassed and fear humiliation if they file (Fiedler & Hamby, 2000). Some authorities contend that the nursing profession has the highest rates of sexual harassment (Madison & Minichiello, 2001). Surveys have shown that many employees do not know what constitutes sexual harassment.

In Bangladesh, sexual harassment is classified as a form of discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is characterized by conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted and unwelcome by the receiver. Conduct is considered unwelcome when it is neither invited nor

solicited and the behavior is deemed offensive and undesirable. Sexual harassment in the workplace is an unlawful exercise of power. The harasser uses his or her authority, or power to belittle, humiliate, and refuse to promote, or demote someone (Hamlin & Hoffman, 2002). Harassing behaviors include but are not limited to the following:

- Verbal sexual advance determined by the recipient as unwelcome.
- Sexually oriented comments about someone's body, appearance and/or lifestyle.
- Offensive behavior such as, leering, ridicule or innuendo.
- Display of offensive visual materials.
- Deliberate unwanted physical contact (Gardner & Johnson, 2001).

In this paper, we have also adopted the following classification by Choudhury (2006):

- I. Verbal harassment: namely comments that have sexual overtones, or personal remarks that are humiliating and of a sexual nature;
- II. Psychological harassment: namely behaviors that cause the woman mental anxiety, such as, for example, insistence on accompanying the respondent, phone calls at odd hours, stalking/ following the respondent, staring at her breasts and sending obscene SMS/text messages;
- III. Sexual gestures and exposure: include incidents in which the perpetrator intentionally falls onto a woman, exposes his penis to her, stands naked, masturbates; in the case of patients, insists that nurses or other staff members massage or sponge his body or wipe his private parts even when he is able to do so himself; unwanted touch: namely unwanted touching of breasts or other parts of the body; and unwanted embraces;
- IV. Rape, attempted rape or forced sex.

In a study of 188 critical care nurses, 46% reported regarding suffering from sexual harassment, which included offensive sexual remarks, unwanted physical contact, unwanted verbal attention, requests for unwanted dates, sexual propositions and one physical assault. Physicians represented the largest percentage of offenders, followed by co-workers, and supervisors. The majority of the incidents are unreported, perpetuating this public health problem (Sandberg, McNeil & Binder,

2002). The detriment to the victim involves both short- and long-term psychological, psychosocial, and occupational consequences. Emotional distress may be manifested by anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. Many victims experience increased absenteeism, burnout, job change, interpersonal conflict, and/or impaired intimacy and sexual functioning. A study (Choudhury, 2006) conducted in Calcutta, India reveals that among the 50 of Nurses (out 135 respondents who were female employee in the hospitals), 31(62%) female staff had experience of being harassed- verbal 14 (28%), psychological 16 (32%), sexual gesture and exposure 9 (18%), unwanted touch 9 (18%). The study also delves into the perpetrators of the harassment as following: 14 nurses reported that they were harassed by the doctors, 22 by patients and their family members, 3 by non-medical staff, 4 by administrative staff, and 5 by other harasser (Choudhury, 2006). "Nurses are the only group who are harassed by everyone; doctors, non-medical staff, patient, patient party and outsiders. (Choudhury, 2006)".

Job satisfaction is a complex socio-psychological construct. It has been shown in various public health studies as job satisfaction, which often determines nurses' sincere duty in the hospital. Dissatisfaction in the nursing profession has been a major problematic issue in many developing countries of the world including Bangladesh. A portion of the nurses directly leave the job even for the extreme dissatisfaction in their professional life which is a serious threat for the health sector of a country. An unsafe work environment leads to compromises in patient care; for instance, when the harasser is a colleague, valuable patient care information may not be communicated. Also, a distressed individual may have difficulty concentrating, in turn, missing important patient information (Valente & Bullough, 2004). Organizations incur costs from lawsuits and claims, increased absenteeism and turnover as well as poor productivity. According to Gardner and Johnson (2001), "Prevention is the first, last, and primary line of defense against sexual harassment; in fact, prevention is the cure. Simply for the sake of human dignity, employees in healthcare settings are entitled to safe, harassment-free workplaces." Reliable procedures, education, follow-up and a "zero-tolerance" approach by an organization will curtail sexual harassment and prevent its consequences. Employers must have a strong policy that clearly indicates the position of the organization related to sexual harassment. The EEOC recommends that employers voice strong



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disapproval of sexual harassment and educate all employees. Taking this advantage the less qualified females are entering to this profession. As these new nurses are being considered as the less qualified directly affect the total health care sector of our country. So the study relating to nurses' job satisfaction should get priority for the sake of its own merit. But very few studies have been conducted to explore the issues of the nurses' dissatisfaction. Of course, most of the previous studies emphasized on quantifying the structural issues regarding the nurses' job satisfaction. Socio-psychological constructs of job satisfaction, sexual harassment in the work place, related to this job and other cultural and contingent factors relating to have always been overlooked. As mentioned above, the unexplored reasons of nurses' job dissatisfaction are crucial to prevent health sector, thus it would be rational to explore it.

## 2.0 Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the proposed study was to provide data, which would allow for designing strategies to help having a sound environment for nurses in their workplace, investigating the nature of harassment in their workplace and the extent of dissatisfactions toward their profession in Bangladesh. Specific objectives were:

- 1) To find out the socio-demographic characteristics of the nurses in the public hospital.
- 2) To explore the pattern of sexual harassment in the nursing profession.
- 3) To find out the extent to which nurses in public hospitals are satisfied with their job.

With a view to examining the relationship between sexual harassment and job satisfaction, this study tests the hypothesis: 'The more extent of victim of sexual harassment, the greater extent of job dissatisfaction in the nursing profession'.

## 3.0 Power Imbalances -Sexual harassment -Job dissatisfaction: Theoretical Framework of the Study

According to Kanter (1977), workplace behaviours and attitudes are determined by social structures in the workplace, not personal predispositions. She claims that workers are empowered when they perceive that their work environments provide opportunity for growth and access to power needed to carry out job demands. When these

conditions are lacking, employees feel powerlessness. This threatens organizational productivity since powerless individuals are more susceptible to burnout and reduced job satisfaction (Kanter, 1979). Kanter defines power as the capacity to mobilize resources to accomplish work, and identifies structural characteristics within an organization that influence an individual's ability to access and mobilize the resources of job-related empowerment: (1) Power, that is, access to resources, support and information and; (2) Opportunity, that is, access to challenge, growth and development. Access to these organizational structures is influenced by the degree of formal and informal power an individual has in the organization.

Kanter (1977) maintains that individuals with access to power and opportunity structures can accomplish the tasks required to achieve organizational goals. Because they have these tools, they are highly motivated and able to motivate and empower others. Individuals without access to power structures perceive themselves to be powerless and become more rules-minded and less committed to organizational goals. The organizational behavior in public hospital in Bangladesh can be explained with this theoretical interpretation because Bangladesh as patriarchal society women are subordinate to male, they can't take any decision alone in home and outside of home. They are deemed as powerless. They cannot protest to any injustice against them indeed because they practice culture of silence. It is the culture of silence that teaches women, 'if you are harassed by male', 'keep silent' because it is your wrong, thus women are stigmatized in the society like Bangladesh. Moreover, they are exploited, victim of violence in the irrespective of home, workplace or on the transport and so on. Thereby the public hospital of Bangladesh are not exception, it is not secured place for the female nurses. The public hospitals are also the place in where the nurses are deemed as powerless women, they are victim of sexual harassment. So, the reality of the public hospital for a female nurse is not different from patriarchal social structure of Bangladesh.



#### 4.0 Conceptual Framework of the Study

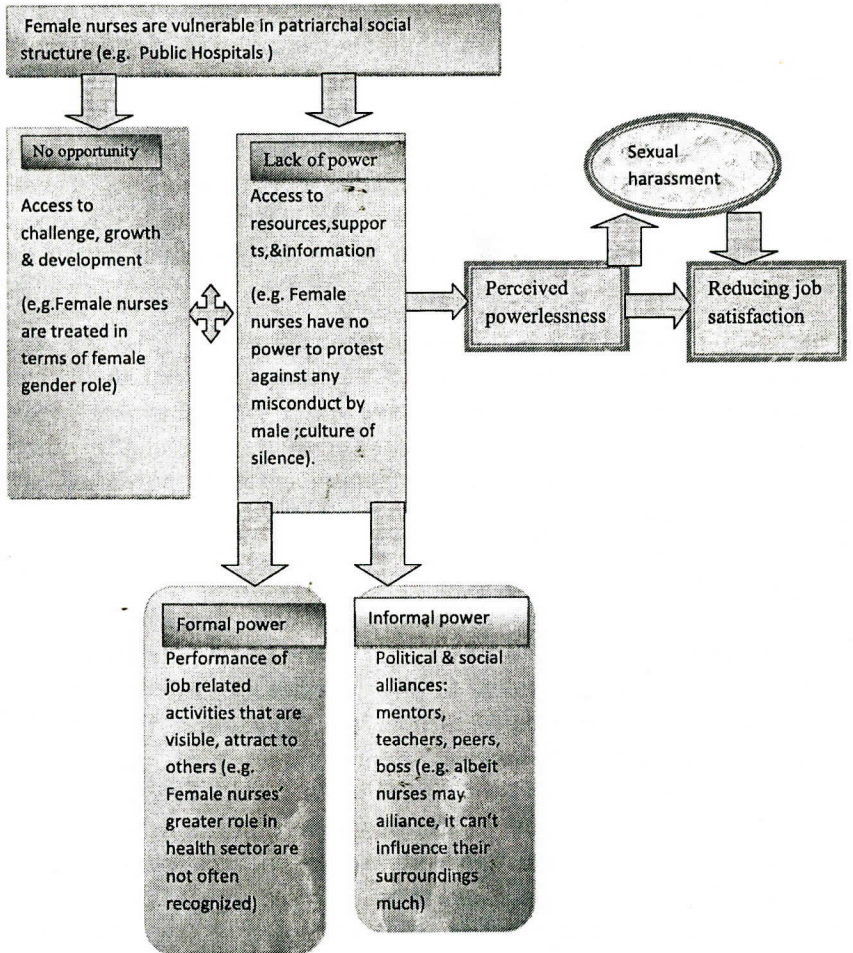


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

#### 5.0 Study Design

This is a study designed to look into female nurses' level of job satisfaction in terms of sexual harassment in the public hospital of Dhaka city, Bangladesh. The study used quantitative approach of data collection. Survey was the main technique of data collection for this study. Following systematic random sampling procedure, samples for the survey were drawn from three public Hospitals in Dhaka city. The public

hospitals are Dhaka Medical College & Hospital (DMCH), National Institute of Ophthalmology & Hospital (NIOH), and National Institute of Kidney Disease and Urology (NIKDU), randomly selected. The hospitals were enlisted as following sequences: NIOH, DMCH, and NIKDU as per the drawing lottery ensuring the quality of random sampling with a view to constructing a sampling frame. Sample size was determined using Fisher's (Sarantakos, 2005) exact formula. A total of 138 female nurses from the three public hospitals were interviewed for collecting primary data. The variables and indicators were identified according to the conceptual framework of the study (Figure 1). A semi structured interview schedule containing pertinent questions related to the objectives of the study was developed for data collection. The fieldwork was conducted during June to September 2011. SPSS for Windows (version 12) was used for managing data and computing statistical association.

## 6.0 Findings of the Study

### 6.1 Background Characteristics of the Respondents

The present study is conducted among the nurses of three public hospitals of Dhaka city. In total, 138 nurses ranging from age 21 to 60 years were interviewed. Of them 85% was married and 15% was unmarried nurses. The table 1 reveals the demographic profiles of the respondents. The table shows that the majority of the respondents (46%) are 41-50 years old; on the contrary, a considerable number of respondents (23%) are 31-40 years old. Majority of the respondents' (57%) level of academic education was SSC. It was found only 9%, who completed their Masters. Again most of the respondents (74%) did diploma in nursing. On the other hand, only 9% of the respondents did Masters in nursing. In terms of total monthly income, the majority of the respondents' (56%) family income ranges between Tk.30, 000-Tk.40, 000 per month.

On the contrary, a considerable number of respondents' (7%) monthly family income is more than Tk. 50,000. It can be reported that a significant number of respondents' (26%) monthly family income is less than Tk. 40,000-Tk 50,000.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile of the Respondents

| Characteristics (N= 138 )                           | Per cent     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Age</b>                                          |              |
| 21-30                                               | 18           |
| 31-40                                               | 23           |
| 41-50                                               | 46           |
| 51-60                                               | 13           |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Marital Status(N= 138 )</b>                      |              |
| Married                                             | 85           |
| Unmarried                                           | 15           |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Level of Education(N= 138 )</b>                  |              |
| SSC                                                 | 57           |
| HSC                                                 | 28           |
| Bachelor                                            | 11           |
| Masters                                             | 4            |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Religion(N= 138 )</b>                            |              |
| Islam                                               | 81           |
| Hinduism                                            | 19           |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Total Monthly Income of the Family (N= 138 )</b> |              |
| Tk. 20000- Tk.30000                                 | 11           |
| Tk. 30000- Tk. 40000                                | 56           |
| Tk. 40000- Tk. 50000                                | 26           |
| More than Tk. 50000                                 | 7            |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Professional Qualification(N= 138 )</b>          |              |
| Diploma in nursing                                  | 74           |
| B. Sc. in nursing                                   | 17           |
| Masters in Nursing                                  | 9            |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>100.0</b> |

## 6.2 Dynamics of sexual harassment of nurses: at work place and way to work place, in the physical and para -social world

The following table (Table 2) reveals that a significant number of respondents (66%) reported that they face sexual harassment in their hospital. On the other hand a considerable number of the respondents (34%) replied that they don't face any type of sexual harassment. Again most of the respondents (75%) reported that they face sexual harassment on the way to their hospital. And only negligible respondents (25 %) said that they didn't face that type of sexual harassment on the way to their hospital.



Table 2: Nursing Profession and Sexual Harassment

| Victim of sexual harassment (N=138)                           | No | Yes | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|-------|
| Facing of any type of sexual harassment ever in the hospital  | 34 | 66  | 100   |
| Facing any type of sexual harassment on the way to work place | 25 | 75  | 100   |

## 6.2.1 Sexual Harassment of Nurses: at Work Place and Way to Work Place

Table 3 shows that 37% of the respondents reported that they got face physical violence by the hospital staffs:

Table 3: Sexual Harassment of Nurses: at Work Place and Way to Work

| Source of sexual harassment in the work place (N=138)        | Per cent     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Doctor                                                       | 21           |
| Male nurse                                                   | 18           |
| Patient                                                      | 17           |
| Other staff                                                  | 37           |
| Visitor                                                      | 7            |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>100.0</b> |
| Source of sexual harassment on the way to work place (N=138) |              |
| Bus staff                                                    | 69           |
| Passer by                                                    | 11           |
| Other people                                                 | 20           |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>100.0</b> |
| Night duty is a cause of sexual harassment (N=138)           |              |
| Strongly agree                                               | 53           |
| Agree                                                        | 23           |
| Neither agree nor disagree                                   | 4            |
| Disagree                                                     | 9            |
| Strongly disagree                                            | 11           |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>100.0</b> |

On the other hand, 21% of the respondents condemned the doctor for their facing of sexual harassment at work place. Only 7% of the respondents condemned the visitors for this sexual harassment. It is evident from the table 3 that almost all the respondents (69%) physically harassed by the local bus staff on the way to their work place. And a considerable number of respondents (11%) are physically harassed by the passer by on the way to their work place. The table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents (53%) strongly agree that night duty is a cause of physical violence/ harassment in the hospital, and a considerable number of them (11%) strongly disagree with the statement.

### 6.2.2 Sexual Harassment of Nurse in the Para -social World

The table 4 shows that a significant number of respondents (63%) has tendency to switch off their cell phone, while 19 % of the respondents keep their switched off mode to avoid patients' call at midnight.

Table 4: Sexual Harassment of Nurse in the Para-social World

| Cell phone switched off tendency (N=138)             | Percent |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Yes                                                  | 63      |
| No                                                   | 37      |
| Total                                                | 100.0   |
| Reason behind the switching off the cell phone(N=63) |         |
| Patient call at any time                             | 19      |
| Male colleagues call at night                        | 28      |
| Patient's attendant disturbs at night                | 15      |
| My husband wants it                                  | 18      |
| Total                                                | 100.0   |

On the other hand 18% of the respondents do it because their husbands want it. Last bit not least 28% of the respondents keep their cell phone switched off to avoid their male colleagues call at night, and 15% of the respondents do it to avoid the patient's relative's phone call.

### 6.3 Dynamics of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Regarding Nursing as a Profession

From the table 5 we see that most of the respondents have the work experience ranging from 11-15 years. Again 25% of the respondents have the service experience of 6-10 years. On the other hand only 4% of the respondents experienced their service above 20 years.

Table 5: Service Experience of the Respondents

| Service Experience(in year) (N=138) | Per cent |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 6-10                                | 25       |
| 11-15                               | 63       |
| 16-20                               | 8        |
| More than 20                        | 4        |
| Total                               | 100.0    |

The table 6 shows the antagonistic relationship between nursing as a profession and nurse's family life. It is found that majority of the respondents (52%) strongly agree that they don't get enough time to take care of their kids and family members due to their nursing profession.

Table 6: Nursing Profession Versus Family Life

| Contradiction between Nursing profession family life(N=138)                     | Level of agreement on the items (in per cent) |       |                            |          |                   | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------|
|                                                                                 | Strongly agree                                | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |       |
| Getting enough time to take care kids or other family members                   | 52                                            | 23    | 5                          | 11       | 9                 | 100   |
| Contradiction between nursing profession and smooth family life                 | 25                                            | 40    | 3                          | 19       | 13                | 100   |
| Married nurses are less committed to their profession than the unmarried nurses | 37                                            | 28    | 7                          | 18       | 10                | 100   |

On the other hand, a considerable number of them (9%) strongly disagree with the statement. In respect of male respondents' state of agreement with the relationship between nursing professional and family life, it is found that majority of the male respondents (40%) agree with the statement that there is a contradictory relationship between nursing profession and smooth family life. On the other hand, a considerable number of them (19%) disagree with the statement. It is also found that majority of the male respondents (37%) strongly agree with statement that Married nurses are less committed to their profession than the unmarried nurses.

Table 7: Satisfaction with the Hospital Administration System

| Nurses satisfaction with hospital administration(N=138) | Percent |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Yes                                                     | 33      |
| No                                                      | 67      |
| Total                                                   | 100.0   |

From the table 7 we find that the most of the respondents of this study (67%) are not satisfied with the hospital administration system. Instead 33% of the respondents said about their satisfactoriness with the hospital administration system.

Table 8: Respondents level of Agreement with the Statement that 'Nursing Profession is seen to be a low class Profession'

| Nursing profession is the low class profession(N=138) | Percent |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Strongly agree                                        | 14      |
| Agree                                                 | 11      |
| Neither agree nor disagree                            | 7       |
| Disagree                                              | 8       |
| Strongly disagree                                     | 60      |
| Total                                                 | 100.0   |



The table 8 shows that the majority of the respondents (60%) strongly disagree with the statement that nursing profession is seen to be a low class profession. On the other hand, a considerable number of them (14%) strongly agree with the statement.

#### 6.4 Changing Tendency of Nursing Profession and Its Aftermath on Health Care System

From the table 9 we find that the most of the respondents of this study (68%) want to change their profession. Instead 32% of the respondents said that they want to change their profession. It is evident from the table 9 that most all the respondents (41%) want to change their profession due the job related physical harassment. On the other hand a considerable number of respondents (33%) reported about the risks related to job. And a considerable number of the respondents (21%) said that due to the low salary structure they want to change their profession

Table 9: Changing Tendency of Nursing Profession and Its Aftermath on Health Care System

| <b>Intension to change their profession(N=138)</b>                      | <b>Per cent</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes                                                                     | 32              |
| No                                                                      | 68              |
| <b>Total</b>                                                            | <b>100.0</b>    |
| <b>Reason behind the job change intension(N=32)</b>                     | <b>Percent</b>  |
| Low salary structure                                                    | 21              |
| Risk related to job                                                     | 33              |
| Job related physical harassment                                         | 41              |
| Other                                                                   | 5               |
| <b>Total</b>                                                            | <b>100.0</b>    |
| <b>Nurses of the public hospital are careless to the patient(N=138)</b> | <b>Percent</b>  |
| Strongly agree                                                          | 43              |
| Agree                                                                   | 28              |
| Neither agree nor disagree                                              | 7               |
| Disagree                                                                | 15              |
| Strongly disagree                                                       | 7               |
| <b>Total</b>                                                            | <b>100.0</b>    |
| <b>Reason of the carelessness(N=138)</b>                                | <b>Percent</b>  |
| Permanent job                                                           | 63              |
| Low salary structure                                                    | 13              |
| Lack of supervision                                                     | 24              |
| <b>Total</b>                                                            | <b>100.0</b>    |

As we see in the table 9 that 43% of the respondents strongly agree that nurses of the public hospital are careless to the patient. On the contrary,

only 7% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. It is evident from the table 9 that almost all the respondents (63%) think that nurses of the public hospital are careless to the patient because of the permanent nature of their job. And a considerable number of respondents (24%) reported about the lack of supervision for the nurses' carelessness.

## 6.5 Bi-variate analysis

### Components of sexual harassment of nurses and job satisfaction

The table 10 shows the statistical association between the different components of sexual harassment of nurses and the job satisfaction. It reveals that night duty, sexual harassment and sexual harassment by their male colleagues (doctors, fellow employee), visitors & patients are significantly associated with their job satisfaction.

Table 10: Summary tables of Chi-square and Cramer's V on the Components of Sexual Harassment of Nurses and Job Satisfaction

| Components of sexual harassment of nurses                         | Job Satisfaction              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Frequent night duty                                               | $\chi^2 = 51.750^{***}$ df= 6 |
| Sexual harassment on the way to hospital                          | $\chi^2 = 48.042^{***}$ df= 2 |
| Harassment by the male colleagues, doctors, visitors and patients | $V = .115^{***}$              |

\*\*\* p=0.001 \*\* p=0.01 \* p=0.05

Thus we can say from the table 10 items related to sexual harassment such as frequent night duty, physical harassment on the way to hospital and harassment by the male colleagues (doctors, fellow employee), visitors and patients faced by the nurses are strongly associated with their job satisfaction.

## 7.0 Recommendations

To get sexual harassment free workplace for the nurses with a view to making a sound health sectors for Bangladesh, the following issues can be recommended for national and local level: -

- Specifics on how complaints should be made against the physical harasser and how confidentiality will be ensured;
- Employers provide initial and annual educational programs that define sexual harassment and communicate the institution's position, policy, and procedure for reporting;

- Registered nurses develop skills to identify and prevent sexual harassment by;
- Taking immediate verbal and/or physical action to reject sexual harassment behaviors;
- Reporting instances of sexual harassment promptly;
- Government should put emphasis on training to maintain the quality nurses;
- A task force to study potential demands for national and international markets;
- Media to play a role in improving the image of the nursing profession; and
- Re-evaluate the existing salary structure.

## 8.0 Conclusion

This paper has explored women's perceptions and experiences of sexual harassment in the public hospitals of Bangladesh. Findings confirm the persistence of sexual harassment in the public hospitals of Bangladesh, the study also reveals the significant impact of sexual harassment on the extent of job satisfaction by public hospitals' female nurses, consequently this event provokes the nurses to quit from their profession or workplace. The authors acclaims that this tendency is sever threat for the public health for a developing societies like Bangladesh.

The study reveals that a significant number of respondents (67%) reported that they face sexual harassment in their hospital. Again most of the respondents (76%) reported that they face Sexual harassment on the way to their hospital. The findings of our study in this context are consistent with the findings and comments of siddiqi (2003) where he reported that industrial women workers have to face sexual harassment in their workplace and way to workplace .The findings of our study also reported that 37% of the respondents reported that they faced sexual harassment by the hospital staffs. On the other hand 21% of the respondents condemned the doctor for their facing of sexual harassment at work place. Only 7% of the respondents condemned the visitors for this sexual harassment. In terms of out of hospital, almost all the respondents (69%) physically harassed by the local bus staff on the way to their work place. And a considerable number of respondents (11%) are physically



harassed by the passer by on the way to their work place. The findings of the present study are reflected, to some extent, by the study conducted in Calcutta, India (Choudhury, 2006) because findings of the study also suggest that out of 50 nurses, 14 (28%) nurses were harassed by the doctors, 22 (44%) by patients and their family members, 3 (6%) by non-medical staff, 4 (8%) by administrative staff, and 5 (10%) by other harasser. From the comparative scenario of Bangladesh and India, it is worthy that Nurses are the only group who are harassed by everyone; doctors, non-medical staff, patient, patient party and outsiders (Choudhury, 2006).

Findings also suggest that the most of the respondents of this study (67%) are not satisfied with the hospital administration system and the most of the respondents of this study (68%) want to change their profession. Because most of all the respondents (41%) want to change their profession due the job related physical harassment. This study suggests significant (table 10) association of frequently night duty, sexual harassment on the way to work place, the sexual harassment by male colleagues, doctors, visitors and patients with the job satisfactions.

The study deems the theoretical framework that the power imbalances in the gender relations cause the sexual harassment of nurses by the male colleagues irrespective of fellow or upper positions; even by the male visitors is caused by the power imbalances because women in Bangladesh can not protest against the harassment by male.

"Clearly, sexual harassment is an issue of power dynamics and it is those who wield least power who are most vulnerable to all forms of harassment. By and large, moreover, sexual harassment (aside from attempted rape and rape) was taken as a routine occurrence in the health sector and was perceived as an occupational hazard more generally for women in the labor force (Choudhury, 2006: 18)".

According to Kanter (1977), workplace behaviors and attitudes are determined by social structures in the workplace. It is rooted in patriarchal social structure. It is the matter of culture that is called culture of silence. The culture of silence is a practice that when a female becomes victim of sexual harassment, she does not explore, to protest is far away, publicly because if it is so, she will be treated negatively at the eye of society. She will feel shame to say publicly. For that why, very few female nurses complain to the higher authority about their harassment.

The study conducted in India (Choudhury, 2006) is relevant in this regard only 27 of the 77 women experiencing harassment made a formal complaint; 10 reported the incident to a supervisory level staff member and 17 to hospital authorities or the management.

Table 11: Distribution of the Respondents by the Complaining to the Authority after Being Victim of Sexual Harassment and Factors for not Complaining

| <b>Complaining to the authority for sexual harassment (N=138)</b> | <b>Per cent</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Yes                                                               | 22              |
| No                                                                | 78              |
| <b>Total</b>                                                      | <b>100.0</b>    |
| <b>Factors behind not complaining (N=138)*</b>                    |                 |
| Fear of dismissal of job                                          | 65              |
| For shame                                                         | 78              |
| Obstacle to promotion                                             | 38              |
| Prohibited by family members                                      | 51              |
| Harasser are powerful administratively                            | 63              |

\*Theses percentages add up to more than 100 because of respondents appeared in more than one category

They do not complain or protest not only for the fear of image crisis (table 11) in the society but also there is a fear of dismissal of job (table 11), obstacle to promotion and others socio economic factors. It appears then that complaints to the management were more likely to result in dismissal, termination of contract or reprimand of the harasser than complaints made to supervisors. At the same time, if the harasser was a person in authority (table 11), specifically a doctor, it was likely that complaints made to the management would result in pressure on the victim herself to tender her resignation. Instead of complaining, women reported that they developed other coping mechanisms, ranging from sharing experiences of harassment informally with their colleagues to changing their dress habits or change the workplace silently. The aforementioned findings of our study related to complaining to the authority for sexual harassment and factors behind not complaining are strongly supported by the study conducted in India (Choudhury, 2006). Experiences of sexual harassment reflected, by and large, power imbalances that make younger women and those in subordinate positions particularly vulnerable. Incidents of sexual harassment were most often

perpetrated by people in authority, such as senior or consultant doctors and even patients and their families, who were perceived to have the power to influence women's job security in the institution. Nurses and other doctors were likely to be the most vulnerable category although even hospital attendants and non-medical staff reported harassment from colleagues and senior or consultant doctors.

Finally, our study has noted that sexual harassment of female nurses in their workplace is alarming for the public health for a given country. Particularly, Bangladesh as a developing country has tendency of 'brain drain', many of our skilled nurses are immigrated to the developed countries in every year. The low salary structure, low job status and less job security are degrading their level of satisfaction toward their job. Moreover, sexual harassment in their workplace is a significant dimension to affect the job satisfaction in the growing sector of work forces in Bangladesh.

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## Local Government in Bangladesh: Major Challenges and Leading Case Decisions

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***Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to focus on the local government structure in Bangladesh and tries to examine the situation prevailing at the local government structure in Bangladesh. An analytical endeavour has been taken to evaluate the extent of local autonomy by investigating the prevailing situation of local government in Bangladesh. In this part, the major barriers have been analysed separately with its theoretical pillars first then relating it with the situation of Bangladesh. Moreover, the case decisions concerning local government in Bangladesh have also been examined. At the end of the study some recommendations have been suggested to overcome the barriers. This study is an attempt to analyse and evaluate the local government structure and the lacunas which hinders to establish an autonomous, efficient, representative and transparent local government in Bangladesh.*

### 1.0 Introduction

Local Government is almost a universal institution in the present day world and a vital component as well of a politico-administrative system composed of the members elected by the people of an area or locality to ensure local-level participation in the formulation, planning and implementation of programs and delivering prompt basic civil services (sanitation, public health, primary education social welfare services etc.) to the local people within its jurisdiction through the efficient use of local knowledge, direct contact with citizens and greater ability to overcome communications problems. As a tier, local government is at the bottom of a pyramid of governmental institutions with the national government at the top. The local government which is ultimately accountable for exercising the powers of administration and taxation delegated upon it by the relevant laws. It would be difficult nowadays to name any aspect of day-to-day life without a link with local government.<sup>1</sup> A vibrant and viable local government system can ensure the sustainable development of a country. With the increase of population and greater expansion of governmental functions, certain matters of policy and administration concerning national and international interests are reserved for the central government but the rest bulk of the

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<sup>1</sup> Bari, Dr. M. Ershadul, The 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh and The Local Government, The Dhaka University Studies, Part-F Vol. VI(1), 1995, P.1



administrative functions are invested with local authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Bangladesh has a long and eventful tradition of local government. The structure and functions of local government have evolved in consonance with the socio-economic and political transformation of the country. Nevertheless, the Bangladesh Constitution contains provisions for establishing local government as an inseparable organ of administering state affairs to safeguard democratic values and to secure economic and social justice.<sup>3</sup> The original Constitution of Bangladesh, which was adopted on 4 November 1972 and that came into effect on 16 December 1972, contained two Articles, 59 and 60, in Chapter III (entirely devoted to local government) of Part IV providing for the composition (to be consisted of elected persons) and powers of local government institutions to be established in Bangladesh by the Act of Parliament. Apart from these two Articles, original Article 11 of the Constitution provided, as one of the Fundamental Principles of State Policies, that "the Republic shall be a Democracy ... in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured." However the provisions concerning local government was abolished by the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975, passed on 25th January 1975 through the omission of Articles 59 and 60 from it and dropping the sentence concerning local government as contained in Article 11. The First Martial Law Government (1975-1979), though did not restore these provisions to the Constitution, but it substituted the provisions of original Article 9 concerning nationalism. Later the Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act, 1991, passed on 18 September 1991, restored the original provisions of Articles 59 and 60 relating to local government and the sentence of Article 11 to the effect.<sup>4</sup> Thus, local government in Bangladesh has appeared with its changing face since its beginning. The main objective of the study is to examine the gradual development of the local government in Bangladesh. Most importantly, this study analyzes and evaluates the present face of local government in the context of Bangladesh.

<sup>2</sup> Talukder, Dr. S. M. Hassan, *Development of Administrative law in Bangladesh : Outcomes and Prospects*, 2nd Edn, 2011, p.189

<sup>3</sup> Khan, Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat, *Functioning of Local Government (Union Parishad) : Legal & Practical Constraints*, p.4 (link- <http://www.dwatch-bd.org/L&P%20constraints.pdf> (last visited: 07.06.11)

<sup>4</sup> Bari, Dr. M. Ershadul, *Local Government Institution at the Thana/Upazila Level in Bangladesh*, The Dhaka University Studies, Part-F Vol. VII(1), June 1996, P.1-2

### 1.1 Meaning of Local Government

Local government is loosely defined, without making any reference to its financial and legal status and representative character, as "a public organization authorized to decide and administer a limited range of public policies within a relatively small territory which is a subdivision of a regional or national government."<sup>5</sup> According to William Valent, "Local government is subject to the authority of the State and composed of by the elected person for the purpose of imposing taxes and raising funds."<sup>6</sup>

In a similar way, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, the then Chief Justice of Bangladesh commented in 1992 on the nature of local government in the case of Kudrat-e-Elahi Panir V. Bangladesh<sup>7</sup>, "Local government is meant for management of local affairs by locally elected persons. If government's officers or their henchmen are brought to run the local bodies, there is no sense in retaining them as local government bodies ... Local government is an integral part of the democratic polity of the country." <sup>8</sup> The essential features of a local government are:

- i. It is established by law;
- ii. It is generally an elected body composed of members elected by the people of an area or locality;
- iii. It has the power of administration over a designated locality and the authority to manage the specified subjects;
- iv. It has the power to raise fund through taxation within its area; and
- v. It is ultimately accountable and subordinate to the national government.

Thus local governments are not true sovereign governments. As such they possess no independent sovereign powers or authority, except those delegated to them by State institutions and laws.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.0 Major Challenges of Local Government in Bangladesh

2.1 Local Government is acknowledged as a highly viable mechanism through which democratic processes and practices can be established and

<sup>5</sup> IX Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, New York, 1968, p.451

<sup>6</sup> Valent, William, Administrative Law, 2nd edn.

<sup>7</sup> 44 DLR (AD) 319

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. at 330, 336

<sup>9</sup> Valent, William, Local Government Law 2 (American Case Book Series)

participatory development ensured.<sup>10</sup> The constitution of the country provides for the creation of the local government bodies at every administrative level. In effect, LG in Bangladesh remained weak and perpetually dependent upon central government through various means of political and administrative control. Since the emergence of the country there have been frequent policy changes and rearrangements of the tiers of local government. At the same time, these bodies are alleged to have been exploited both by democratic and military national governments as means for political mobilization and consolidation of power, and not allowing them to operate as autonomous, decentralized local government institutions. The above has also been reflected in one of the important observations of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh-

...since independence from the British rule, these institutions fell victim to party politics or evil designs of autocratic regimes, passed through the ordeal of suppression, dissolution or management of their affairs by official bureaucrats or henchmen Government of the day.<sup>11</sup>

An overview of the growth and evolution of local government units in Bangladesh establishes the fact that these have all along been under the strict administrative control of the public bureaucracy and the close political control of the national government or party in power. As a result the local bodies could neither become politically or financially viable nor could they gain any credibility in the eyes of electorate.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 Lack of Freedom or Autonomy

Local self-government is perceived to be an expression of freedom in society. Liberty for the local communities to develop according to their own preferences was powerful ideological element in the introduction of local government systems in most countries of the world.<sup>13</sup> But the history of LG bodies of Bangladesh indicates that those institutions were not

<sup>10</sup> Khan, Z.R., 'Strengthening Local Government: Recent Experience and Future Agenda', keynote paper presented at the CPD-CARE Dialogue held in Dhaka, Dhaka, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), 2000, p.12.

<sup>11</sup> 1992, DLR (AD) 319

<sup>12</sup> CPD, Policy Brief on "Administrative Reform and Local Government": CPD Task Force Report, Dhaka: Center for Policy Dialogue, 2001, pp.11-13.

<sup>13</sup> Kjellberg, Francesco, "The Changing Values of Local Government", *Annals of the American Academy of Social Sciences*, 1995, No. 1, p.42.



allowed to develop independently, rather they were imposed from above at the behest of the central government.<sup>14</sup>

The LG bodies of Bangladesh are in such a condition that the question of 'freedom' is not perceived and valued properly. For example, the LG institutions are entitled to have Annual Development Plan (ADP) Block Grants from the national government. But there are unduly restrictive and strictly complied central guidelines for the use of the ADP Block Grant for Unions that inhibit the UP's development activities. In particular, the grants have been designed to be applied for specific investment sectors.<sup>15</sup> This pre-determined sectoral allocation thus seriously limits the scope of local level planning as well as the flexibility of local bodies to utilize the financial resources for satisfying the diversified and immediate development needs.<sup>16</sup>

The UP annual income and expenditure budgets are provisionally scrutinized and approved by three levels of central government officials - the UNO, the Assistant Director, Local Government (AD, LG) and Deputy Commissioner (DC). The annual budget is submitted to the UNO, scrutinized by the AD, LG and placed before the DC for final approval. This scrutiny extends beyond checking that a proper budget has been prepared which is consistent with the legislation<sup>17</sup>. In this regard Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan finds out that,

- i. Persistent tendency of the bureaucracy to control the LG institutions is a major constraint. Such control is manifested through frequent promulgation of the executive orders curtailing the authority of the LG.
- ii. There is no clear demarcation between jurisdiction of the members of the parliament and the local government representatives.

<sup>14</sup> Zafarullah, Habib and M. M. Khan, "Bureaucracy and Rural Development in Bangladesh" in Ali Farazmand (Ed.) Handbook of Bureaucracy, New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994, p.644.

<sup>15</sup> 15-50% for agriculture and irrigation, 25-60% in transport and communication, 10-15% in physical infrastructure and 10-25% in education and development.

<sup>16</sup> Ehsan, Mohammad, Rhetoric of Local Democracy in Bangladesh: An Analysis of Rural Local Government, Asian Affairs, Vol.24, 2002, p.57-58.

<sup>17</sup> Khan, Zarina R., Strengthening Local Government: Recent Experience and Future Agenda, keynote paper presented at the CPD-CARE Dialogue held in Dhaka, Dhaka: Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), 2000, p.6.

- iii. There is no alternative to financial autonomy for comprehensive development of the LG. In fact, absence of effective financial management made the LG a weaker and less acceptable institution. Most of the time, the LG bodies implement programs and decisions imposed by the central government that mostly are at variance with the local needs.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.3 Interference of the Members of Parliament (MPs)

One of the most self-serving actions of the ninth Parliament was to reintroduce the 1998 Upazila Act with some amendments. A unique feature of the 1998 Upazila Act is that it brought the Upazila Parishad under the controlling authority of the MPs by making them Advisers and requiring the Parishad to adhere to their advice. In addition, the legislature let the Zila Parishad and the Local Government Commission Ordinances lapse.<sup>19</sup> The new Parliament, however, passed new laws for City Corporation, Paurashava and Union Parishad, removing most significant reforms incorporated in the Ordinances, including women's representation on a rotational basis and disclosure requirements of candidates.<sup>20</sup> The new Upazila Parishad Ordinance<sup>21</sup> provides that the Members of Parliament would be advisers to the Upazila Parishads. According to the law, no development plans can be taken or no program can be implemented by the Upazila Parishads without the advice of the concerned MPs, and even any communication between Upazilas and the government must be informed to the MPs which explicitly contradicts the notion of modern government with its three branches - legislative, executive and judiciary - being mutually interdependent.<sup>22</sup> This act is in contradiction with Article 59 of the Constitution, which empowers the locally elected persons to run local affairs.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the interference by MPs in the UP affairs, particularly in development activities, has weakened the UPs' independence. The MPs often dictate the development activities to be undertaken, most of the

<sup>18</sup> Interview of Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan, (dated.23.07.11)

<sup>19</sup> Disclosure requirements were kept in the City Corporations Act, 2009

<sup>20</sup> The Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Ordinance, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Aminuzzaman, Salahuddin, "State of Art of Local Government in Bangladesh", As Profile, Vol.12, No.2 1998, p.7

<sup>22</sup> Siddiqui, Kamal, 1995, pp.440-444.

<sup>23</sup> Rahman, Md. Saidur, Challenges of Local Government Institutions Bangladesh, <http://EzineArticles.com/> (last visited:09.07.11)

times without consulting with the local elected representatives or assessing actual needs. Ruling party MPs tend to intrude more in the UPs' development planning. Even if there is no ruling party MP in the areas the local leaders of the ruling party meddle in the process.

So as per the law, the Upazila Parishads have lost their characteristics of local government bodies, since in the name of advice, the MPs are authorized to control the activities of the bodies. Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan said in this regard:

"The relationship between Members of Parliament (MPs) and the local government should be cooperative and complementary instead of domination and subjugation. MPs should not in any way interfere in the affairs of UPs. Respective jurisdictions of MPs, central government and local government have to be urgently redefined in a clear and specific manner to free the LG bodies from political interference."<sup>24</sup>

## 2.4 Corruption

Widespread corruption is another reason which hampers much functioning the LG institutions better. Funds for projects like Food for Work or disaster relief are all too often misused by local leaders; even VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) cards go to the people rather than those who really need it.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) had released a report which shows that almost 80 percent of VGF cardholders in Gaibandha District, northern Bangladesh, had not received the food subsidy: Out of 13 villages in Monohorpur Union, Palasbari sub-district, seven villages were on the list of beneficiaries; six villages were excluded altogether. Local political leaders had taken the VGF cards of 600 families who are in the beneficiary list but never received the food subsidy. Some of the cardholders receive 3 kilograms of rice instead of 15 kilograms earmarked.<sup>25</sup>

It has also been reported that the VGF cards distributed by Council and Committee which are composed of government officials or political activists failed to reach the poorest. It often goes to the families or

<sup>24</sup> Interview of Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan, (dated.23.07.11)

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.thehungersite.com/click to Give/th/article/National-food-program-in-Bangladesh-facing-serious-allegations302](http://www.thehungersite.com/click%20to%20Give/th/article/National-food-program-in-Bangladesh-facing-serious-allegations302) (last visited on 19.09.11)



relatives, or is used for the purpose of political activities. One of the main causes is that those who distribute the cards are either public servants or politicians who practice corruption widely.

The Transparency International in Bangladesh (TIB) has published their report on corruption by upazilas/thanas in Bangladesh.<sup>26</sup> It was reported that all of the upazilas/thanas except 16 had incidence of corruption. It shows that out of 496 Thanas, the highest number of report was found in Uttara thana (25) in Dhaka district which is 1.86% of total reported cases. Second highest corruption cases were reported for Ramna Thana of Dhaka district.

Table 1: Corruption at Upazila/Thana Administration

| Name of the Thana/Upazila | Reported cases (%- N) |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Uttara                    | 1.86 25               |
| Ramna                     | 1.19 16               |
| Sharsha                   | 0.97 13               |
| Sherpur (Bogra)           | 0.89 12               |
| Barisal Sadar             | 0.82 11               |
| Comilla Sadar             | 0.82 11               |
| Mymensingh Sadar          | 0.74 10               |

## 2.5 Undue Bureaucratic Control in Centre-Local Relations

In the context of the LG, central-local relations have always been an issue. In Bangladesh, statutorily, central-local relationship as provided in the statute has historically been authoritative in nature<sup>27</sup>. The central or the national government primarily exercises its control over the LG bodies through its field level government functionaries such as the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and the UNO, heads of district and Upazila administration respectively. In addition, LG units are further controlled through a plethora of intricate and complicated orders and circulars from different agencies/ ministries which very often contradict the original legal framework<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/index.php?page\\_id=337](http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/index.php?page_id=337) (last visited: 01.10.11)

<sup>27</sup> CPD, Policy Brief on "Administrative Reform and Local Government": CPD Task Force Report, Dhaka: Center for Policy Dialogue, 2001, P.14

<sup>28</sup> Siddiqui, 2005

Under the law, again, the national government is also empowered to carry out inquiries into the affairs of local government institutions. And after such inquiry, if the government considers that a LG unit is 'unable' to discharge its duties; or has 'failed' to meet its financial obligations; or otherwise exceeds or abuses its power, then the government may declare such LG bodies to be suspended for a period as may be specified by the law. This provision allows the district administration to axe an LG unit such as the UP at any time and consequently, make them extremely vulnerable to the political and administrative whims of the government. In this regard Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan observed that the constitution did not mention different aspects of local government management in detail as it did for the parliament, the executive and the judiciary. The composition, structure, election, functions, financial power, sources of income, rules of procedure, control of local bodies, monitoring have not been mentioned in any detail in the Constitution. Consequently, the central government used its unfettered authority to modify laws and rules relating to local government. This practice hindered consistency in the form and functions of the local government.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, the central government also exercises substantial financial and administrative control over the local government institutions in different ways. The annual budgets of the LG units are scrutinized and approved by different levels of central government agencies<sup>30</sup>. Again in the case of UP authority over the appointment and payment of salaries of the staff is held by central government bureaucracy<sup>31</sup>. The above facts in the context of UP, reveal that the LG units in Bangladesh are being constantly controlled by the national government through various mechanisms for almost every aspect of their operation and functioning. Such practices, in reality, have turned the local government institutions in Bangladesh into mere extension of the national government and of their various functionaries.

## 2.6 Lack of Institutional Capacity

Institutional capacity includes both human competence and logistics. Relevant studies reveal that the overwhelming majority of the chairmen

<sup>29</sup> Interview of Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan, (dated.23.07.11)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.unescap.org/lgstudy/country/Bangladesh> (last visited: 05.06.11)

<sup>31</sup> For example, the Local Government Ordinance requires, a UP to constitute a number of Standing Committees and for the formation of any additional committee it needs the formal approval of the DC.

and members of LG units lack knowledge and understanding of the operational procedures and functions of these bodies<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, for example, Union Parishads are required to maintain and preserve more than 100 registers (for general office management, village courts, test relief programs, food-for-work programs, VGDP and RMP). It is a huge task considering the managerial capacity of the said LG unit. In effect, very few registers are actually maintained. This is due to the fact that very little effort has been taken over the years to impart training in the relevant fields of local institutional operations to the elected officials and salaried staff particularly the Union Parishad Secretaries. Moreover, relevant institutions have inadequate facilities and the training modules are also out dated<sup>33</sup>.

Recently National Institute of Local Government (NILG) and Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) Bangladesh jointly conducted a study titled "Exploring the challenges and potentials of UP standing committees"<sup>34</sup>, which was intended to explore the role of standing committees in the decision making process at the UPs. The study report says that 60% of the committees are not functioning, and it identifies some major reasons for non-functioning of the standing committees, such as, apathy of UP chairmen, ignorance of members and lack of resources and proper monitoring system. The report says the UP chairmen dominate while taking decisions and do not think that the committees are very important in this regard<sup>35</sup>.

## 2.7 Lack of Efficiency

The efficiency of local self-government can be assessed by two ways. First by observing the kinds of tasks performed by LG bodies or in other words, how many and important functions are channelled through the LG bodies and secondly, by the fact of how much money a particular unit of LG generate as local resource from their area of jurisdiction and their effectiveness in spending money in the proper projects for the development of the particular area<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Aminuzzaman, Salahuddin, "State of Art of Local Government in Bangladesh", Asia Profile, Vol.12, No.2 1998

<sup>33</sup> CPD, Policy brief on "Administrative Reform and Local Government" CPD Task Force Report, Election 2001 : National Policy-Forum,Dhaka, 2001, p.13.

<sup>34</sup> Study report published on 6 May 2009,source: Rahman, Saidur.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Kjellberg (1995)



In Bangladesh, the LG traditionally have limited jurisdiction especially over some specific but again very limited development functions. The area of regulatory administration has always been kept aside from the purview of the role and functions of these bodies<sup>37</sup>. Powers and responsibilities of the local government are invariably defined in general and vague terms while the powers of the administration are enshrined in specific and precise terms. For example, the general power of the UP is to maintain law and order but the specific powers in this context lie with the magistracy and the police in terms of powers of arrest, bail and so forth<sup>38</sup>. The UPs are responsible for 43 functions,<sup>39</sup> however, in reality, most of the developmental functions for which LG units are made responsible under the legal framework, such as, family welfare, education, public health, social welfare, etc., are administered by different agencies of the national government<sup>40</sup>. For example, the UPs have no authority other than reviewing and reporting to the Upazila Nirbahi (Executive) Officer (UNO), a national government functionary. UPs virtually have no scope to get involved in the implementation of development projects initiated by these agencies at the local level<sup>41</sup>.

## 2.8 Inefficiency in Mobilizing Local Resources

LG bodies' performance in mobilising local resources in Bangladesh is also very poor. Though the LG regulations empowered them to mobilise resources from local sources through assessment and levy of taxes, leasing of local Hats and Bazars, water bodies etc, but they do not receive the total resources generated from their entitled sources<sup>42</sup>. Another feature of financial control is that the UNO receives funds transferred from UP mobilized resources like share of land transfer tax, market lease money

<sup>37</sup> Hussain, A., Sarker, A. E. and Rahman M., "Governance in Bangladesh: An Analytical Review", Theoretical Perspective, Volume 1, Number 1, 1994, p. 78.

<sup>38</sup> Rahman, Hossain Zillur (2001), Re-thinking Local Governance Towards A Livelihoods Focus, Dhaka: Power and Participation Research Centre, p.6.

<sup>39</sup> In the following categories: a) civic functions, b) police and defense functions, c) revenue and general administrative functions, d) development functions and e) functions which may be transferred by the government.

<sup>40</sup> CPD, 2001, p.11.

<sup>41</sup> Ehsan, p.62.

<sup>42</sup> For example, in the case of UPs, of the revenue generated from the leasing of the rural market, 25 percent is retained by national government, 10 percent by the Upazila, and 15 percent is earmarked for the maintenance of the market, and the rest 50 percent is the entitlement of the UP

for retention in the accounts maintained by him for later distribution to UPs on basis of prescribed government guidelines<sup>43</sup>. This indicates that the UPs virtually have no direct control even over resources generated from its own jurisdictions. Such practice of regulating and controlling of the financial resources by the national government functionaries keeps the LG units ever resource poor and resource dependent on the national government<sup>44</sup>.

## 2.9 Lack of Accountability and Transparency

Accountability and transparency of operations and functions of the LG units are essential for ensuring their credibility to the electorate. This can only be achieved through adequate supervision and monitoring. Legally, the Monitoring & Evaluation Wing of the Local Government Department of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD&C) is responsible for monitoring the functions of the local bodies. But it has been observed that the monitoring mechanism of the said wing is weak, inadequate and ineffective<sup>45</sup>. The other mechanism is through the inspection and visits by the field level government functionaries, such as, the UNO and the ADLG. But their functions are more of controlling nature than of monitoring<sup>46</sup>.

Table 2: Survey Report on Accountability, Transparency and Effectiveness of LG<sup>47</sup>

| Question                                         | Yes | No  | Others |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|--------|
| 1. Enhance the power of UP                       | 47% | 30% | 23%    |
| 2. Enhance authority in budget making            | 17% | 70% | 13%    |
| 3. Local people's participation in budget making | 93% | 0%  | 7%     |
| 4. Tax collection from locality                  | 13% | 80% | 7%     |

<sup>43</sup> Ehsan, p.63

<sup>44</sup> Khan, Zarina R., Strengthening Local Government: Recent Experience and Future Agenda, keynote paper presented at the CPD-CARE Dialogue help in Dhaka, Dhaka: Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), 2000, p.7.

<sup>45</sup> CPD, 2001,p.16

<sup>46</sup> Ehsan,pp.66-68.

<sup>47</sup> A study on Ambaria and Shomoshpur union parishads in Kushtia Zila dated 09.07.11 and 10.07.11. Information were collected from the local people of two Union Parishads of Kushtia Zila. Fifteen person from each Union, totaling 30 person participated in the survey. They were asked questions on 14 different aspects of the functioning of UP.

|                                                |     |     |     |
|------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 5. Support from UP members                     | 33% | 47% | 20% |
| 6. Satisfied with the role of UP members       | 27% | 67% | 7%  |
| 7. Delivery of information on LGED programs    | 90% | 0%  | 10% |
| 8. Enhance the educational qualification       | 63% | 7%  | 30% |
| 9. Limit the UP election expenditure           | 53% | 10% | 37% |
| 10. Observance of UP election conditions       | 17% | 37% | 47% |
| 11. Enhance the power of women members         | 87% | 0%  | 13% |
| 12. UP Standing Committee properly functions   | 10% | 27% | 63% |
| 13. Political interference in welfare programs | 77% | 3%  | 20% |
| 14. Village police performs properly           | 7%  | 63% | 30% |

## 2.10 Defects in Representativeness

In the Constitution of Bangladesh, it has been articulated in clear terms that the state will encourage LG institutions composed of elected representatives. But, so far, the sociological representation is not proper and effective in Bangladesh. Councilors of LG bodies are still disproportionately male and middle-aged and that women, younger people and ethnic minorities are all under-represented, though there has been some progress in recent years in regards to women<sup>48</sup>. However, although the entry of rural women into the formal structure of the UP is a landmark in the history of political participation of Bengali women<sup>49</sup>, but the post election experience of elected women members in the Ups has not been encouraging. Reports indicate that they are being systematically discriminated and abused, denied power to take decisions, implement schemes and deliver services to people, are intimidated and even raped by male councilors of the same Parishad. They also face gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the UP office.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Shamim, Ishrat and Mahbuba Nasreen, "Gender and Local Governance: A New Discourse in Development", The Journal of Social Studies, Volume 94-95, 2002, p.11.

<sup>49</sup> In 1997, for the first time in the history of Bangladesh, direct election for women representative was held at the Union Parishad. An amendment to the Union Parishad (Ordinance No. LI of 1983) was made in 1997 (Act 20 of 1997) which provided for exclusive reservation of three seats for women to be elected directly on the basis of adult franchise. It further provided that a woman would be free to contest general seats not reserved for women.

<sup>50</sup> CPD, Strengthening Local Government: Recent Experience and Future Agenda, Report No. 29, Dhaka: Center for Policy Dialogue, 2000, p. 22.



## 2.11 Bureaucratic Supervision over Local Level Infrastructural Development

Local level infrastructure development is one of the important functions of the LG. These projects are generally implemented through food aid and grants received from the national government. Food aids are channeled through food aid and grants received from the national government. In this area, for example, the role of UP as a LG unit is again limited to the selection of the possible projects only. Such selected projects are finally approved by the UNO in consultation with the Upazila Engineer (UE) and the Project Implementation Officer (PIO)<sup>51</sup>. The above type of scenario clearly suggests that the role and functions of LG units are restricted in the area of development administration. In addition, the other functions of the LG units are again subjected to bureaucratic supervision and guidance.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan finds out the following constraints which hinder the proper functioning of local government,

- i. Lack of proper legal authority in carrying out public programs and deliver public services is a major practical constraint.
- ii. There exists serious capacity gap within the LG bodies in rendering its responsibilities in terms of manpower, training, and supply of logistics.
- iii. Administrative complexities and red tapes hamper LG activities.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.12 Frequent Changes of Local Government Institutions

The structure of LG in Bangladesh has always been dependent upon the nature of the regime and the outcome of the power struggle at the centre. Rather than the permanency of the existing local government structure since its independence, regular changes in it with the changes of successive governments are permanent in Bangladesh. In spite of the clear-cut vision of local government in the Constitution of Bangladesh, 'local government for the central government' is a legacy which Bangladesh inherited from British India, but which has been strengthened by the passage of time<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Ehsan, p. 62.

<sup>52</sup> Khan, Zarina R., "Decentralised Governance: Trials and Triumphs" in Raunaq Jahan (Ed.) Bangladesh: Promises and Performance, Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000, p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Dr. Mohammad Mohabbat Khan

<sup>54</sup> Ehsan, pp. 68-69.

Local government has long been considered a favoured political mechanism by our army rulers (General Ziaur Rahman and General H. M. Ershad) because it served their purposes to rule. The bureaucracy took quite the opposite view for local government as they consider local government a rival political and administrative force to which they are supposed to surrender or share most of their power<sup>55</sup>. Elected political governments have usually taken a view in between these two extremes. There has been a reluctance to revive, or continue, local government systems that were established by previous rulers<sup>56</sup>. As a result, local government in Bangladesh has always been a rolling stone in the power struggle between the generals, short-sighted politicians, and over-ambitious bureaucrats. In the shadow of national politics, and in competition with a powerful and integrated all-purpose bureaucracy, local government could never become a self-sustaining, stable and self-governing set of institutions. Rather it has been successively attacked by different political parasites trying to flourish and survive on its life force<sup>57</sup>.

It has been observed that, the LG bodies had never been, in the past, and even so in liberated Bangladesh, 'self-governing' bodies in the true sense of the term. These could simply be labeled as extensions of the national government with guides and limits local participation. Consequently, LG units have always been institutionally and financially weak, poorly managed and lacks social and political credibility.<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately all reform efforts fell short of expectation in bringing about desired changes in the public administration and local government systems of the country for a number of reasons. But for the sustenance and institutionalization of democratic tradition, values and culture in the polity, an efficient, result oriented, representative, participatory, gender sensitive, transparent, corruption free and neutral public administration and local government system are required.

### 3.0 Case Law Analysis Relating to Local Government

To examine the provisions of our Constitution concerning local government, some landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh have been discussed in this chapter.

<sup>55</sup> CPD, 2001

<sup>56</sup> Aminuzzaman, Salahuddin, "State of Art of Local Government in Bangladesh", Asia Profile, Vol. 12, No. 2 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Ehsan, p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> CPD, 2001, P. 1

### 3.1 Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir Vs. Bangladesh, 1992, 44 DLR (AD) 319

3.1.1 Fact: The Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act, 1991, passed on 18 September and restored Arts. 59, 60 and the sentence of Art. 11. On 23 November 1991, the Upazila Parishad<sup>59</sup> was abolished through the promulgation of the Local Government (Upazila Parishad and Upazila Administration Reorganization) (Repeal) Ordinance, 1991. The Constitutional validity of the Ordinance was ultimately challenged before the court in the case of Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir Vs. Bangladesh.

3.1.2 Issue: It was contended in Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir Vs. Bangladesh that having regard to the provisions of Art. 59 read with Arts. 9 and 11 of the Constitution, Parliament can not abolish an existing tier of local government.

3.1.3 Judgment: The Appellate Division rejected the contention holding that the Upazila Parishads were not local government bodies in conformity with the provisions of Art. 59 and no provision of the Constitution has been violated by the abolition.

With regard to the continuity of the system of local government institutions, the then Chief Justice of Bangladesh, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed observed in the case<sup>60</sup>:

"The local government is an integral part of the democratic polity of the country and the local government institution may be altered, reorganized or restructured, and their powers and functions may be enlarged or curtailed by Act of Parliament<sup>61</sup>, but as the system as a whole cannot be abolished."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> which had been established by 1982 Martial Law Administrator.

<sup>60</sup> 1992, 44 DLR (AD) 319, at 336

<sup>61</sup> See *City of Worcester v. Worcester Consolidated Street Ry CO*, 196 US 539, 550 (in the absence of any Constitutional restriction the legislature may at any time repeal the Charter of a municipal corporation or otherwise terminate its existence and provide other and different means for the government of the territory lying within the limits of the former municipality); *W.W. Atkins v. Kansas*, 191 US 207, 221 (As legislature may create a municipality, so it may abridge and control); *U.S. v. Baltimore & Ohio R.R. Co.*, 21 L. Ed. 597.

<sup>62</sup> 1992, 44 DLR (AD) 319 (These bodies made great contribution to the country's democracy, which is now a basic structure of the Constitution. With the revival of the Constitutional backing for 'local Government' these old institutions can not be abolished without damaging the democratic fabric of the country-per S. Ahmed CJ).



The Supreme Court observed, further<sup>63</sup> :

"Local government is meant for management of local affairs by locally elected persons. If government's officers or their henchmen are brought to run the local bodies, there is no sense in retaining them as local government bodies ... Local government is an integral part of the democratic polity of the country."<sup>64</sup>

"Local government, as a concept and as an institution, was already known to have possessed certain common characteristics, namely, local elections, procedure for public accountability, independent and substantial sources of income, clear areas for independent action and certainty of powers and duties and the conditions under which they would be exercised".<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the Supreme Court criticized the steps taken by various autocratic regimes both before and after the independence of Bangladesh regarding local government institutions thus:

"...since independence from the British rule, these institutions fell victim to party politics or evil designs of autocratic regimes, passed through the ordeal of suppression, dissolution or management of their affairs by official bureaucrats or henchmen nominated by Government of the day."<sup>66</sup>

The structure of local government was left fully and completely in the hands of Parliament. No one can claim a vested right in any particular form or in any particular number of tiers of local government. Within the framework of Articles 59 and 60, Parliament retains the power of continually re organizing, re structuring and re modeling the local government institutions in the light of experiences gained to meet the changing needs of changing times. It is to be remembered however that local government is a part of the constitutional system and therefore Chapter III of Part IV of the Constitution containing Articles 59 and 60

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<sup>63</sup> 1992, 44 DLR (AD) 319

<sup>64</sup> Id. at 330,336

<sup>65</sup> 1992, 44 DLR (AD) 319.

<sup>66</sup> Id. at 341-342

<sup>67</sup> Id. at 329-330

cannot ever be kept as a dead letter. Local Government cannot be abolished altogether. It must exist in some form, in some tier or tiers at any given point of time to give a meaning to Chapter III of Part IV and to justify its rationale, validity and existence, It is not a mere adornment in the Constitution.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.2 Anwar Hossain Manju v. Bangladesh,<sup>69</sup> 16BLT(HCD) 2008

In this case the High Court division, declared the appointment of District Ministers by a government notification unconstitutional, clearly forbids MPs from getting involved in local development activities the High Court states in this regard:

"... Neither the Ministers nor the members of Parliament can abdicate the functions of the elected members of the Local Government Bodies in respect of their functions in the concerned administrative units... While the Executive Government under Chapter-II would run the administration, development and other ancillary matters for the entire country as a whole, but at the same time the people at the grass-root level should also be made responsible for the development of their own respective areas, on the formation of local government bodies, in order to bring the development and also administration to their door steps so that they can be responsible as well as self-reliant and also become part of the over-all nation building process."

### 3.3. Ziaur Rahman Khan v. Bangladesh, 49 DLR 491

3.3.1 Fact: In this Writ Petition, Rule was issued calling upon the respondents to show cause as to why section 16A (16Ka) contained in Rangamati Hill Tract District Local Government Council (Amendment) Act, 1997, Khagrachari Hill Tract District Local Government Council (Amendment) Act, 1997 and Bandarban Hill Tract District Local Government Council (Amendment) Act, 1997, should not be declared to have been made in contravention of the Constitution.

<sup>68</sup> Kamal, Mustafa J in id, at 343

<sup>69</sup> Anwar Hossain Manju v. Bangladesh, 16BLT (HCD) 2008

3.3.2 Judgment: It has been held that, the provision for interim council to be appointed by the government for the Chittagong Hill Districts is not unconstitutional as such a council will, in fact, come in aid of and facilitate the implementation of Arts. 59 and 60 of the Constitution.<sup>70</sup>

The observations made by Justice Md. Mozammel Hoque<sup>71</sup> are worth-quoting:

"Section 16Ka has been added in order to meet a situation if for the reasons and circumstances beyond control, the election of the councils cannot be held within the stipulated time."

It is also held that, interim council will be created only to meet an unforeseen situation and insertion of the provision by section 16Ka in the Act itself will not in any way affect the very fundamental structure of the Constitution.<sup>72</sup>

#### 4.0 Recommendations

The following specific suggestions are made for the LG system to make the local bodies truly decentralized, institutionally effective, financially viable, participatory, gender sensitive, transparent and accountable:

- Political parties should declare their political commitment to initiate concrete legal measures for ensuring the establishment of decentralized local government system in the country and express this in explicit terms in their respective election manifestos. The committed LG system should be based on the principle of devolution of power, authority and functions; resource sharing; and with appropriate mechanism for effective representation and participation of women and other disadvantaged groups. Political parties should - i) reach consensus on the number of tiers of local government and make legal provisions of elections to all LG units (tiers) simultaneously; and ii) ensure establishment and continuity of local government units once decided upon.
- The whole range of functions of government should be divided into three categories namely, Reserved, Transferred and Residual. The national government would retain the functions under the

<sup>70</sup> 49 DLR 491.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, at para 20.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, at para 20 & 21.



Reserved list. While functions under the Transferred list would fall under the jurisdiction of LG. On the other hand, functions under the Residual List may be placed under the local government. This division of functions has to be materialized by transferring powers from the national to the local government through specific and clear-cut provisions.

- The tiers of LG decided upon must have access to their own finances. An effective mechanism of accountability of the expenditures from such funds has to be ensured by regular auditing and reporting. Apart from this right of Local Resource Mobilization, each of the LG units should have stipulated share of the central government revenue earmarked in the national budget to be distributed on the basis of a pro rata population strength and other relevant criteria. This share of revenue should be determined by a high level committee including representatives from relevant quarters and experts on local government revenue matters.
- The deputed officials must be made responsible and accountable to LG units. One effective means of achieving it is by making the mandatory provision of the Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) of such officials to be initiated and signed by the Chairpersons of concerned LG units so long they are on deputation. And this ACR will be the basis for onward career development of the deputed staff. In addition, LG units should have the authority to hire and fire necessary staff / officials of its own.
- The Members of Parliament (MPs) shall not be involved in any manner with the affairs of the LG units because this violates the Principle of Separation of Power.
- Specified number of seats for women have to be reserved at every tier of the LG system. The chairman and members including women members should be directly elected to all LG units.
- The elected members of each of the local government units shall be given distinct portfolios on the basis of functions given to them.
- The public accountability through the mechanisms of transparency of LG functions and financial management i.e., budgeting and development planning and implementation thereof shall be activated and regularly monitored.

- Reorganization and building capacities of the national training institutes like NILG, BARD and RDA should be initiated.
- An independent local government commission has to be established for funding and monitoring of local government activities. Local government representatives shall be accountable to that commission for their actions.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion reveals that though the history of LG in Bangladesh is centuries old but still today, the citizens of Bangladesh have not experienced a stable LG structure. Though the vision of LG is clearly articulated in the Constitution of Bangladesh, but due to political interference and lack of political will, central control is still prevailing despite LG body's untapped potential. It is to be noticed that successive governments felt the necessity to abolish the existing local government institutions and start afresh, perhaps to create political base in accordance with its own choice and preference<sup>73</sup>. As a result, local government in Bangladesh has always been a rolling stone in the power struggle between the generals, short-sighted politicians, and over-ambitious bureaucrats. In the shadow of national politics, and in competition with a powerful and integrated all-purpose bureaucracy, local government could never become a self-sustaining, stable and self-governing set of institutions. Rather it has been successively attacked by different political parasites trying to flourish and survive on its life force<sup>74</sup>. The noble words of Winston Churchill "to change is to improve, to change often is to improve often, to change continuously is human endeavour for perfection"<sup>75</sup> have never been reflected in the laws enacted by the various governments of Bangladesh concerning local government. Finally, we can say that the state of local government system in Bangladesh is not very impressive in any respect. If there is less control from the part of central government and if they value LG as an autonomous body then there is ample opportunity for Bangladesh as a real democratic country both at local and national level.

<sup>73</sup> Bari, Dr. M. Ershadul, Local Government Institution at the Thana/Upazila Level in Bangladesh, Part-F Vol. VII (1), June 1996, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Ehsan, Mohammad, Rhetoric of Local Democracy in Bangladesh: An Analysis of Rural Local Government, Asian Affairs, Vol.24, 2002, p. 68.

<sup>75</sup> Cited in Bari, p. 19.

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