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ত্রয়স্ত্রিংশত্তম সংখ্যা

ডিসেম্বর ২০০৮/অগ্রহায়ণ ১৪১১

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Economy of Ancient Bengal - Roots to the Development of Bangladesh : An Overview

Mallick Anwar Hossain*

Dr. Abdul Maleque Talukder **

Abstract : Geographical evidence indicates that much of Bangladesh were formed 1 to 6.5 million years ago during the tertiary era. Human habitation in this region is, therefore, likely to be very old. The people of the ancient Bengal were very much dynamic. They were involved in different types of economic activities due to the necessity of life. Ancient Bengal was very much resourceful with its fertile land, natural beauties, natural resources like, rivers, forest, crops and different kind of flora and fauna. Besides, people of the ancient Bengal were technically sound. Environment of Bengal influenced people to participate in different types of economic activities. With the growth of population, however, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture. Although agriculture formed the predominant feature of Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries were developed at a very early age and played important parts in the life of the people. The most noteworthy among these seem to have been textiles, sugar, metalwork, stonework and pottery. The role of the rivers in the economic geography of Bengal is very much important. They fertilized the soil by the silt, which they carried; they eliminated, to a large extent, the need for artificial irrigation and being navigable for inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. The raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloths came into Bengal from China and were exported to Damirica by the way of the river Ganges. Two factors seem to have promoted the early growth of economy of the ancient Bengal: first, the qualitative and quantitative development of Bengal's industries and secondly, the unrivalled facilities for movement afforded by the seacoast and river-systems of the Bengal. The use of metallic coins of the ancient Bengal as the medium of exchange marks a big forward step in civilization, especially in its commercial and economic aspect. The article looks into the economy of ancient Bengal as development roots of present Bangladesh economy. The article also looks into the socio-cultural trends of ancient Bengal.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh have a long history with its natural resources and geographical position from the ancient period. It is also resourceful with its natural beauty, fertile land, river routes and economic activities. It is said, "Bangladesh has a hundred gates open for entrance but not one for departure" - Bernier. Bangladesh is a new state in an ancient land. An

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American political scientist has described it as "a country challenged by contradictions". On the face of it, the recent twists and turns of her history are often inconsistent. It is neither a distinct geographical entity, nor a well-defined historical unit. Nevertheless, it is the homeland of the ninth largest nation in the world whose groupings for a political identity were protracted, intense and agonizing. The key to these apparent contradictions lies in her history. Etymologically, the word Bangladesh is derived from the cognate "Vanga" which was first mentioned in the Hindu scripture Aitareya Aranyaka (composed between 500 B.C. and 500 A.D.). Legend has it that Bengal was first colonized by Prince Vanga, the son of King Bali and Queen Sudeshna of the Lunar dynasty. According to linguists, the roots of the term Vanga may be traced to languages in the adjoining areas. One school of linguists maintains that the word "Vanga" is derived from the Tibetan word "Bans" which implies "wet and moist". According to this interpretation, Bangladesh literally refers to a wetland. Another school is of the opinion that the term "Vanga" is derived from Bodo (aborigines of Assam) words "Bang" and "la" which connote "wide plains." Geographical evidence indicates that much of Bangladesh were formed 1 to 6.5 million years ago during the tertiary era. Human habitation in this region is, therefore, likely to be very old. The implements discovered in Deolpota village in neighboring West Bengal State of India suggest that paleolithic civilization in the region existed about one hundred thousand years ago. The evidence on paleolithic civilization in Bangladesh region is limited to a stone implement in Rangamati and a hand axe in the hilly tip of Feni district. They are likely to be 10,000 to 15,000 years old. New Stone Age in the region lasted from 3,000 B.C. to 1,500 B.C. Neolithic tools comparable to Assam group were found at Sitakunda in Chittagong. Hand axes and chisels showing close affinity to neolithic industries in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have been discovered at Mainamati near Comilla. The thinly forested laterite hills in eastern Bengal dotted with fertile valleys provided a congenial environment for neolithic settlements. However, the archaeological evidence on transition from stone age to metal age in this region is still missing.

Bangladesh have a history of two thousand years. Bangladesh is naturally resourceful from its very beginning to present. It has also colorful scenic resources. So world famous tourist Huean Saung and Ibna Batuta visited the country for the fulfillment of their mental thirsty. Evidence from the history it was observed that the Portugies, Olandaus and East India Company selected the Bengal as business place. The British also ruled the country in the backside of the screen but in favor of the East India Company. So it is historically proved that the Ancient Bengal was very much resourceful with its fertile land, business field, natural beauties,

natural resources like, rivers, forest, crops and different kind of flora and fauna. Besides, people of the ancient Bengal were technically sound. So it is assumed that there remained much more economic activities in ancient Bengal. The economy is one of the important factors for development of a country and as well as people welfare. The economic condition of ancient Bengal is the foundation of present economy of Bangladesh. The trends of economic development in Bangladesh are not smoothly run on.

The article looks into the economic conditions of ancient Bengal. The materials available for the reconstruction of the economic history of Bengal in ancient times are extremely meager. The paper is based entirely on secondary data which encompass relevant books, journals and web page information.

2. Geographical Background of Bangladesh

Bangladesh passed a large history with its origin. Four ancient historical territorial units deserve consideration in the context of modern Bangladesh: Pundra, Vanga, Samatata and Harical. The founder of these territorial units was Gupta. The Gupta established the territorial units by removing forestland for crop cultivation (A. Kader, 1998). At present Bangladesh lies between 20 34 N and 26 38 N latitudes and between 88 01 and 92 41 E longitudes, covering 143,998 square km and comprising, according to the recent estimates, a population of about 135 million (BBS, 2003). The south parts of Bangladesh lies the Bay of Bengal and other three parts covered by India.

Physiology: In 1957 B.L.C. *Johnson (1957)* offered a physiological classification of Bangladesh with 9 distinct areas according to the land type. The term physiography has been taken to include the combination of the geographical materials in which particulars kinds of soil have formed and the landscape in which they occur.

Soils: twenty-one general soil types have been recognized for Bangladesh. These soil types have been grouped in to three physiographic units: floodplain soils, hill soils and terrace soils (*H. Brammer, 1971*).

Climate: Bangladesh shows the broad features of temperature regime. It begins to rise from end of March and maximum in May to July. But in the month of July rainfalls occurs and continue up to September. In the month of December to February there arisen cold weather. Sometimes Bangladesh faced south-western depressions that cause high tide and storm-waves, the coastal areas take a tremendous battering.

Vegetation and Fauna: Many kinds of fruit tree, timber yielding plants, and forest trees are grown in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is said to possess

200 species of animal, 750 species of birds, 150 species of reptiles and batrachians and over 200 species of marine and freshwater fishes (*H.E. Rashid, 1977*).

Rivers and channels: Bangladesh is said the country of rivers. Most of the town and business centre was established near the side of the river. Internal and external business goods easily move from one place to another through rivers and channels.

3. Political Dynamics of Ancient Bengal (326 B.C. to 1204 A.D.)

The earliest historical reference to organized political life in the Bangladesh region is usually traced to the writings on Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C. The Greek and Latin historians suggested that Alexander the Great withdrew from India anticipating the valiant counter attack of the mighty Gangaridai and Prasioi empires, which were located in the Bengal region. It is not, however, clearly known who built these empires. Literary and epigraphic evidence refer to the rise and fall of a large number of principalities in the region which were variously known as: Pundra Vardhana (northern Bangladesh), Gauda (parts of West Bengal and Bangladesh), Dandabhukii (southern West Bengal), Karna Subarna (Part of West Bengal), Varendra (northern Bangladesh), Rarh (southern areas of West Bengal), Summha Desa (south-western West Bengal), Vanga (central Bangladesh), Vangala (southern Bangladesh), Subarnabithi (central Bangladesh), Navyabakashika (central and southern Bangladesh), Lukhnauti (North Bengal and Bihar) and Samatata (Eastern Bangladesh). There are two schools of opinion regarding the political evolution of ancient Bengal. According to one school, the Bangladesh region in the ancient period was an integral part of mighty empires in north India. These historians maintain that Gangaridai and Prasioi empires were succeeded by the Mauryas (4th to 2nd century B.C.), the Guptas (4th-5th century A.D.), the empire of Sasanka (7th century A.D.), the Pala empire (750-1162 A.D), and the Senas (1162-1223 A.D). Specially, the Pala Empire, which lasted for more than four hundred years and reached its zenith in eighth and ninth centuries under the leadership of Dharmapala and Devapala is cited as an example of Bengal's political genius. The revisionist historians are of the opinion that the traditional interpretation overstates the role of all-India empires in the political life of the Bangladesh region. They maintain that epigraphic evidence suggests that only some of the areas, which now constitute Bangladesh, were occasionally incorporated in the larger empires of South Asia. In their views, political fragmentation, not empire, was the historical destiny of Bangladesh region in the ancient times. Inscriptions attest to the existence of a succession of independent kingdoms in southern and eastern Bengal. These local kingdoms included the realms of Vainyagupta

(6th century), the Faridpur kings (6th century), the Bhadra dynasty (circa 600-650 A.D.), Khadaga dynasty (circa 650-700 A.D.), Natha and Rata dynasty (circa 750-800 A.D.), the rulers of Harikela (circa 800-900 A.D.), Chandra dynasty (circa 900-1045 A.D.), Varman dynasty (circa 1080-1150 A.D.) and Pattikera dynasty (circa 1000-1100 A.D.).

Opinions differ on the reasons for political fragmentation in Bengal. Some scholars attribute it to Bangladesh's topography especially to difficulties in negotiating its swamps and marshes, its unending maze of rivers and creeks and dislocations caused by the Bengali rainy season. Others emphasize the frontier character of the region, which attracted from north India a continuous stream of rebels, heretics, and malcontents who destabilized the political life. Some scholars maintain that political fragmentation was fostered by a lack of corporate life at the village level. Specially, the village organizations were weakest in the eastern and southern areas; the corporate life of villages gradually increased in the western areas. Political fragmentation was, therefore, endemic in eastern and southern areas, which now constitute Bangladesh. The primacy of the individual in social life and the concomitant institutional vacuum in Bangladesh region was not, however, an unmitigated shortcoming. The weakness of social, political and economic institutions provided a congenial environment for freedom of religion. The Buddhist rulers continued to rule Bengal long after the resurgence of Brahmanism in the rest of north India. Nowhere in South Asia were the deviations from the Brahmanical orthodoxy so glaring as in the Bengal zone. The esoteric cults like Vajrayana, Shajayana, Kalachakrayana, Nathism, the Bauls and the folk cults flourished in pre-Muslim Bengal. Throughout history, small kingdoms blossomed and withered like wild flowers in the region. In an environment characterized by weak political institutions, heresy, heterodoxy and alien faiths thrived in defiance of the Brahminical orthodoxy.

4. Ancient Civilization

Bangladesh is the frontier of South Asian civilization. It is the natural bridge between South and South East Asia. Because of its location, Bangladesh was the intermediary in trade and commerce between the South Asian sub-continent and the Far East. This region, as a distinguished historian observed, "played an important part in the great cultural association between the diverse civilizations of Eastern and South Eastern Asia which forms such a distinguished feature in the history of this great continent for nearly one thousand and five hundred years". Tradition has it that a Bengalee Prince Vijayasingha who established the first political organization in that island colonized Sri Lanka. Gadadhara, another Bengalee, founded a kingdom in the Madras

State in South India. Bangladesh region also played a seminal role in disseminating her beliefs, art and architecture in the wider world of Asia. The Bengali missionaries preached Mahayana Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago, Kumaraghosha, the royal preceptor of the Sailendra emperors of Java, Sumatra and Malaya peninsula, was born in Gauda. The Bengali scholar Santirakshit was one of the founders of the Buddhist monastic order in Tibet. The great Buddhists sage Dipankara Srijnana, also known as Atish (10th-11th century) reformed the monastic order in Tibet. The Bengalee scholars Shilabhadra, Chandragomin. Abhayakaragupta, Jetari and Jnanasrimitra were venerated as great theologians in the Buddhist world. Ancient Bangladesh also witnessed the flowering of temple, stupa and monastic architecture as well as Buddhist art and sculpture. There was discernible influence of the Pala art of Bengal on Javanese art. There was a close affinity between the scripts used on certain Javanese sculptures and pro-Bengali alphabet. A group of temples in Burma were built on the model of Bangladeshi temples. The architecture and iconographic ideas of Bengal inspired architects, sculptors and artists in Cambodia and the Indonesian archipelago. The influence of Pala art in Bengal could be easily traced in Nepalese and Tibetan paintings, as well as in Tang A.

5. Rural-Urban Settlement and the Economy

The most noteworthy fact concerning the economic life of the ancient Bengal is the preponderance of rural settlements. The people established themselves in villages, and organized there lands-the fields, meadow and woodlands to serve their essential needs. The rural people lived in compact groups and not in widely scattered habitations. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture. The village also contained ordinary roads and paths. A few villages are also stated to have been in possession of woodlands or jungles, which meet their fire needs. It is thus clear that various types of land attached to the village which organized them for exploitation according to certain systems and customary practices, so as best to satisfy human needs.

Bangladesh was primarily a land of village; town settlements were by no means rare. References have already been made to a large number of these towns as known from epigraphic and literary evidence. There are three factors of growth of this town: first, it was a place of pilgrimage; secondly, it was the seat of a court or the capital of province; and finally, it was advantageously situated along the main trade route of North Bengal. A few towns primarily developed due to administrative and political reasons and also possibilities of trade in the towns. Further, an analysis of the sites and positions occupied by the ancient towns of the Bengal shows that they were of such a geographical character that they

could be utilized as 'nodes' or centers of routes by land or by water. It is clear that most of the rural population was mainly dependent on soil and its product i.e. agricultural activities. The urban people involved wide variety of functions like, commercial, industrial, political, judicial and military. The most distinctive characteristics of the towns were their comparative richness and luxury.

6. Land Tenures and People Livelihood

Land was the bedrock of ancient Bengal's political economy. It was the main source of wealth and the chief support of life. Even so, our knowledge of the system of land tenure as they obtained in this province in the ancient times is extremely vague and incomplete. Most of the early copperplate grants refer to the sale or gift of wastelands for pious purposes. Inscriptions ranging from the eighth to the twelfth century, and belong to Pala, Sena and other contemporary dynasties, introduce a new things. Kings in favour of temples and religious foundations with rare exceptions made these. The conditions and immunities attaching to these grants are found enumerated in the copperplate charters, which register them. In the early stage of the ancient Bengal the tenant enjoyed their land without rant. It is obvious that these were grants in perpetuity, rent-free, and accompanied with the assignment of the all revenues according to the crown. They made over to the donee merely the state share of the produce and other state right in the land alienated or convey to him the proprietorship of the land as well, that is, an out and out gift of soil and revenue both.

7. The Economic Activities of Ancient Bengal

7.1 Agriculture and the Economy of Ancient Bengal

The beginnings of agriculture in Bengal, as in the rest of India, have to be traced back to the pre-historic past. Even so, it seems very probable that in the initial stage both settlement and agriculture followed the courses of the great river systems of the province, which acted as powerful fertilizing agents of the soil in their neighborhood. With the growth of population, however, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. One can discern indication of this extension of cultivation in the copperplate inscriptions of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. It is possible, though we have no positive evidence to prove it, that this movement of agricultural force and varying effect from century to century, and from region to region. The founder of these territorial units was Gupta. The Gupta establish the territorial units by removing forestland for crop cultivation. It seems that in the initial stage both settlement and agriculture followed the courses of the great river -systems of the Bengal acted as powerful fertilizing agents of the soil in their

neighborhood. The role of the rivers in the economic geography of Bengal cannot be over-estimated. They fertilized the soil by the silt, which they carried; they eliminated, to a large extent, the need for artificial irrigation; and being navigable far inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. With the growth of population, however, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture.

The pressure of a growing population, the growing desire of priests for material prosperity, and the religious zeal of kings, all served in various ways to organize. A widespread attack on some of the 'negative' lands of the province, which settlement and agriculture had at first avoided. Concerning agricultural practice as it obtained in ancient Bengal, it is not possible to draw any comprehensive picture. It seems certain, however, that paddy was cultivated from a remote antiquity as the staple food-crop of the people. Rice is one of the most important crops of ancient Bengal. Rice, as we all know, is sown in three different ways - broadcasts, by drill, and by transplantation from a seedbed where it has been broadcast sown. Of these, the third method is, as a rule, the least risky and the most profitable. That it was known and practiced in this province at least as early as the fifth century A.D. seems clear from the aforesaid statement of the great Sanskrit poet. Another food-crop cultivated was probably sugarcane. The classical author, Aelian, speaks of a kind of honey expressed from reeds, which grew among the prasioi. Lucan says that the Indians near the Ganges used to quaff sweet juices from tender reeds. Besides the above, contemporary records mention a variety of other crops grown in different parts of Bengal.

7.2 Industry and the Economy of Ancient Bengal

Although agriculture formed the predominant feature of Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries were developed at a very early age and played important parts in the life of the people. The most noteworthy among these seem to have been textiles, sugar, metal-work, stonework and pottery.

Textile Industries: A pure and finer form of linen was called dukula. It was of three varieties; the first, produced in lower Bengal, was white and soft; the second, produced in North Bengal was black and "as soft as the surface of a gem;" while the third, manufactured at suvarnakudya in kamarupa, had the "colour of rising sun." It is significant that wild silk of the best quality is still produced in these districts. The Muslins is the finest sorts 'among the exports of Bengal. In the fifteenth century Ma Huan, the Chinese traveler witnessed five or six varieties of textile goods being manufactured in this province.

Sugar Industry: Another industry, which seems to have made considerable headway in our period, was sugar. The Bengal was probably one of the earliest homes of sugar-cane cultivation.

Salt Industry: The manufacture of salt by means of evaporation either from infiltrated sea or from sub-soil brine was also probably known and practiced in the certain areas.

Metallic works: Different kinds of metal works have been known from early time.

The history of textile manufacture in Bengal goes back to the remotest antiquity. At the time when the Arthasastra of Kautilya was composed, it was already a well-established industry with a wide reputation in the country. The author mentions four varieties of textile commodities, which were produced in Bengal in his time, viz. Kshauma, dukala patroma and karpasika. Kshauma was linen but of a coarse variety, being mixed with cotton its chief seats of manufacture were pundravardhana and benares. A pure and finer form of linen was called dukula. It was of three varieties; the first, produced in lower Bengal, was white and soft; the second, produced in North Bengal was black and "as soft as the surface of a gem;" while the third, manufactured at suvarnakudya in kamarupa, had the "color of rising sun." It is significant that wild silk of the best quality is still produced in these districts. Karpasika obviously meant cotton fabrics. These were manufactured in various parts of India, but vanga and six other regions, as Kautilya affirms, produced the best variety. It is thus evident that as early as the time of Kautilya Bengal had attained to great eminence as a seat of textile manufacture. The records of the succeeding ages tend to show that age retained this eminence down almost to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It may be noted that the periplus of the Erythraean sea, written in the first century A.D.; includes "Muslins of the finest sorts" among the exports of Bengal. In the fifteenth century Ma Huan, the Chinese traveler witnessed five or six varieties of textile goods being manufactured in this province. Another industry, which seems to have made considerable headway in our period, was sugar. We have already cited evidence to show that Bengal was probably one of the earliest homes of sugar-cane cultivation. The manufacture of salt by means of evaporation either from infiltrated sea or from sub-soil brine was also probably known and practiced in the certain areas. Different kinds of metal works have been known from very early time. No settled agricultural community could get on without blacksmith, whose service were required in the manufacture and repair of agricultural implements; and contemporary evidence proves that apart from agricultural implements. The blacksmiths manufacture other articles of general use like water-vessels of iron and weapons of war such as arrowheads, spearheads and swords.

7.3 Trade and the Economy of Ancient Bengal

The Jataka stories, the account of Strabo and Pliny and the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea prove the high antiquity of Bengal's inland and foreign trade. Two factors seem to have promoted this early growth of commerce: first, the qualitative and quantitative development of Bengal's industries and secondly, the unrivalled facilities for movement afforded by the seacoast and river-systems of the province.

7.3.1 Internal Trade of Ancient Bengal

The chief routes of internal trade were probably the waterways of the province, in proximity to which stood the principal towns. The role of the rivers in the economic geography of Bengal cannot be over-estimated. They fertilized the soil by the silt, which they carried; they eliminated, to a large extent, the need for artificial irrigation: and being navigable far inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. It is probable enough, although statistical data are lacking that throughout the ancient and mediaeval periods they bore the greater part of the inland traffic of the province.

7.3.2 Foreign Trade of Ancient Bengal

The history of Bengal's foreign trade may be traced back to at least four or five centuries before the birth of Christ. Strabo refers to 'the ascent of the vessels from the sea by the Ganges to palibothra (Mc. Crindle, 1901) and his information is probable drawn from Megasthenes' account. A number of Jataka stories mention merchants and businessmen taking ships at Benares and then either coasting to cyclone or adventuring many days without sight of land (R.K. Mukherji, 1912). The commodities exported from ancient Bengal are Gangetic spikenard, pearls and muslin of the finest sorts.

7.3.3 Trading Routes of Ancient Bengal

As early as the first century A.D. raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloths came into Bengal from China and were exported to Damirica by the way of the river Ganges. In the later period this route became the greatest highway Buddhist pilgrim travel between Magadha and Tibet. In later centuries the overseas trade of Bengal seems to have increased both in volume and extent. This is probably the chief reason of the phenomenal growth of Tamralipti as a port of first rate importance. Taking Tamralipti as the centre, we find radiating from it three principal routes of overseas trade. The first led in a southeasterly direction past the coast of Arakan to Burma and beyond. Most of the early voyages from Tamralipti to Suvarnabhumi were probably made along this route. But there was a second line of overseas trade with the Malaya Peninsula and the Far East.

Ships came along the coast up to Paloura, near modern Chicacole, and then proceeded right across the Bay of Bengal. A third line of trade led in a southwesterly direction past the coasts of Kalinga and Coromandel to South India and Ceylon. Besides the sea-routes, there seem to have been a number of land-routes by which Bengal's foreign trade was carried. One of these was the route, which connected Pundravardhana with Kamarupa.

7.3.4 Export and Import

A third line of overland trade seems to have led through the passes of the Himalayas, past Sikkim and Chumbi Valley to Tibet and China. As early as the first century A.D. raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloths came into Bengal from China and were exported to Damirica by the way of the river Ganges. In the later period this routes become the greatest highway Buddhist pilgrim travel between Magadha and Tibet

7.4 Monetary Activities

The use of metallic coins as the medium of exchange marks a big forward step in civilization, especially in its economic aspect. The question as to when metallic coins were first introduced in Bengal is involved in obscurity. It is certain, however, that they were known and used several centuries before the commencement of the Christian era. A few gold coins of the Kushan kings have been discovered in Bengal; but there is nothing to show that they were used as medium of exchange within the province. With the establishment of the Gupta Empire, Bengal shared in the currency system introduced and maintained by that dynasty. The coinage of the Gupta monarchs was based essentially on gold and silver, though copper was not unknown. The discovery of a large number of Gupta coins, both of gold and silver, in almost every part of Benal, shows that they came into fairly wide circulation within the province. But this raises an intricate problem as to the rate of exchange between gold and silver in Eastern India about the middle of the 5th century A.D. It is clear, therefore, that under the Sena. Kings cowrie shells served as the medium of exchange in Bengal. In other words, "payments were made in cowries and a certain number of them came to be equated to the silver coin. The purana, thus linking up all exchange transactions ultimately to silver, just as at present the rupee, the silver coin, is linked up to gold at a certain ratio.

8. Conclusion

Bangladesh have a glorious economic history of its ancient age. The economy of ancient Bengal is known as a development roots of Bangladesh. With the growth of population, there came about a steady increase in the cultivated areas. Most of the villages contained pits and canals, which serve the purpose of agriculture. The tenent enjoyed rent-

free land and they cultivated it with their own capability. The river systems of the Bengal acted as powerful fertilizing agents of the land and people had grown different types of crops like, rice sugarcane etc. Although agriculture formed the predominant feature of Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries were developed at a very early age and played important parts in the life of the people. Some of them were textile, sugar, salt and metallic works. The river being navigable far inland throughout the year, they served as 'corridors' or 'natural routes' for long-distance traffic. So important commodities like, pearls, muslin were exported from the Bengal. The ancient Bengal was resourceful and people were technically sound. The name of Bengal as sources of natural resources spread all over the world and attracted business communities which contributed to the economy of ancient Bengal.

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Small Business and Socio-Economic Development

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Abstract : *The paper tries to highlight the small business sector as the most potential source for socio economic development of a country through analysis of its capability of: generating employment opportunities both for men and women particularly for women, promoting entrepreneurship by unleashing the creative energy of entrepreneurs and providing means of livelihood for much of the non agricultural population. Nurturing of small business ensures social justice through alleviating mass poverty and income inequality by providing scope for upward mobility among otherwise uprooted population. The paper also delves into how small business is defined differently in various countries along with some theoretical definition for small business. In favour of the argument for small business to be a better vehicle for accelerating socio economic development, the researcher has endeavored to highlight how small business sector contributes to economic growth by promoting the growth of other sectors through offering flexibility and also through backward and forward linkage. The paper also endeavors to justify small business as an agent for fostering innovation, reducing dependency on other nations. In support of all the arguments findings of various studies conducted by researchers both in developed and developing countries have been presented.*

1. Introduction

Small business is a field that is often mentioned in development discourse. Since it covers a wide range of activities, its concept and definition varies enormously from one place to another, from one country to another and from one author to another. One study on small business sector has identified more than 50 different definitions in 75 countries.¹ However publications in the field of small business do not usually make any distinction between different types of small businesses, be they manufacturing, service or retail, perhaps because the differences between them is almost non-existent as far as the characteristics of the enterprises and entrepreneurs as well as their pattern of functioning are concerned.

Development through industrialization can be achieved in one of two distinct ways, which have little direct connection with each other i.e. (a) promotion of large scale industries often through investment of state capital and foreign affiliation; or (b) development of both small and medium scale enterprises mostly in private sector. But due to scarcity of capital and availability of abundant supply of labor, developing countries generally tend to put greater emphasis on the promotion of labor-intensive small and medium enterprises as against capital-intensive large

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¹ I.L.O. Small Enterprise Development: Policies and Programmes, Management Development Series No.14, Geneva, 1977, p.8

industries, in their efforts to accelerate economic growth. Promotions of small enterprises are relatively less capital and skill intensive and their management is not complex. These are likely to create more employment opportunity and production outlet which in turn would generate a process of accelerated socio-economic development in diversified sectors.

Small and micro enterprises constitute a vital economic force because of their ability to effectively respond to domestic demand arising from improved household income, while providing employment opportunities, especially to small farm households, landless labors and women. The development of this sector generally facilitates decentralization and the dispersal of economic activities, which is a desired outcome for a developing country with large population, scarce resource and widespread income poverty and disparity. They will serve a developing economy not only by their output of goods but also by functioning as a nursery of entrepreneurial and managerial talent.²

2. Definition of Small Business in Various Countries

Although small business sector employs well over half the industrial labor force in most developing countries yet remarkably little is known about its composition and characteristics.³ Most definitions of small business (SB) appear to be governed by the purpose for which it is defined and the stage of socio economic development, and the interest of the perceiver. Different criteria like the upper limit of fixed assets, net works/value added; number of persons employed, sales volume, total number of customers, maximum energy consumed, type of energy used, have been combined to set the point at which an enterprise ceases to be small. In a developing country an enterprise employing 50 people may be "large" but the same may be "small" in a developed country. Such differences are due to differences in factor endowment and stage of technological development.

Except Japan and U.S.A no country defines and regulates small firms as a whole through laws and ordinances. Japan is the only country that has a clear-cut definition for each sector of small business in terms of number of regular employees and amount of capital employed⁴.

² Ranjit Kumar Chowdhury, Financing of Small Scale Industries in Bangladesh, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1984, p.4.

³ David Morawetz, "Employment Implications of Industrialization in Developing Countries: A Survey", Economic Journal, September 1974 cited in Seiji Naya, Small-Scale Industries in Asian Economic Development: Problem and Prospects, Economic Office Report, series No.24, ADB February 1984, p.1

⁴ Ahmed, Momtaz Uddin The Financing of Small Scale Industries: A Study of Bangladesh and Japan, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, September 1987, p.5

In Japan, small business is the one that satisfies the following criteria :⁵

Industries	Capital Size (million yen)	Number of employees
Manufacturing and Others	300 or less	300 or less
Wholesale	100 or less	100 or less
Retail	50 or less	50 or less
Services		100 or less

"Small Business" in U.S.A denotes the size of firms comparable to that of "Small and Medium Enterprises" in Japan⁶.

In Canada small business is defined differently by different agencies: According to Canadian Industry Profiles, a small business is defined as one with revenue between \$30,000 and \$5 million. Statistics Canada defines small businesses as firms with less than 500 employees and less than \$50 million in annual revenues. Where as Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment defines small business as one with less than 50 employees⁷. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business defined a small business as "a firm which is independently owned and operated and not dominant in its field of endeavor".⁸ This is the general definition of small business, which is accompanied with some qualifications such as "independently owned, corporative and not dominant in its field of operation".

In India small scale industries have been defined as "undertakings having an investment in fixed assets in plant and machinery whether held on ownership term or by lease or by hire-purchase not exceeding Rs.35 lakhs".⁹ Further under the small-scale industries in India, micro industries, small-scale service establishments and ancillary units have been defined separately¹⁰.

In Nepal an industrial unit having fixed capital investment including land and building of Rs. 200,000 to Rs. 700,000 qualifies as a cottage industry

⁵ Montaz Uddin Ahmed, The Financing of Small Scale Industries: A Study of Bangladesh and Japan, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, September 1987, p.5 and also http://www.chusho.meti.go.jp/sme_english/outline/02/01.html

⁶ Masami Takeuchi, "Role of Small and Medium Industry in Economic Development of Developing Countries - An International Comparison", in Evolution of Policy for Changing Conditions of Small and Medium Enterprises in Japan, Report on the Project for Fiscal Year 1978, The Center for Small Business Development in Asia, March 1979, p.16.

⁷ http://www.enterprisetoronto.com/index.cfm?linkid=99&linktype=mainlink&content_id=222&fromurl=content&faq_id=162&action=viewItem&faqTopicId=49

⁸ Raymond W.Y. Kao, Small-Business Management: A Strategic Emphasis, Toronto: Halt, Rinehart and Winston, Canada, 1981, pp.6-7.

⁹ P.Gulati, Social Studies and Entrepreneurship with Latest Revised Question Bank, Third Edition, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p.71.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 71.

while all industrial enterprises with fixed assets including land and building of less than Rs. 200,000 fall in the informal or household category of industries.¹¹

The Government of Bangladesh, like many authorities, defined small business (SB) sector more or less arbitrarily in terms of the volume of labor or amount of investment in fixed assets depending on its purpose i.e. statistical purpose or for establishing eligibility for government assistance. In Bangladesh the definition of small business underwent many changes over time depending on the need for the investment in fixed assets. In the fifties the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) defined small business as those establishments whose investment in fixed assets did not exceed Tk.0.25 million. In the early sixties, the ceiling was raised to Tk.0.5 million and subsequently the ceiling was again raised to Tk.1.0 million excluding the value of land. This definition continued till the liberation. After independence the definition of small-scale industry underwent a further change in terms of the ceiling for fixed assets. In the private sector financing, the ceiling of fixed investment for the BSCIC processed small enterprises was raised from Tk.1.0 million to Tk.2.5 million.¹²

With the introduction of the Industrial Policy 1986, the ceiling for fixed investment in case of small enterprises was further revised and accordingly small scale enterprise was redefined as a business enterprise engaged either in manufacturing process or service activity, with a maximum investment of Tk.15 million, including investment in machinery and equipment not exceeding Tk.10 million (excluding taxes and duties).

In 1991 small business was redefined as an industrial undertaking engaged in manufacturing processes or service activities whose total fixed investment is limited to a maximum of Tk.30 million. Whereas cottage industry was defined as an industrial unit run by family members, either full or part-time, which has a total investment of up to Tk.500,000.¹³ But for survey purpose small and cottage industry was defined in a different way by the Government of Bangladesh. In 1982, BSCIC in its survey report on small industries in Bangladesh defined small industry as a privately owned manufacturing unit which uses hydro or thermal power, diesel oil or gas for any production process or for industrial services rendered, employing 10 or more but less than 20 workers; or employs 20 or more workers but does not use any electricity and whose investment in fixed assets does not exceed Tk. 2.5 million.¹⁴

¹¹ Q.K. Ahmad and Chandni Joshi, *Role of Women in Rural Industries*, Vol. III; Nepal, Final Report, Center on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific CIRDAP, June 1988, p.64

¹² Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), *Survey Report on Small Industries of Bangladesh*, Dhaka, 1982, p.2

¹³ BBS, GOB, *Statistics* 1991

¹⁴ BSCIC, 1982, *Op. cit.*, pp.1-2

Cottage industry which is a part of small industry was defined by BSCIC in its survey report of 1983 as an industry which is carried on wholly or mainly by the members of a family either as a whole time or as a part time occupation employing a maximum of 10 persons (if electricity is used) and a maximum of 20 persons if electricity is not used.¹⁵

In the Industrial Policy 1999, small business was defined as an enterprise, which employs fewer than fifty workers with a fixed capital of less than Tk. 100 million. Cottage industry was defined as household base units operated mainly with family labor.¹⁶ Industrial Policy 2005 defines small business as an enterprise in which the value/replacement cost of durable resources other than land and factory buildings is under Tk.15 million. Cottage industry is defined as an industry in which members of the family are engaged on part-time or full-time basis in production and service-oriented activities of the enterprises¹⁷. Central bank of Bangladesh defines small business as an enterprise that employs less than 50 persons and has an investment of less than Tk 250 million¹⁸.

For national accounting and other management purpose the AEIS in its survey report of 2002-2003 defines small business both in terms of sectors in which the enterprises belong and number of people employed therein. In case of manufacturing enterprises small business have been defined as those which do not engage more than nine persons whereas in case of trading and service sector small business have been defined as those which employ one to nineteen persons. All household sectors are treated as small irrespective of number of persons employed.¹⁹

2.1 Theoretical Definition of Small Business

Carland et.al defined small business in line with the "Canadian Federation of Independent Business" but denied small business's ability to engage in new marketing and innovation. According to Carland et. al "small business enterprise does not engage in any new marketing and innovation practice".²⁰

Barnett and Mackness defined small firms as those, which are characterized by: lack of specialist services to advice management; the necessity for senior people to get involved in all aspects of running the business; usually only one or two people are involved in significant

¹⁵ Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), Cottage Industries of Bangladesh - A Survey, Dhaka, October, 1983, p.2

¹⁶ Ministry of industries, Industrial Policy 1999, GOB, p.6

¹⁷ Ministry of industries, Industrial Policy 2005, GOB

¹⁸ http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/search_index.php?page=detail_news&news_id=4988

¹⁹ The Annual Establishment and Institutional Survey (AEIS), 2002-2003, BBS, Ministry of Planning, Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

²⁰ Seiji Naya, February 1984, Op. cit. . p.1

decision making; and lack of time for the senior men to think about the development of the firm.²¹

Some argues that the least objectionable way to define "small business" would be to sort out firms according to the number of employees or persons engaged.²² Keeping this in mind Jacob Levitsky defined small business as those enterprises, which employ no more than 5-10 workers, including the owner and family. They engage in non-corporate income generation and use less than US\$10,000 equivalent of total capital; starting capital is often less than US\$100 and rarely exceeds US dollar one thousand.²³ Others defined small enterprises as establishments with ten to forty nine persons whereas cottage and household industries as establishments with one to nine persons, thus excluding cottage or household units from small business enterprises. But in most developing countries no statistics on the size distribution of firms is available, numerical criterion for defining small business has many limitations, because small business enterprises cannot be adequately defined in terms of employment, assets, turnover or output.

Keeping these in mind small business enterprises may be defined in terms of some characteristics, making them significantly different from large and medium scale enterprises. Enterprises which are managed by its owners in a personalized way, have a relatively small share of its market, operate independent of any other enterprises and the owner managers are free from outside control in taking their principal decisions may be categorized as small business. Thus family business engaging three or four family members, cottage industry, partnerships, sole proprietorship, micro enterprises and self employed workers in the informal sector engaged in manufacturing, service and petty trading type of business should come within the purview of small business.

3. Contribution of Small Business in the Socio-Economic Development

Small business, which involves relatively simple technology and small investment and is capable of generating larger employment opportunities, has a vital role to play in the socio-economic development of a country. Studies on small business reveals that in addition to the wide spread consensus on the great potential of small enterprises in generation of employment opportunities and in providing the means of livelihood for much of the non-agricultural population; it also leads to innovation, formulation of capital, and equitable growth of national income and the development of entrepreneurs. It also creates employment and wealth for

²¹ T.R. Barnett and J.R. Mackness, "An Action Research Study of Small Firm Management", *Journal of Applied System Analysis*, 1983, p.63

²² Masami Takeuchi, March, 1979, *Op. cit.*, p.17

²³ Jacob Levitsky, Summary Report, World Conference on Micro-enterprises, Washington D.C., 6-9th June, 1988, p.12. (Mimeo)

people of modest means. As such it constitutes a precious national asset. Another very positive feature of small firms is that they owe little to government and make few demands out of it.²⁴

A number of factors such as: (b) the capacity to provide a minimum standard of living, (c) the scope for upward mobility, (d) the optimum use of indigenous material that would otherwise be wasted and (e) capacity to unleashing the creative energy of the entrepreneurs makes small business a potential source for socio economic development of a country.

3.1 Generation of Employment

Small enterprises with new innovative products demonstrate a higher rate of growth, job creation and make other contributions to the economy in terms of overall growth.²⁵ Perhaps the major argument for small business enterprises rests on their potential to generate employment opportunities at a relatively low investment cost. Small firms create greater employment because unlike large firms, they use more labor-intensive techniques. This view has become increasingly popular in recent years, and is propagated by many international agencies such as the World Bank.²⁶

In the development economics it has been found that the small-scale enterprises have provided most, if not all, of the net new jobs created over the last decade.²⁷ Even in highly developed economies such as the US or Japan, most new employment is created by smaller firms, not by large companies or by the government.²⁸ This argument is supported by a study conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology revealing that during 1977-1982 small business (employing twenty or fewer people) created two-thirds of all the new jobs in USA.²⁹

In USA during the period 1980-82, 1.7 million jobs were lost in firms with over 100 employees whereas 2.6 million new jobs were created in

²⁴ Reazul Islam et. al (ed.), *Small Firms Informally Financed: Studies from Bangladesh*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka 1995, p.36

²⁵ *Small Business and Innovation*, Washington D.C., U.S. Senate Select Committee on Small Business, 1978 cited in Wayne S. Brown, "Commentary on Entrepreneurship Education" in Calvin A. Kent et. al (ed), *Encyclopedia of Entrepreneurship*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Inc, 1982, p.347.

²⁶ Isa Baud, "Industrial Subcontracting: The Effect of the Putting out System on Poor Working Women in India", in Andre'a Menefee Singh and Anita Kelles Viitanen (ed), *Invisible Hands: Women in Home-based Production*, (Women and the Household in Asia), Vol.1 Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p.69.

²⁷ Keneth Loucks, *Training Entrepreneurs for Small Business Creation: Lessons from Experience*, MD Series No.26, ILO, Geneva, 1988/ Reproduced by Mohan Primlani for Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. New Delhi, 1991 p.1

²⁸ Mr. C. Willonghby, Resident Representative, World Bank, Inaugural Speech, Aug. 4-5, 1992, Workshop on Informal Financing held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, quoted in Reazul Islam et. al (ed.) 1995, Op. cit., p.211.

²⁹ Frederick C. Klein, "Some Firms Fight Ills of Bigness by Keeping Employee Units Small", *The Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 1982, p.1.

firms with fewer than 100 employees, accounting for 43 percent of the net increase in jobs.³⁰ Virtually all of the new jobs created in the United States in the past decade are in businesses with fewer than 100 employees. And most of that growth (67%) occurred in the new high growth small ventures, which represent only 7 percent of all businesses in USA.³¹ According to small business administration, in 1982, small enterprises with 100 or fewer employees in USA accounted for 34 percent of employment and provided more than half the jobs in construction and in the wholesale and retail trade".³² According to the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and telecommunications, Establishment and Enterprise Census of Japan (2001) establishments with fewer than 100 employees accounted for 70.2 percent of the total employment in the non-primary sectors in 2001. In the United Kingdom 20.5 percent of manufacturing jobs in 1983 were in firms with 20 to 99 employees and there were over 2.1 million self-employed persons in 1981.³³ In France 2.12 million people are employed in enterprises employing 100 persons, which accounts for 43 percent of overall sales. In Italy 40 percent of the total work force (some 22 million in 1978) is employed in firms with less than 100 employees and small enterprises account for over one-third of the country's exports.³⁴

Statistics on India, Columbia, Ghana, Indonesia and Nigeria show that small and micro enterprises are the largest employers accounting for 70-88 percent of employment in manufacturing sector.³⁵

In India small scale industries sector accounts for about 45 percent of the total industrial production, 30 percent of the country's exports and two-thirds of the total employment in the manufacturing sector of the country³⁶ and the exponential growth rate is significantly high at 16.16 percent.³⁷

In Nepal cottage industries account for 60 percent of the total employment in the organized industrial sector—59 percent of the total male and 64 percent of the total female employment.³⁸

³⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO), *The Promotion of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises*, International Labour Conference, 72nd Session, Report VI, Geneva, 1986, p.13

³¹ David L. Birch, *The Rise and Fall of Everybody, Inc.* December 1987, p.19, cited in David J. Rachman et.al (ed), *Business Today*, Sixth edition, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New York, 1990, p.61

³² ILO, Report VI, 1986, Op. cit. , p. 5.

³³ ILO, Report VI, 1986, Op. cit. , p .5.

³⁴ Ibid. , p.6.

³⁵ Ibid. , p.7

³⁶ Umesh C. Patnaik, "Status of Small Business in Developing Countries", in M. Gangadhara Rao (eds), *Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Development*, Kaniska Publishing House, Delhi, 1992, p.127.

³⁷ Ibid p.130.

³⁸ Q.K. Ahmad and Chandni Joshi, June 1988,op.cit p.64

In UK small firms play a key role in creating jobs and driving economic reforms - the 3.7 million SME's employ 12 million people and contribute 1 trillion per year to the economy. In Europe, a massive 65 million people depend on this thriving sector for employment.³⁹

This is also borne out by similar findings of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, indicating that between 1975 and 1982 the net total job creation in Canada occurred only in the category of enterprises employing less than 50 employees.⁴⁰ All these revealed that expansion and development of large industries is not a solution to the unemployment, underemployment and income inequality problem in developing countries. This led some policy makers and the multilateral as well as bilateral donor agencies to understand this lacunae in policy implementation, so that in 1980's they "advocated that vigorous promotion of small business, capable of utilizing local resources, technology and manpower can play a much needed catalytic role in the transformation of developing economy".⁴¹

In a small business, employment is created with limited investment of resources. For example, in India to create one work place in a small-scale unit, one requires Rs.7,000. It is almost eight times less the amount required in the large sector.⁴² No such information based on overall small business sector is readily available in Bangladesh. However, AEIS report (2002-2003) reveals that in case of small manufacturing concern average employment cost per unit is Tk. 39,740 whereas in case of cottage industries it is Tk. 23,232.⁴³ Employment cost per person per annum in case of small manufacturing sector is Tk. 13,295 and in case of cottage industry it is only Tk. 7,855. In case of Bangladesh small business sector employs 5447191 persons in total. In manufacturing sector representation of female employee is only 6.54% whereas in household sector 20.48% are female. From 1995-96 to 2002-03 total employment in SB has increased by 18.92%. The report further suggests that one main element of policy on the expansion of employment should be the conscious promotion of small-scale industries.⁴⁴

The widespread consensus on the great potential of small enterprises in development of job creation warrants special attention in both developed and developing countries. The great potential of small business in employment generation; the failure of large and public enterprises to

³⁹ Speech of Nigel Griffiths MP, Small Firms and Europe, Fédération of Small Business Annual Conference, Friday, March 22, 2002

⁴⁰ ILO, Report VI, 1986, Op. cit., p.14.

⁴¹ Nazma Ara Hussain, "Some Thoughts on Promotion of Entrepreneurship in Small Business in Bangladesh" The Journal of Asiatic Society, Vol.39, No.1, June 1994, p.136.

⁴² P. Gulati, Social Studies and Entrepreneurship with Latest Revised Question Bank, Third Edition, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, New Delhi, 1992, p.69.

⁴³ The Annual Establishment & Institutional Survey (AEIS), 2002-2003, op.cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid

create new job opportunities and slow down of the rate of growth of employment opportunities in the government agencies and other organizations demand the growth and development of small business sector.

3.1.1 Generates Employment Opportunities for Women

Small Business enables the general population, women in particular to acquire a greater economic independence through employment and self-employment.⁴⁵

The jobs created by small business in developing countries differ significantly from those created by big enterprises in several key respects. For example: (a) significant share of the jobs in small business roughly 25 percent is part time, (b) these tend to be filled by employees, who are either younger or older than the average big company employees, (c) on an average, employees in small business need to have less formal education than their counterparts in large companies.⁴⁶

Since many women of developing countries have less formal education than their male counterparts and need to look after their households, small business can become an important element in their empowerment due to its flexibility and need for less or no formal education.

By hiring women workers who do not quite fit the corporate model, small business serves as an important safety net for the women of developing countries. This argument is also supported by the following statistics revealing that small business is an important source of livelihood for women;

(a) A survey in four regions of Honduras shows that women own about 61 percent of all the small enterprises and employ nearly 50 percent of all the workers.

(b) A survey of small enterprises in rural Guatemala indicates that women contribute 50 percent of the work force in textiles, 17 percent in leather works, 47 percent in food processing and baking and 65 percent in commercial services.⁴⁷

The role of women as entrepreneurs in the very small enterprise sector of developing countries is another factor that argues in favor of promoting the sector. One of the significant findings of the Sierra Leone Survey is that over 80 percent of the owners of tie dye establishments are women.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ World Bank, *Employment and Development of Small Enterprise*, Sector Policy Paper, Washington DC, February 1978.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ ILO, Report -VI, 1986, Op. cit., p. 10.

⁴⁸ E. clenta, *The Economics of Gars (tie-dye) Industry in Sierra Leone*, African Rural Economy Working Paper No.26, East Lansing, Michigan State University, 1978, also cited in the ILO, Report-VI, 1986, Op. cit., p.10.

In Britain women represent 25 percent of all the self employed persons. In France, they now represent 21 percent and in Jamaica, the number of men and women entrepreneurs is about equal.⁴⁹

The experience of the Grameen Bank also shows that small business activities are important as a source of livelihood for the poor women in Bangladesh. The proportion of women entrepreneurs among the Grameen Bank's creditors in different activities is about 94 percent.

All these suggest that promotion of small business and development of women entrepreneurship will increase female participation in economic activity and will thereby improve their status in society through increasing their income.

3.2 Provides More Job Satisfaction

The small enterprises allow the individual artisan to retain a pride in his/her work by not reducing him/her to an operator on the assembly line; at the same time it also assures him/her the benefits of modern technology through improved tools and processes that are suitable to him/her and which he/she can use with confidence. It is in this sense that small industry development can provide more job satisfaction and can play a crucial role in modernizing the stagnant rural economy of the developing countries.⁵⁰

3.3 Fosters Innovation and Reduces Dependency

Small business contributes to economic growth in an important way by fostering innovation, imagination and entrepreneurship. "Often creative and resourceful entrepreneurs in small business tend to be mavericks as they push back the frontiers of knowledge. Ideas are their stock in trade".⁵¹ It is the small business entrepreneurs who developed the Polaroid camera and the citizens band radio and also some of the PCs. The results of investigation by many researchers suggest "much of the innovation and invention leading to the creation of industries for future growth has emerged from and was initiated by small business sector".⁵² "A study of 121 industries in USA found that small firms or individual investors produced 40 percent of the new products, given the fact that small companies spend less than 5 percent of the nation's research and development money".⁵³

⁴⁹ Editorial, "Women Entrepreneurs and Gender Bias", The Bangladesh Observer, 22nd January 1996

⁵⁰ Dr. Ram K. Vepa, "Small Industry Development - Challenges of the Eighties", SEDME, Vol. VII, No.3, September 1980, Hyderabad, India, p. 197.

⁵¹ Ricky W. Griffin and Ronald J. Ebert, Business, Second Edition, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1991, p. 141.

⁵² Kenneth Loucks, 1988, Reprinted in 1991, Op. cit., p. 1

⁵³ Steven Solomon, Small Business USA, Crown, New York, 1986, pp. 74-75

Small business relies on domestic resources that may otherwise not have been drawn in the development process. It also evolves intermediate technology by copying, adapting and imitating obsolete technologies. Because development of small business leads to utilization of local resources, technology and manpower, it helps to gradually reduce dependence on other countries and helps to develop local infrastructures - one of the main conditions for national development.

3.4 Offers Flexibility and Contributes to Industrialization

Small enterprises may be started much more quickly and easily than large enterprises and can be started as part time activities. "Another element facilitating the establishment of small firms is that the technologies or processes used are often relatively simple".⁵⁴

In terms of product development, small business enterprises often have an edge over large business enterprises because they can react more quickly to customers' satisfaction, are extremely flexible and ready to change not only operations but also strategy. In addition to producing new products and creating jobs, small business may play an important role in the operation of large enterprises, acting as distributors, servicing agents, suppliers and sub-contractors. Sub-contracting not only ensures the marketing of small industry products but also helps the large enterprise to concentrate on the main task of large scale manufacturing operation leaving the other tasks to the sub-contractors, get the benefit of technological change in production process, reduce the cost of production and minimize business risk⁵⁵.

Small enterprises in all developed countries play an indispensable role in the development of modern industries, particularly in engineering and electronics, where they act as complementary to the large-scale sector. A substantial portion of industrial production originates in small and medium sector in India.⁵⁶ Thus small business can contribute to the industrialization of Third World countries by spreading industrial production and employment over a wide area than can be done by large firms only with concentrated forms of production.⁵⁷ Subcontracting between the large companies and small business also generate much needed new employment and is expected to provide a greater scope for improving conditions in the informal sector.

⁵⁴ Reazul Islam et. al (ed.), *Small Firms Informally Financed: Studies from Bangladesh*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka 1995, p.36

⁵⁵ Isa Baud, "Industrial Subcontracting: The Effect of the Putting out System on Poor Working Women in India", in Andre'a Menefee Singh and Anita Kelles Viitanen (ed), *Invisible Hands: Women in Home-based Production, (Women and the Household in Asia)*, Vol.1 Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p.69.

⁵⁶ S.K. Srivastava, "Leadership Style in Large and Small Scale Industries", *Journal of Business Administration*, Vol.21, No.1 & 2, January and April 1995, p. 92.

⁵⁷ Isa Baud, in Andrea Menefee Singh and Anita Kelles-Viitanen (ed), 1987, Op. cit., p.69.

Some of the large companies in developed countries have based their business strategy on the use of small suppliers. Liz Claiborne, one of the leading firms in the fashion industry in USA has no factory. All of its garments are made on contract by outside suppliers. This gives Liz Claiborne the flexibility to change its designs quickly - an important competitive edge in the fickle world of fashion.⁵⁸

Subcontracting by small firms can be especially useful to larger developing countries such as India and Brazil, falling within the category of "newly industrializing countries" as they are less limited by the narrowness of the local market, lack of skills, technology and know-how of indigenous firms than smaller countries.⁵⁹ Subcontracting by small firms can also be useful to Bangladesh, a densely populated country.

3.4.1 Helps Growth of Other Sectors

Small enterprises are apt to promote the growth of other sectors particularly agriculture through production linkages. For example, there may be backward linkages from the small business sector in the form of demand from this sector for output of agricultural sector and there may be forward linkages where output of this sector may serve as inputs to agricultural sector. Small manufacturing enterprises in rural areas provide backward linkages by processing agricultural products through such activities as dairy products, oil making, grain processing, tobacco processing, wood processing, leather processing. Small business sector in rural Bangladesh has a very high backward linkage effect in that its intermediate consumption accounts for about 74 percent of the gross value of production. Small business enterprises, such as jute baling (90%), dhenki products (83%), leather processing (83%), grain milling (82%), saw milling (80%), tobacco crushing (74%), etc., provide, as the bracketed figures indicate, very high backward linkages to agriculture.⁶⁰ Handlooms, on the other hand, provide important backward linkages to large scale spinning mills. The cost of cotton yarn as percent of the value of production varies from 53 percent in case of sarees and lungis to 70 percent in the case of shaloo and markin, and about 63 percent in gamcha and napkin.⁶¹

Small business sector provides forward linkages to agriculture and other sectors through supplying intermediate and capital goods in the form of equipment, seeds, plants, fertilizers and pesticides for agriculture. For example, smithy supplies metal agricultural and non-agricultural implement; wood works manufacturing supply rural transport equipment

⁵⁸ Stuart Gannes, "America's Fastest Growing Companies", *Fortune*, 23 May 1988, p.30.

⁵⁹ Isa Baud, 1987 Op. cit., P.69.

⁶⁰ BIDS, Rural Industries Study Project, Final Report, Feb 1981, p.133

⁶¹ Abdul Hye Mondal, Rural Industrialization as a Tool for Rural - Urban Integration in Bangladesh, Research Report No.84, BIDS, Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 1988, p.16.

like carts and boats, baskets for petty trade and earth work; and tobacco crushing supplies processed tobacco for the cigarette and bidi factories. Intermediate and capital goods produced by small business sector of rural Bangladesh account for more than 13 percent and 2 percent of the total gross value of production of other rural industries respectively. Thus the high production linkage between small business sector and other sectors implies that the growth of small business sector is likely to ensure the growth of other sectors.⁶²

3.5 Value Addition

It contributes highly towards value added.⁶³ A case study conducted by U. Staley and R. Morse of Stanford Research Institute on 109 USA industries reveals that the share of small and medium factories with less than 100 employees is high in the amount of value added.

In Japan small and medium sector jointly account for 99.7% of enterprises and contributes 51.1% of total value of shipment of manufactured goods.⁶⁴ The Bangladesh Observer reports, "Small business sector contributes 43% of the manufacturing value added".⁶⁵ Average value added at factor cost per unit by small manufacturing sector is TK. 141.03 thousand. In case of household sector it is Tk. 81.87 thousand.⁶⁶ According to the Fifth Five Year plan contribution of small Business sector to GDP is 5 percent.⁶⁷

3.6 Social Benefits

The social argument in favor of development of small business sector falls broadly under two heads i.e. equality and efficiency benefit of poor consumers.

3.6.1 Equality

A crucial element in the achievement of economic progress in a low-income economy is the enhancement in the standard of living of the poor.⁶⁸ Small business activities appear to provide a positive scope for earning among an otherwise uprooted population and for their upward mobility along the income and social scale. Small business enterprises are likely to reduce the spread between the highest and the lowest income brackets through generating income for the landless and help to avoid an undesirable concentration of economic power in the hands of a few. Self

⁶² BIDS, Rural Industries Study Project - Final Report, February 1981, p.135.

⁶³ [Masami Takeuchi, March 1979, Op. cit., p.22.]

⁶⁴ http://www.chusho.meti.go.jp/sme_english/outline/07/01.html

⁶⁵ Editorial, "Small-Scale Industry", The Bangladesh Observer, 12th September 1995.

⁶⁶ AEIS(2002-2003), Op.cit.

⁶⁷ Planning Commission, The Fifth Five Year Plan 1997-2002, March 1998, Op. cit., p.325

⁶⁸ ARTEP, Bangladesh: Selected Issues in Employment and Development, A Report Prepared for the Bangladesh Planning Commission, ILO, Asian Employment Program, Bangkok, November, 1985,

employed persons in small business are likely to act as an effective vehicle for increased understanding of the development potential of a country and provide a base for equitable relations between the rural and urban people.

Cottage industries and handicrafts are particularly important for rural households with a little or no land. Empirical evidence from some countries shows that as farms become smaller, the share of non-farm income in total household income becomes larger.⁶⁹ In Sierra Leone, for example, rural households cultivating more than 15 acres of land earned less than 20 percent of their income from non-farm activities, while those cultivating less than 1 acre earned more than 64 percent of their income from the same activities. A nationwide survey of rural household budgets and consumption conducted in 1982/83 in Rwanda showed handicraft production accounting for 20 percent of household cash income, compared with 27 percent from commerce, 11 percent from services and other sales and a mere 19 percent from agriculture.⁷⁰

In some Asian countries where land is very much a limiting factor in generating household income, small business projects in favor of the landless and near landless could contribute to increasing total household income, thus alleviating mass poverty⁷¹ and income inequality.

3.6.2 Offers Elasticity of Expenditure

One of the objections most often raised against development of small business enterprises is the narrowness of the market. But existing surveys show that locally manufactured products have the highest elasticity of expenditures. In Sierra Leone and Nigeria, a 10 percent increase in income leads to a 13-14 percent rise in expenditure on local goods and services (other than food), as compared with only 11 percent for imports.⁷²

Small-scale enterprises produce low-cost products creating efficiency benefits for consumers, especially for the poor consumers. The low-cost goods produced by the small business sector satisfy the basic needs of the rural poor, and middle and low-income groups of the urban sector. But this feature of small-scale enterprises are not usually appreciated because the disadvantages of small scale production are usually compared with the advantages of large scale production and are wrongly argued that an increase in output in domestic sectors, particularly in industry is highly

⁶⁹ E. Chuta and Carl. Liedholm, Rural Non-Farm Employment: A Review of the State of the Art, MSU Rural Development Paper No.4, East Lansing, Michigan State University, 1979, also cited in ILO, Report VI, 1986, Op. cit. , p.10.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ ILO, Report VI, 1986, Op. cit. , p. 10.

⁷² Maria Nowak, "The Role of Micro enterprises in Rural Industrialization in Africa", in Jacob Levitsky (ed), Micro Enterprises in Developing Countries, Intermediate Technology Publications, London, 1989, p.64.

constrained by the lack of adequate purchasing power in the rural areas.⁷³ But in reality small business sector is remarkably resourceful and highly responsive to market conditions.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Industrialization is a pre-requisite for sustained economic development of developing countries, particularly for the eventual solution to their problems of mass poverty, acute unemployment, low Gross National Product (GNP) growth and heavy dependence on foreign aid.⁷⁴ Therefore, the development strategy of developing countries have been geared toward a structural shift from agriculture to non-agricultural enterprises to create new job opportunities for the increasing labor force and to alleviate poverty. Initially they tried to achieve development through placing emphasis on large scale industries. But due to limited infrastructure development, limited funds, isolated small sized markets and non-availability of skilled human resources, most of the large scale industries in most developing countries failed to operate in a manner that helps to generate surplus from the production process, generate a corresponding increase in employment opportunities, alleviate poverty and achieve development. Only in late eighties they realized that expansion and development of large industries is not a solution to the unemployment, underemployment and income inequality problem and started emphasizing on vigorous promotion of small business, capable of utilizing local resources, technology and manpower can play a much needed catalytic role in the transformation of their economy. Small business activities are not, as often alleged, economically inconsequential. Rather this sector carries a great potential in the process of economic development of a country, both in terms of growth and equity.

Small business in general is considered to be a vehicle for progress. Because it : (a) contributes highly towards value added, (b) contributes significantly to the economy in terms of output of goods and services and creates direct and indirect jobs at relatively low capital cost (c) provides a vehicle for reducing income disparities (d) provides the opportunities for developing and adapting appropriate technology (e) improves forward and backward linkages between diverse sectors of the economy (f) enables youth and women to acquire a greater economic independence through employment and self-employment thus helps to raise the level of women's participation in the economy (g) offers an excellent breeding ground for entrepreneurial and managerial talent (h) demonstrates flexibility in adapting to market change.

⁷³ Planning Commission, The Fourth Five Year Plan, (1990-95), Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, June 1990, pp.1-2.

⁷⁴ Mahmood Ahmed, Growth of Industrial Entrepreneurship in Bangladesh: A Study of Bank Financed Engineering Industries, Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the University of Rajshahi, July 1993, p.18.

Self-employment in small business through greater mobilization of domestic resource would alleviate poverty through the expansion of productive employment, a major development issue and would reduce the persistent reliance on external economic assistance, which has become an increasing source of concern to planners and academics. As such it is high time that more attention was paid by the developing nations to the development of interactive small and micro enterprises, which feed each other through interlink, provide a productive outlet for entrepreneurial spirit of individuals and assist in the dispersion of economic activities.

Changes of Wetland Agriculture in Bangladesh Experience from Mithamain Union

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Afia Rahman***

Abstract : Bangladesh possesses enormous wetland areas and indeed during the rainy season, about half of the country could be classified as wetlands. Wetlands of this country have great ecological, economic, commercial and social importance and values. But the wetland ecosystem is already under stress due to both physical and human interferences in and around the wetlands. Increasing human as well as various development activities lead the severe negative impact on wetland's environment. The present paper mainly discusses some changes in wetland agriculture of Bangladesh taking wetland areas of Mithamain union, Kishorgonj district as case study. Both primary and secondary data have been used. The study found that agricultural activities have increased in the recent years. Farmer's dependence on local boro paddy has been shifted towards HYV boro paddy. Besides, excessive use of pesticides in the recent time has increased land and water pollution in the haor areas. Moreover, conversion of wetlands into paddy fields during the Boro season has been destroying the wetlands habitat. Therefore, the study concludes that a capability should be developed to monitor the changes in the environment with a view to ensure sustainable agricultural development and environmental protection in wetlands of Bangladesh.

Introduction

Agriculture is the single most important sector of the economy in Bangladesh. It is the major source of livelihood in the rural areas, where about 80 percent of the population lives. Approximately two-thirds of the labour force is employed in agriculture and the performance of this sector affects the overall economic growth. Bangladesh has achieved an estimated cropping intensity of about 177.03 percent by 2003/04. Out of the net sown area of 19.84 million acres, about 51.46 percent (10.21 million acres) is double cropped and approximately 12.62 percent (2.5 million acres) triple cropped and about 35.28 percent (7 million acres) is still single cropped (BBS 2005).

Wetland agriculture is a major form of land use and those river valleys, floodplains, and coastal lowlands in particular have frequently been used for agriculture because of their natural suitability and the demands of agriculture for flat, fertile land and a ready supply of fresh water. Bangladesh possesses enormous wetland areas and indeed during the

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rainy season, about half of the country could be classified as wetlands. Large areas of wetland are commonly known as beels, baors and haors. The low-lying wetland area is very fertile and suitable for agricultural purpose as they are flooded during the wet season. And cultivation of rice is a major activity in and around the wetlands of the Ganges-Brahmaputra flood plain and Haor Basin. Low-lying lands under private ownership are used almost exclusively for the cultivation of rice and the state-owned margins of beels, baors, haors and rivers are often leased on an annual basis for paddy cultivation. As a result, the total wetlands of Bangladesh are contributing a substantial amount of paddy to our total food grain production (Akonda 1989). But in recent decades, some noticeable changes have been occurred in wetland agriculture in Bangladesh. In this context, the present study has taken an attempt to know the changes in wetland agriculture in Bangladesh taking Mithamain union of Kishoregonj District as a case study.

Mithmain union is located in the Kishoregonj District, the northeast wetland region of Bangladesh. It is a part of the large natural depression, commonly known as haor basin. Mithamain union occupies the Surma-Kushiara flood plain and older Meghna estuarine flood plain. The total area of this union is 3644 hectares. During the rainy season a complex of over 8 beels merge into a single, large water body and 85% land of this union turns into wetlands whereas during the dry season about 35% land of Mithamain union is recognized as wetlands. The maximum depth of water in the beels varies from approximately 8 to 10 m during the rainy season and 2 to 3 m during the dry seasons. The land type of the area is dominated by very low and low lands, which are seasonally flooded 7 to 8 months during May to November (Huq, 2005).

Location of the Study Area

The study area Mithamain union is located under Mithamain upazila. It is situated between 24° 22' N to 24° 26' N latitude and 91°01' E to 91°04' E longitude (Figure 01). The Kishoregonj District borders the districts of Netrokona and Mymensingh in the north, Norshingdi in the southwest, Brahmanbaria in the southeast, Sunamgonj and Hobigonj in the east and Mymensingh and Gazipur districts in the west. The main rivers of the districts are Old Brahmaputra, Meghna, Kalni, Dhanu, Ghorautra, Baurii, Narasunda and Piyain. Again Mithamain union is bounded by Itna and Ajmirigonj upazilas on the south; Ghagra union (Mithamain upazila) & Austogram upazilas on the east; Karimgonj & Nikli upazilas on the west; Dhaki and Gopedighi union of Mithamain upazila on the north.

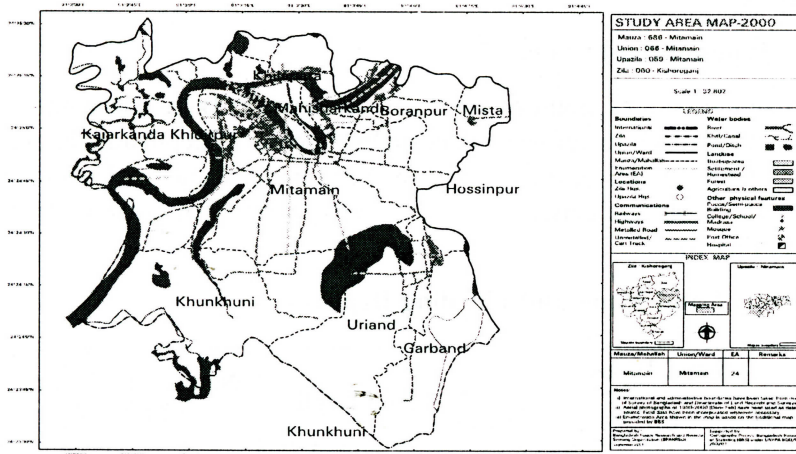


Figure 1: Map of Study Area

The large number of rivers and land depressions make this part of area a specific kind of landscape with its evergreen shrubs, berries and bamboos. Kishoregonj District is especially famous for its large area of inland open water that include a number of rivers and estuaries, land depressions and lakes varying in size from a few hectares to more than two thousand hectares and a large area of floodplains. The monsoon rains flood the area yearly and many parts retain some water throughout the dry season. This floodplain region is also a wetland eco-system and the region plays an important hydrological, biological and ecological role in the natural functioning of the region. Thus the physical environment is suitable for agricultural activities and a local person depends on it.

Methodology

The present study is mainly based on primary data. Secondary data both published and unpublished has also been used. Primary data were collected by field investigation with the help of direct observation and questionnaire survey in December 2004. The questionnaire accounts list of different kinds of crops including their past and present status, uses of fertilizer, agricultural pattern and mode of irrigation. As a part of primary data collection, the study has also conducted FGDs (Focus Group Discussion) with people from different professions like farmers, governmental officials, and agricultural labors. Relevant documents from various government and non-government organizations like Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Bangladesh Soil Research Development Institute (SRDI), Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies (BCAS) and Center for Natural Resources Studies (CNRS) were consulted. Thereafter, all the collected data have been analyzed and presented by simple analytical methods.

Analysis

Land Types of Study Area

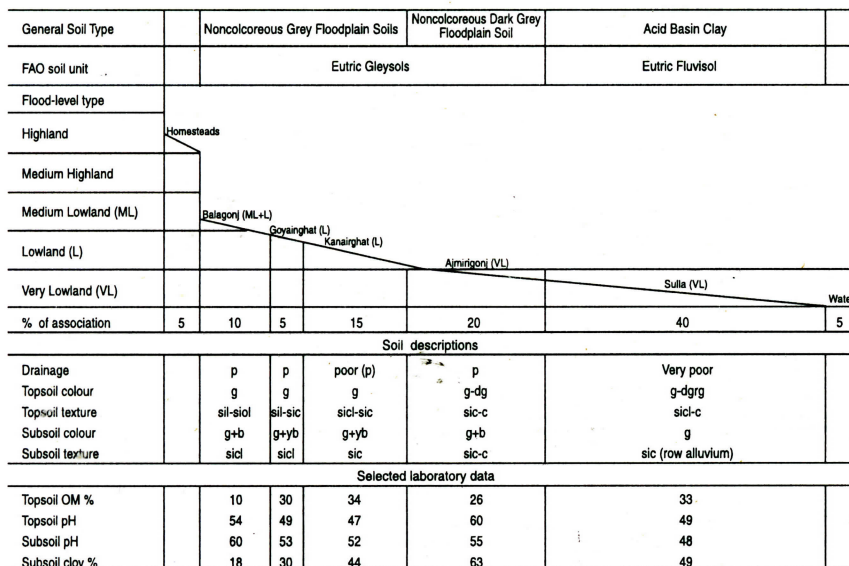
From an agricultural point of view, soil scientists in Bangladesh adopt a different approach to define wetlands. On the basis of depth and duration of inundation/flooding, the country has been divided into six broad land types. The scientific classification of land type has been given in Table-01 and Fig.-02.

Table 01: Land Types and Flooding Depths

Land Types			Flood Depth	Nature and Extent of Flood
MPO	SRDI	Local		
F0	High land	--	--	-
F1	Medium high land	---	30-90cm	Seasonal
F2	Medium low land	Viti	90-180cm	Seasonal (3/4 months)
F3	Low land	Haor	180-275cm	Approx.7 months
F4	Very low land	Haor	Above 275cm	Approx. 8-9 months

Source: SRDI, 2000.

Mithamain union only includes 3 categories of land types. Among them medium low land (F2) is mainly used for settlement and the amount is 430 hectares. Lowland (F3) is the dominant land type, which occupies 2451 hectares. This type of land is about 67.26% of the total land. Among these land categories, medium lowland (which remains flooded up to a depth of 180 cm during monsoon) through bottomland (which remains wet throughout the year) is considered as areas of wetlands. Very low land is about 11.27% of the total land area.

Figure-2: Typical Soil Association in Mithamain Union

1 Adopted from Kishoregonj-Mymensingh South report soil association 40. That association also includes minor areas of 3 other soil series

2 N.B.: a) all soils are moderately deeply to deeply flooded in the rainy season, b) Sulo soils stay wet through the dry season; c) general increase in OM and clay contents between high and low sites; d) very strong acidity of most topsoils and subsoils, e) despite strong acidity, subsoil base saturation is above 50%, requiring the soils to be classified as Eutric Gleysols in the FAO Legend

3 Laboratory data show results for single profiles. They do not indicate range in contents within the series.

4 Abbreviations Colour g=grey dg=dark grey dgrg=dark greenish grey b= brown yb=yellow-brown
Texture sil= silt loam sicl= silty clay loam sic= silty clay c= clay
Laboratory data OM=organic matter

Source : FAO, 1988

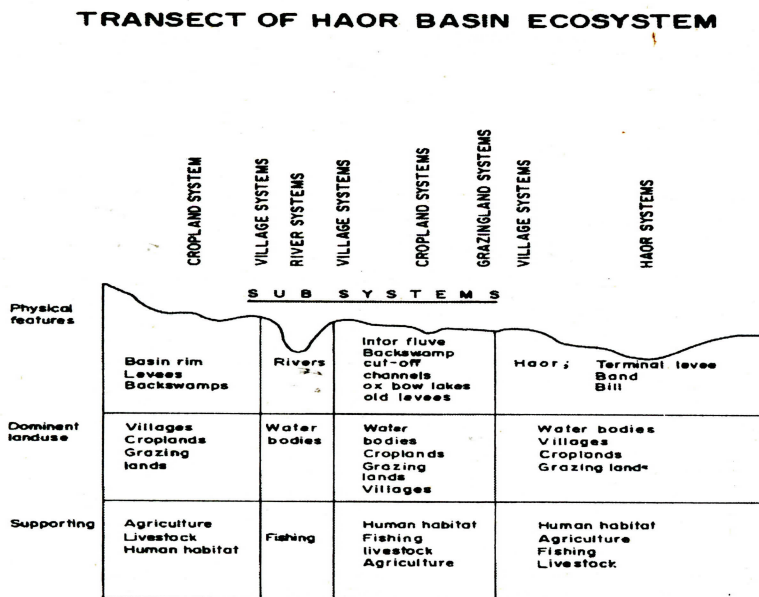
Water Resources

Different rivers and small or large water bodies bound the study area. The river Ghorautra divided the study area into two parts. Beels and khals are the major geomorphic features in Mithamain union. There are thirteen beels in the study area. They are as follows-

Table-2: Name of the Beels of the Study Area

Name of the beels	Name of the beels
Khunkhuni	Ujandar
Deoduri	Vatirdar
Lakhai	Rana beel
Valler Char	Joaira beel
Rani beel	Laodora
Goph beel	Dhupi
	Pada beel

These beels are playing a major role in the drainage system of the study area. Most of the beels are seasonal, ill drained and fed by monsoon water.

Figure 3 : Transect of Haor Basin Ecosystem

Source : Ali, S. I., 2000

Present Landuse

HYV boro paddy is the main crop, irrigated by pump. Local boro is grown with irrigation on some selected floodplain ridges and upper part of the basin margins. On the highest land near rivers, mustard is grown in a very small area and in other dry lands Rabi crops are grown. Non-irrigated haor areas are used as fishery. Figure 03 shows a transect of Haor Basin Ecosystem.

Most of the populations of the study area depend on agriculture and fishing. These are the main source of their income. Most of the people belong to low-income group. Mithamain union is less developed region of the haor area of Bangladesh.

Findings

Wetland Agriculture in Mithamain

Like other parts of Bangladesh, agriculture is the dominant activities in Mithamain Union. The system of wetland farming is based on the farmers' knowledge and experience on wetland hydrology, ecology, soil characteristics and the requirements of wetland crops. The agriculture of the study area is principally driven by seasonal hydraulics and the seasonality factors have a strong impact on cultivation. During the monsoon, the study area becomes single body of open water links to the river system. When floodwater recedes, the beels of the study area

become isolated and are prepared for agriculture. Before 1970, about 60-70% land of study area was cultivable in dry season and different varieties of local boro paddy were produced. Within the intervening period the land types of study area, particularly the beels have been raised due to over siltation by regular flood. As a result, at present about 95% land of Mithamain union become cultivable in dry season. It can be mentioned that 20-25 years ago agricultural activities began in November/ December when the water of the beels were drained out and paddy was sown on the residual soil moisture. Those were usually harvested between March / April. Off late, agriculture practices are begun in January/ February and paddy is harvested in between June/July. The main cause behind the shifting of cropping season is dependency on the changing behaviour of local hydrology. Due to establishment of embankment as well as FCD/I (Flood Control and Drainage/Irrigation) projects in the upstream, at present, flood water enters and drains in the low lying beels in the study area very lately and vise versa (Alam et. al. 2003). Flood water hampers agricultural activities very much. Due to late start of cultivation in recent years, the farmers cannot collect their ripen paddy properly as flood season begins at that time. But most striking feature is that villagers of this wetlands are now coping this unstable condition by introducing homestead gardening and using relatively high land particularly the newly buildup area.

Changes in Agricultural Area

In the past century or so, when the population pressure was less, most of the rim-lands of the haors remained as cultivable wasteland and was used for extensive grazing in the dry season. As population increased, boro cultivation expanded onto these marginal lands leading to a large area being drained. Thus, the existences of these wetlands are now threatened. Consequently, more and more people are being forced into marginal areas in the search of agricultural land (Banglapedia 2003). In the search for productive agricultural areas, however, this traditional wetlands use strategies are being superseded by more intensive form of their uses. The impacts of such intensification in wetland uses, particularly cultivation are already evident in many areas.

Table 3 : Area Under Agriculture in Mithamain Union.

Area under agriculture (Hectare)	Year		Change		Remarks
	1984	1996	Changes from 1984	Percentage of change (%)	
Net temporary area	5850	4400	1450	24.79	Decreased
Gross cropped area	5642	4399	1243	22.03	Decreased

Source : Agriculture Census (BBS)-1996 & 1984.

In 1984, the net temporary area and gross cropped area were 5850 hectares and 5642 hectares respectively, whereas those were 4400 hectares and 4399 hectares in 1996 (Table 3). It is observed that both net temporary area and gross cropped area have been decreased about 24.79% and 22.03% respectively during that decade. Agricultural land has decreased due to human interferences with the increase of settlement. Apart from this, during the rainy season the agricultural fields is frequently inundated and it receives huge amount of alluvium. According to FGD survey, 20-25 years ago, silt was full of different kinds of biomass. But now when floodwater recedes or after inundation an amount of 1 to 1.5 inches sand is deposited on topsoil. In addition, decomposing plants fill up wetlands and the plant residuals help to settle down more sediment in that place. In such way of cumulative deposition of 'very lowland' is converted into 'lowland' and gradually into 'medium highland'.

Changes in Paddy

Rice cultivation in the study area like other area of Bangladesh has undergone some changes in terms of yields. Earlier, the farmers of Mithamain union cultivated 11 types of indigenous paddy (Table 4). But now, they are producing only HYV paddy. Observation reveals that BR-28 and BR-29 are very much popular in Mithamain union. Some farmers also introduced an imported HYV named HIRA, which comes from China. The farmers of the study area opined that HYV paddy has some problems. It is very tuff to carry the ripen HYV paddy from paddy fields to house as they rapidly detached from the ear of corn. The present study found that nine types of local varieties are locally extinct and two are rare. Before 1970, about 60-70 percent land of the study area were cultivated in the dry season and were producing many varieties of local Boro paddy like Laldingi, Jagli boro, Tapi & Tópa Boro, Buchibaroi, poshushail, Kala Boro, Rajashail, Lakhai Boro, etc. Bogra, Buchibaroi, Rajashail, Lakhai Boro, which were used to be cultivated at beels.

Table 4 : List of Paddy Cultivated in Wetland of Mithamain Union.

Sl. no.	Boro Varieties	Name of Boro paddies	Status	
			Past	Present
1	Local	Laldingi	VC	ED
2		Bogra	VC	E
3		Buchibarai	VC	E
4		Poshushail	VC	E
5		Tapi boro	VC	R
6		Topa boro	VC	E
7		Kala boro	VC	E
8		Lakhai boro	VC	E
9		Rajashail	VC	ED
10		Jagli boro	VC	R
11		Kalijira	C	R
12	Bangladeshi HYV	BRI-28	-	C
13		BRI-29	-	VC
14		BRI-8	VC	R
15		BRI-36	VC	R
16		Mongol (BR-19)	VC	R
17		Biplob (BR-3)	VC	C
18		Gazi (BR-14)	VC	C
19		Shahjalal (BR-18)	VC	R
20		Balam (BR-16)	VC	R
21		Mala-IRRI	VC	C
22	Imported HYV	HIRA	-	VC
23		ALOK	-	R
24		SONAR BANGLA	-	VC
25		JAGORON	-	C

[Code: Status: Very common=VC; Common=C; Rare=R; Endangered=ED; Locally Extinct=E]

(BRRI=Bangladesh Rice Research Institute; BARI= Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute)

But now local Boro rice is not cultivated except at few places and many of them are now locally extinct. In 1984 the total local Boro paddy cultivated area was 1363 hectares whereas it was only 985 hectares in 1996 (BBS, 2000). Although the land of the study area has already been raised due to siltation and at present about 95 percent land of the study area became cultivable in the dry season. The farmers did not get expected return by cultivating local Boro because of poor production.

Moreover, flash floods damage Boro crops during harvesting period in June and July.

Cultivation of New Crops

The inhabitants of Mithamain union have been cultivating a small amount of new crops for a few years like potato, chili, onion, garlic and groundnut (Table 5). They also cultivate few vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower and tomato in winter season in their yard. Most of the Chili and groundnut are cultivated at bar land.

Table 5: New crops of Mithamain union.

Sl. No.	English name	Local name	Scientific name
1	Cabbage	Bandhakopi	<i>Brassica oleracea var capitata</i>
2	Cauliflower	Phulkopi	<i>Brassica oleracea var botrytis</i>
3	Mustard green	Sarisa shak	<i>Brassica campestris</i>
4	Radish	Mula	<i>Raphanus sativus</i>
5	Bottle gourd	Lau	<i>Lagenaria siceraria</i>
6	Potato	Alu	<i>Solanum tuberosum</i>
7	Brinjal	Begoon	<i>Solanum melongena</i>
8	Tomato	Tomato	<i>Lycopersicon esculentum</i>
9	Chilli	Jhal marich	<i>Capsicum species</i>
10	Stem amaranth	Danta	<i>Amaranthus lividus</i>
11	Garlic	Roshun	<i>Allium sativum</i>
12	Onion	payaj	<i>Allium cepa</i>

People with wetland gardens plant different types of vegetables in the winter season. Most of the farmers do not cultivate these new crops for commercial purpose. These crops are only used for home consumption and sometimes as households supplement for their cash by selling crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, chili, and vegetables. Block supervisor (Agriculture activist) of the Mithamain union claimed that they are trying to create awareness for growing vegetables and other crops because they have to import vegetables from other parts of Bangladesh.

Changes in Mode of Irrigation

Irrigation is an agricultural strategy designed to reduce moisture deficiency, i.e. the imbalance between the moisture supplied by rainfall and the evapotranspiration demand. In Bangladesh irrigation plays a pre-eminent role in minimizing the adverse influence of scanty and unreliable rainfall. Many agricultural regions of the world get enough rainfall and it becomes essential to redistribute rainwater for the inadequate rain during the growing season.

Table 6: Mode of irrigation

Mode of irrigation	Percentage (%) of the respondent (2004)	Percentage (%) of the respondent (25 years ago)
Diesel engine (Boro scheme)	82.00	17.83
Canal	13.43	72.15
Hand/lift	4.47	10.02

Wetland agriculture in Mithamain takes place as formal and informal irrigation. Formal irrigation encompasses government schemes that were established from the 1980s and self-help schemes that were constructed in the 1960s to 1970s. The table 6 shows the mode of irrigation of Mithamain. The table 6 depicts that in 2004, 82% respondents use diesel engine, which is locally called Boro scheme. The Boro schemes collect irrigation water from river and they have to pay money to local government. Besides, a few people use canal for irrigation (13.43%). 25 years ago, they used to collect water from nearest beels but at present at the time of irrigation, the cultivators do not get sufficient water in beels as they have been filled up by siltation. But 25 years ago beels contain enough water, people used canal for irrigation (72.15%)

Uses of fertilizer and pesticides

Chemical fertilizers today hold the key to the success of the crop production system of Bangladesh agriculture, and contribute about 50% of the total production. The peasants of Mithamain union did not use any fertilizer in 20 to 25 years ago. Now they use 100-150-kg/acre urea, 50-60 kg/acre TSP and 35-40 kg/acre MoP to their paddy field and very low amount of urea is used in vegetable cultivation.

Table 7 : Uses of fertilizer in Mithamain Union

Name of Crop	Uses of Fertilizer (kg/ acre)					
	Urea		TSP		MoP	
	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past	Present
Boro	-	100-150	-	50-60	-	35-40
Vegetable	-	10-15	-	-	-	-

According to their statement, fertilizer was not essential for growing paddy. During the rainy season the agriculture fields are frequently inundated and receive huge amount of alluvium. At that time silt was full of different kind of biomass. But now, land fertility has decreased due to use of a high amount of chemical fertilizer. Again, floodwater deposits an amount of 1 to 1.5 inch sand on the topsoil in every year. As a result they have to use more fertilizer for growing more food on the limited

cultivable land. Apart from these, with the pressure of more population, the farmers have to grow more food by using more fertilizer. Another reason is the use of HYV seeds, which require more fertilizer.

Effect of Pesticides in the Land

In the past, the farmers of the study area did not use any pesticides for pest or any kind of diseases. Most of the local paddy varieties are naturally, to a great extent, resistant to the pest. That was the reason why the local paddy producers depend only natural control. The study area with its heavy population pressure has a very limited scope of expanding its potential arable land. So the farmers improved their productivity by increasing the cropping intensity. Farmers took all possible measures to use of HYV seed, which includes adequate quantity of fertilizer and management of all kinds of pests and diseases.

Table 8 : Pesticides Used in Mithamain Union

Sl. no.	Pesticides varieties	Name of Pesticides	Group	Amount / Acre
1	Granular	Basudin	Diaginon	2-3 kg
2		Furadan	Carbofuran	2-3 kg
3		Bistaren		
4		Sunfuran		
5		Miral (banned-2000)		2 kg
6	Liquid	Nogos (banned-2000)	Dichlorobos	400 ml
7		Dimacron (banned-2000)	Organophosporus	400-500 ml
8		Novacron(banned-2000)	Monocrotophos	350-450 ml
9		Monotuff(banned-2000)		
10		Darsban	Chlorophyriphos	800-900ml
11		Classic		
12		Irridan	Carbofuran	700-800 ml
13		Foratuff		
14		Raison	Diaginon	

Now a days, the cultivators of Mithamain union are using pesticides both liquid and solid. Commonly used pesticides in the study area under different trade names include Carbofuran, Diazinon, and Chlorophiflos. Among the group of pesticides they usually use the Diazinon group. Despite the Government's ban on Nogos, Dimecron, Novacron and Monotuff, the farmers also use them (Table-8).

Conclusion

In Bangladesh, as in most developing countries, agriculture plays a key role in the overall economic performance of the country. It still dominates

in terms of its contribution to GDP, poverty alleviation and foreign exchange earnings and in providing employment to a large segment of the population, especially the rural poor. Consequently the Nation's progress will depend on government intervention in developing the agricultural sector. Wetland areas in Bangladesh have been extensively and intensively developed for food production system, especially those that are rice-based. The major impact has been on cropping patterns and intensity. Though there has a positive effects of changes in wetland agriculture, it has caused several environmental problems including extinction of many indigenous rice varieties, loss of natural soil nutrients, loss of many indigenous aquatic plants, herbs, shrubs and weeds, loss of natural water reservoirs and of their resultant benefits, increase in the occurrence of flooding and degeneration of wetland based ecosystems, occupations, socio-economic institutions and cultures. Therefore, multiple uses may thus be considered as a form of "wise use" which the Ramsar Convention champions in its search for protecting and maintaining wetland across the world (Ramsar Convention Bureau, 2000). To ensure food and nutrition for the ever-increasing population, suitable cropping patterns for wetland agriculture should be introduced based on the concept of crop diversification depending on soils and other agro-climatic conditions and to enhance the positive role that sustainable agricultural practices may have vis-à-vis the conservation and wise use of wetlands. However, over the last couple of decades, the biodiversity and resources of land depressions and oxbow lakes have come under great threat in the absence of effective government control. So, much remains to be done to improve the overall agricultural performance of the country as well as the proper use of wetlands.

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Recent Trends in People Resourcing : Global Context

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Abstract: *The main resources of modern organisation are their human resources i.e. people. People resourcing policies are aimed to extract optimal performance from the employees through ensuring effective attraction, retention and advancement of employees inside the organisation. The ultimate target is survival of the organisation through improving the efficiency of the employees. As organisations are not isolated from the external environment, various factors such as globalisation, technological development, competitive advantage, life expectancy, feminisation of workforce, ethnic diversity etc largely influence the various policies and functions of organisations including those related to people resourcing. Failure to cope with the changed scenario in the long run will cause their extinction. In this article, attempts have been made to analyse the recent changes being taken place in the people resourcing policy throughout the globe. Attempts have also been made to make predictions about the futuristic trend of this field although it is not very easy to make accurate predictions about the future specially, where man, machine and above all society are involved.*

1. Introduction

In order to survive in the highly competitive and continuously evolving business environment, successful management of change is crucial to any organisation, irrespective of size, structure and function (By 2005). Failure of adapting properly to the changed scenario has been severely punished with the demise of the individual or species (Martin, 2001). It is argued that contemporary organisations are immersed in a virtual cyclone of change as they need to adapt to the ever increasing demands from domestic and global markets (Siegal et al 1996). A variety of internal and external influences cause, trigger and drive change (Morden, 1996). Organisation's capability to identify future needs and managing the changes required for reaching that target is crucial (Burnes, 2004). Contemporary management requires high managerial skill due to the urgency of change in management (Senior, 2002). Organisations need to utilise flexible labour policies to meet anticipated future people resourcing needs, performance and quality service agendas (Arrowsmith and McGoldrick, 1996).

2. What is People Resourcing?

It is evident in the relevant literature that people resourcing evolves around a number of interrelated issues i.e. attracting, retaining and developing of personnel within certain organisations. Recruitment and retention are problematic in people resourcing. Therefore, a response is increasing to "cast the net more widely" (Reynolds and Brue, 1990). Maintaining and ensuring service within a competitive climate is necessary while attempting to reduce costs (Graves, 1990). Problem of

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low standards and required improvements to commitment must be overcome (Walsh, 1995). Within this context, flexible labour is an essential prerequisite for organisations (Doogan, 1992). Although questions relating to equal opportunities issues need to be addressed (Freathy, 1993). The need for job satisfaction for ensuring high levels of commitment and staff retention should be addressed (Rogers et al., 1994). People resourcing is concerned with ownership, sector size development stage of organisations; degree of turbulence or dynamism in the competitive or task environment and degree of influence of the external environment; attitude and imagination of key management people towards personnel; enacting unitary, neo-unitary and pluralistic approach to employment relationship; and monitoring the competence, reputation and track record of personnel for developing their skills and capacity (Pilbeam and Corbridge 2002). Therefore, it is management's job to ensure that the industry focuses on employees capable of performing the service (Kathawala and Elmuti, 1991).

3. Influence of External Environment

Organisations are influenced by external environment, which plays a vital role to shape the way of business. The instances of external influences include competition, levels of funding, economic climate, state policy, technological development and social change. Scanning the external environment, seeking to interpret the implications and planning or responding accordingly are the preconditions to successful people resourcing (Pilbeam and Corbridge 2002).

3.1 Globalisation

As a result of globalisation, attracting foreign investment, increasing exports and developing international alliances to penetrate new markets, has become a world-wide trend. Some developing countries could perceive it as undesirable and as a threat. Globalisation does not mean elimination of differences, imitating others, or allowing developed nations to impose their models. It means integrating differences, putting together individual strengths, building from the differences and ability to join efforts for a win-win process. Globalisation is a worldwide pressure for change (Granell, 2000). In a recent study, data were collected from seven regions, interviewing 232 Chief Executive Officers, HRM academics and consultants. In the findings, globalisation was seen as one of the most important and frequent external trends and a pressure for change (42 per cent). The other factors identified include technology advances (40 per cent), skill shortages (36 per cent) and competition (33 per cent). However, the order of importance of globalisation is different in various regions. Globalisation is seen as one of the strongest trends in European, Japanese and American companies. On the other hand, other

trends such as domestic and global instability, technology and competition have the first places in Asia-Pacific, Canadian and Venezuelan Companies (Wright, et al., 1999).

Globalisation seemed to offer the Western world a new horizon of business opportunities during 1980s. The negative impact on the labour market became evident since 1990s. The statistics of Germany's labour shows a picture of job cut in the wake of globalisation. During the period of 1991-96, a total of 0.98 million German workers lost their jobs. The number of employee redundancy is 0.5 million including 0.3 million manufacturing workers in 1996 alone. Firms contend with heightened international competition and low wages in the former Eastern bloc and Asia and they have turned to cost-cutting through shedding labour inside Germany itself. Jobs either disappear altogether or are relocated. The predictions of Karl Marx about capitalism are eventuating in a process by which firms become ever more profitable at a cost of large-scale unemployment. The process of rationalisation and wage reduction proceeds at an alarming pace through computerisation, strategic alliances, the manipulation of trade unions and so on (Bloch, 1998).

3.2 Quest for Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is considered an influential drive for people resourcing. The term 'competitive advantage' can be defined as the asymmetry or differential in any firm attribute or factor that allows one firm to serve the customers in a better way than others and thus create better customer value and achieve superior performance (Ma, 1999). It is argued that in the short run, the competitiveness of organisations derive from the price/performance related factors of the products being manufactured at present. Most of the competing firms are in existence in the competitive arena by converging on similar and formidable standards for product cost and quality. On the other hand, competitiveness derives from the ability to build at a lower cost than the competitors in the long run. Managements' ability to consolidate corporate wide technologies and production skills into competencies that empower the concerned organisation to adapt to the changing scenario quickly is considered the real source of competitive advantage (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990).

It is opined that it is possible to achieve competitive advantage through innovation. There should be innovation in a broader sense by introducing new technologies and new/developed ways of doing things. New product design, new production process, new marketing approach and a new way of conducting training can pave the way for competitive advantage. Huge investment in skill and knowledge is also needed to achieve this objective (Porter, 1990).

Search for competitive advantage has fundamentally changed the

development of international economy. The power of the trans-national companies (TNCs) is determined by their efficiency in production and transporting the capital across borders. Their ability to move from costlier location to lower cost ones gives them enormous bargaining power in relation to workers. Roughly two third of the world is covered by these TNCs, thus they stand at the forefront of globalisation and promote it relentlessly and consistently (UNCTAD, 1995).

3.3 Flat Organisations and 'Interim Managers'

Organisations today are becoming much flatter and slimmer than they were 20 years ago to face the challenges of a changing business environment. Core operations are smaller, supported by out-sourced non-core activities (Handy, 1989). The forward looking and dynamic companies are opting for flatter, more horizontal structures that in the long run will enable them responding more effectively to the turbulent business environment in which they find themselves (Daft, 1998). 'Flat organisations' denotes to fewer management levels and more brands being managed by relatively junior brand managers. Research reveals (Hankinson and Cowking, 1997) that many brand managers (31 percent) manage three to five brands with a further 15 percent managing six or more. Flatter structure is a shift from vertical decision making to horizontal collaboration and cross-functional cooperation (McCalman, 1996). Managers learn to share information across the company and to promote a culture characterised by transparency and trust (Hankinson and Hankinson, 1999). It is argued that in theory at least, flatter organisational structures may be in a better position to deliver better service to the stakeholders (Hankinson, 1999). However, the concept of completely flat organisation (organisation without hierarchy) is a myth. Some sort of control, supervision or facilitation is needed to run any type of organisation. Moreover, flatter structure of organisation can create frustration among employees because such structure diminishes the promotional prospect.

Short-term contracts are often used to replace full time workers. Interim managers or consultants or contractors working on projects are the significant features of current workplace. There is no one single cause for such a change. A series of drivers can be detected in the business environment to which organisations react and adapt. Such drivers of change are fairly constant. The survival of organisations largely depends upon their ability to adapt to these drivers (McGreevy, 2003). For example, in the workforce of China, performance has replaced the traditional criterion i.e. seniority as the determinant factor for people resourcing (Glover and Trivedi, 2007; quoted in Beardwell and Claydon, 2007). Moreover, the recruitment and selection practices are being more influenced by economic and market concerns than political bureaucracy

that results in increasing number of job-cut in both public and private sectors (Zhu and Dowling, 2002).

3.4 Virtual Organisations

Companies need to become super efficient to survive in the competitive global arena. As a result, a number of fashionable strategies of corporate transformation, downsizing and reengineering, and the concept of the "virtual organisation" have emerged. Virtual organisations are small core operating company that outsource most of its services. The company can be large in trading terms but small in terms of permanent staff. The overall network of companies is large and each component specialises in a small subset of activity (Franks, 1998). Each of the component companies in the virtual corporation is built around expertise and specialised knowledge. Knowledge is said to be the true resource of a company. An organisation cannot organise itself without knowledge and it would be unable to maintain itself as an active entity (Davenport and Prusak, 1988).

On the other hand, it is argued that practical examples of virtual organisation are difficult to find and any existing guidelines are almost impossible to put into practical effect (Thorne, 2005). Moreover, flexible, technology-driven, virtualised work arrangements have adverse impacts on social interaction and personal identity. Moreover, the need for face to face contact cannot be ruled out completely (Bunzel, 2001).

3.4 Flexitime

Flexitime schemes split the working day into flexible time and core time. Employees are expected to be at work in the nominated core periods, but can vary their start, finish and lunch break times. Hours are recorded over a defined period (e.g. a month or four weeks) and employees have to balance their actual hours worked with total contracted hours. A small number of credit or debit hours may usually be carried over into the next accounting period. Extra hours may be converted into leave (www.cipd.com).

Over 10% of UK employees (around 2.5 million) work flexitime. About 40% of people on flexitime work in public administration and defence. Managerial, professional and technical staff account for nearly 33%, and 22% are administrative and secretarial staff. Relatively few manual workers are on flexitime (ibid). The 2002 Employment Act provided opportunities for the UK employees to request flexible working arrangements from their employers. Since 2003, fathers are also allowed to take up to two weeks paid paternity leave (Hyman and Summers, 2007). Moreover, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has recognised flexibility as an effective instrument to remove unnecessary

obstacles retarding parents from achieving their full potential within the labour market (Taylor, 2001).

Flexitime can improve work-life balance by making it easier to accommodate domestic and work commitments; help recruitment and retention; make it easier to accommodate fluctuations in workload; improve motivation and job satisfaction (www.cipd.com).*

On the other hand flexitime involves cost. And it may mean that staff 'clock watch' (more emphasis on the time schedule than the need of the organisation); result in staff working according to their personal preferences rather than business needs; give problems in maintaining cover at certain times; make it difficult to schedule meetings. But most of the problems can be tackled by setting clear guidelines and most organisations have reported that flexitime is rarely abused (ibid).

3.5 Feminisation of Workforce

The advancement of women into positions of power and influence in organisations is essential if women are to achieve equality of opportunity worldwide (Schein, 2007). Studies reveal that women's participation in workforce is increasing. In nearly 20 countries, including Austria, Germany, Greece, Israel, Peru, and Singapore, around 20 to 30 percent of legislative, senior official, and managerial positions are held by women. In 16 countries including New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, and the UK, women occupy between 31 to 39 percent of such jobs (Writh, 2001).

However, in countries like the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka, women hold less than 10 percent of legislative, senior official, and managerial positions (Ibid). In 26 African countries, women's participation in management and administrative positions averages 15 percent (United Nations, 2000).

The share of women in managerial jobs has increased by only between 1 and 5 percent in 26 countries between 1996-1999 and 2000-2002 respectively. While a few countries, such as Costa Rica showed steep increases (23.5 percent), others, such as Canada, and Ireland experienced declines (ILO, 2004).

Being influenced by increasing participation of women in the workforce, there have been shifts towards making work-life boundaries more permeable. Policy interest stems from the economic desirability of raising levels of employment participation of young mothers (Hardy and Adnett, 2002). It is accompanied by a growing sensitivity to tensions of the employees between work and non-work lives, particularly regarding child-care. Work-life tensions are closely linked to various factors such as work intensification, long working hours etc. (Green, 2001) as well as extended shift working and unpredictable (and often unpaid) overtime to

meet extended work schedules (Hyman et al., 2003). As a result of the interaction between these factors, stress-related illness and absence have reached significantly (Cooper, 2000). Moreover, the UK equal opportunity and work life balance policy has been largely influenced by the European Employment Strategy, (Hardy and Adnett, 2002) where a social justice case for family-friendly working is founded in the forms of greater equality of opportunity for employed parents, especially women, in terms of pay, advancement and in working conditions (Roper et al., 2003).

3.6 Technological Innovation

People exchange knowledge across the functional areas of business by using technology and established processes (Awad and Ghaziri, 2003). The proportion of Knowledge Workers in the workforce has increased dramatically, as organisations are shifting from manual production to a more automated, and knowledge-driven, production. Knowledge Workers are rapidly becoming the single largest group in the work force of developed countries (Drucker, 1999). However, the scenario was quite different in the past. In 1920, the ratio of manual workers to Knowledge Workers was 2:1 (Davenport, 2002). By 1980, the ratio was 1:2. In 1956, "white-collar" workers outnumbered their "blue-collar" counterpart i.e. manual workers (Thomas & Baron, 1994). It is noted that the pace of the shift from manual work to knowledge work appears to be nearing steady state (Nickols, 2000). The emergence of Knowledge Workers is seen as a consequence of a broader shift from an industrial to a post-industrial society (Drucker, 1988).

In short the drivers include: globalisation, new technology, currency and stock market fluctuations, changing product life cycles, significant financial failures, mergers, acquisitions and alliances, interactions of political and economic issues and power realignments; ethnic and environmental issues; and the haves and have not imbalance (Rabey, 2003).

4. Prediction about the Future

It is predicted that as a result of technological innovation and emergence of new management techniques, only 20% of the existing workforce will be needed in near future (Rifkin, 1995). In China, during 1998-2001 and 2002-2005, the number of public sector employees losing jobs is 25 million and 14 million respectively (Glover and Trivedi; quoted in Beardwell and Claydon, 2007). The worsening unemployment situation is likely to become more acute throughout the globe in course of time. The failure of governments to combat the unemployment problem may give rise to various anti social activities such as drug addiction, mugging, theft, prostitution etc.

Public-private partnership is getting more popularity. Therefore, there will be more lateral entry and exchange of manpower between public and private sectors. In this age of technological innovation, more technical personnel will be needed than in the past. More virtual and relatively flat structured organisations are likely to emerge. The concept of 'interim manager' will gain more popularity because of the dynamic nature of the organisations. As a result of globalisation, the concept of 24x7 is gaining much popularity throughout the world (www.peoplemanagement.co.uk). Therefore, more organisations will go for 'flexi time'. 'Grey labour' (Lyon and Mogendorff, 1991) can be effective to address the particular management needs of the organisation (Finn, 1990). Research indicates that age is a poor indication of ability and performance (Waldman and Arolio, 1986) with job performance, motivation and satisfaction tending to increase rather than decrease. Compared with their young counterparts, the need for entertainment is much lesser among the 'grey labour'. As a result, the latter can discharge their duties with least interruption. Renowned British super shops such as TESCO, Sainsbury, ASDA etc. are employing the 'grey labour' in increasing number particularly at shop level (Humm and Sharp, 1991). Therefore, old age would be an advantage for employment particularly in service sector in near future. The tenure of service may be extended because the life expectancy is increasing. As an outcome of globalisation, there will be more ethnic diversity in workforce actually, there will be free flow of labour all over the world. It may cause high turnover of employees. Governments will have to play vigilant role to curb discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, religion, age etc. and thus provide equal opportunities for workers and job seekers. Specific and pragmatic policies against sexual harassment, ethnic and religious discrimination can contribute a lot towards creating an equitable situation in the workplace.

5. Conclusion

Organisations do not exist in isolation and 'people resourcing' does not come from the vacuum. They live in and are influenced by the external environment (globalisation, technological innovation, competition, state policy, feminisation etc). The main resource of an organisation is its people. Organisations have to change their policies specially those relating to people in order to cope with the changing environment and thus arrest the entropic process. Otherwise they will face extinction. Accurate prediction about the future trend of people resourcing is very difficult. But it can be said that people resourcing in the future will be more complex and diverse in nature as a result of changes in the social and technological fields.

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Human Oriented Japanese Employment Practices, Recent Structural Changes and Possibilities to Emulate These in Bangladesh

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Abstract : *The Japanese employment system is considered as one of the key factors of good performance of the Japanese economy, since the Japanese unemployment rate is low and stable comparison to other developed and industrialised countries. Japan's well-educated and industrious work force, reservoirs of entrepreneurs and technicians, along with other economic factors have produced a mature and stable industrial economy. Motivation of its workers and the workers' strong devotion and loyalty to and recognition of their employers are considered the factors of corporate prosperity in Japan. Japan's industrial structure has been enduring a fundamental change in orientation, moving from secondary industries towards tertiary industries and the labour market is diversifying in working styles. The traditional Japanese employment practices are now being transformed owing to the changes in economic conditions, the structural change in population and the change in Japanese lifestyle. This article tries to capture and shed light on the sacred treasures of Japanese employment practices; origin of the system and its development. Moreover, demographic change has affected the Japanese employment practices. This article also examines and shed light on the structural change, the recent trend in the Japanese Employment practices and labour market. Finally, the article compares the Japanese labour market and employment practices with labour market and employment practices of Bangladesh.*

Introduction

Labour market is considered as an important determinant of the performance of national economies and individual firms. After achieving one of the highest economic growth rates in the world from the 1960s through the 1980s, the Japanese economy slowed dramatically in the early 1990s, when the "bubble economy" collapsed. As a wealthy nation Japan's current status is in the culmination of the process and economic development continues. Its reservoir of industrial leadership and technicians, well-educated and industrious work force, high savings and investment rates, intensive promotion of industrial development and foreign trade have produced a stable industrial economy. The success of corporations in Japan is attributable to the astounding motivation of its

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¹ An economic bubble is trade in high volumes at prices that are considerably at variance from intrinsic values". The intrinsic value is a theoretical calculation that aims at reflecting the fair value by taking into account hypotheses of future returns and risks. The Japanese asset price bubble was a time of skyrocketing land and stock prices in the Japanese economy, lasting from 1986 to 1990. It is one of the most famous economic bubbles in the history of modern economics.

workers as well. The reasons behind this corporate prosperity are the workers' strong sense of loyalty and devotion to and recognition of their employers.

Japan's labour force consists of some 64 million workers, 40% of which are women. Labour union membership is about 12 million. In the first half of 2005, the number of deaths in Japan exceeded the number of births, indicating decline in population, which was initially predicted to be started in 2007 (JILPT, 2005). Over the last two decades different conditions and the surrounding of the Japanese Economy have changed substantially making a significant impact on the Japanese employment practices, industrial relation and its labour market. Japan's labour force continued its rapid aging trend. Moreover, the number of working women in part time jobs, the inflow of foreign labour continued to rise sharply and the employment practices became more diversified.

Overview of Japanese Style Employment Practices

Usually it is said that employment practices in Japan are human oriented. The so-called "Japanese-style employment practices" consist of long-term employment, seniority based wage determination system, promotion in the internal labour market, intra-firm labor unions and long run on the job training (Ihara, 2004). These are considered the sacred treasures of Japanese employment practices. Japanese employment practices and the workings of Japanese industrial relations is described as "welfare corporatism"² (Inagami 1996). The practices of long-term employment and seniority related pay made a major contribution to bringing about full employment and assuring security for workers' livelihoods. These practices provided a partial substitution of a welfare state since these employment practices are unique for job security, training, and the guaranteeing of workers' employment.

In Japan, usually a new employee joins a company after their graduation and work for the same company until they reach their retirement age and people work for the same company for long time. Mobility or changing job is not so popular in Japan (Ihara, 2004). Long term employment system helps the firms in training personnel, sharing information among employees and developing interest in the performance of the firm. But employees make contract with the employers (company) on an individual basis and people are free to leave the company whenever they want to do so. In fact, a large number of employees in the tertiary industry and in small business settings take up different employment more frequently. The lifetime employment is merely a labour practice among the Japanese

² The global emergence of a new form of shareholder-oriented capitalism suggests a shift towards an individualized and market-oriented employment type, lessening the social bonds established by welfare corporatism.

large corporations in the secondary industry. Japanese firm is like a community in which worker are treated as member. Management and workers have a shared goal to make the firm prosper in the long run. The practice of recruiting workers straight from school or university for employment until retirement and invest substantial resources to train them is a unique feature in Japanese model.

Japanese firms raise wages as their employees acquire more skills with longer service. Seniority system is composed of seniority promotion system, and seniority wage system. The seniority promotion system is a practice in which people are promoted according to the length of service. Most new recruits are treated in the same manner. Managers are gradually promoted from the lowest ranks to the next higher ones and they need many years of experience before reaching senior managerial positions. In a pyramidal organizational structure, the scope of promotion to the higher positions is very limited. Therefore, the seniority wage system works as a substitute for promotion practices. Pay and promotion system in Japan is based on the 'Nenko'³ principle. It is argued that 'Nenko' is not just about seniority but also about merit.

Japanese labor unions are not organized by occupation or industry, but by enterprise. Enterprise is the basic unit for organizing workers in the enterprises. Though there are no legal restrictions on having more than one union at a workplace, there is only one union for each company. All the employees belong to the same enterprise union until they are promoted to managers. Managers leave the union to join the management side. As each company has a single union, the relationship between the company and the union is relatively close and enterprise union takes full responsibility of collective bargaining within each company. Japanese employment practices are admired for its outcomes one of which is the low incidence of industrial conflict. Stability in employment relationships, flexible work practices and enterprise based training lead to high productivity growth.

The Japanese company appoints a new graduate as general employee rather than as specialists. Afterward, the company gives a variety of internal education programs to train the new graduates. These diversified education programmes can be divided into on- the-job training (OJT) and off-the-job training. On-the-job training is carried out at the working station on a daily basis. New employees become skilled on the job through experience. What employees learn from their experience is a key to success in their promotion. The company takes time to appraise them in the context of their aptitude, qualities, distinctiveness and entire

³ The Nenko system or Nenko Joretsu as it is called in Japan, is the Japanese system of promoting an employee in order of his or her proximity to retirement.

contribution to the company. Off-the-job training includes new employee education, special skill education and management education. The new employee education is designed for the new graduates to get basic knowledge and to become a member of business world. Moreover a variety of lifelong education programs are available within a company in Japan.

Origin of the System and Its Development

Anthropologist James Abegglen, who conducted a study at manufacturing plants in Japan in 1955 and 1956, first documented the sacred treasures of Japanese employment practices. Afterwards others recognized Abegglen's findings and referred his 'characterization' as "Japanese Style Employment Practices". Abegglen's book was translated into Japanese and it became a best seller (Flath, 2005). Actually Japanese employment practices became widespread in Japan only in the immediate post war shortly before Abegglen undertook the study. Statistics shows that a much lower percentage of workers had lengthy tenures with Japanese industrial firms in the 1900-39 than in 1957. Moreover hiring rates and separation rates in the years 1900-36 were about two times greater than those of the years 1949-66 (Flath, 2005). With his study and extensive interviews of personnel officers and workers in different factories, during 1955-56, Abegglen came to a conclusion on lifelong employment practices on Japanese firm and depicted :

"At whatever level of organization in the Japanese factory, the worker commits himself on entrance to the company for the remainder of his working career. The company will not discharge him even temporarily except in the most extreme circumstances. He will not quit the company for industrial employment elsewhere....The rule of a lifetime commitment is truly proved by its rare exceptions" (Abegglen, 1958, The Japanese Factory, cited in Flath, 2005).

After conducting his study Abegglen argued that the Japanese employment system is paternalistic, feudalistic and first identified lifetime employment as a different employment practice than those of other western employment systems. Abegglen's findings were right on some points and wrong on some interpretation. During 1853 to 1900 the Japanese company hired workers on a spot market basis through labour bosses and brokers (Inagami, 1998). This practice encountered many problems in imposing workplace discipline, rewarding the employees for their good performance and encouraging the loyalty, devotion and commitment to the employer. Afterwards, when new industries developed employers faced different challenges with the gang-boss system and tried to put into practice and replaced the old system with the direct employment of young, male primary school graduates who were then trained. The present lifetime employment system came into sight after the World War II. Afterwards, gradually the Japanese firms adopted

practicing the long-term employment system to get maximum output from the skilled workers for better productivity and prosperity of the firms. It is argued that seniority based pay developed through trial and error attempts to retain skilled and experienced workers who are trained at company expenses and to ensure diligent and meticulous efforts by workers as well.

Japanese employment practices were supported after World War II because of the people's anxiousness about unemployment caused by utterly disordered economy of Japanese at that time. Since it was important to obtain a job right after World War II, Japanese welcomed lifetime employment. During the post war time the Japanese lifetime employment developed gradually (Endo, 1976, in Inagami, 1998). During 1950s, lifetime employment achieved its present dominance and it is argued that employers used it as a strategy for discouraging militant, left-wing trade unionism and for re-establishing managerial control over employees (Inagami 1998). Furthermore, the traditional employment practices of pre-war Japan provided little job security during the period of economic disorder and high inflation. Therefore, life long employment system was established and became popular. The lifetime employment system also used by the employer to strengthen their power over worker and consequently provided their employees' financial incentives, medical and housing facilities. Gradually lifetime employment provided the large Japanese corporations with a cooperative and compliant work force which ensured the high performance and remarkable output.

Structural Change of Traditional System and Recent Trends in Japanese Labour Market

Japan is facing socio-economic transformations represented by the ageing of the population, global competition and diversification among workers. All these structural changes have a significant impact on Japanese labour market and employment practices. Japanese workers economic lives have improved owing to economic development and income distribution throughout the twentieth century and more stable lifestyle has been attained through social security at the time of unemployment, sickness and old age. In response to new economic surroundings the labour market is undergoing several changes. Traditional Japanese employment practices are now being transformed owing to the changes in economic conditions, the structural change in population and the change in Japanese lifestyle. Moreover, demographic structural change has affected the Japanese employment practices. The average age of total employees is rising and the company has more difficulty in hiring new employees. Young people become more interested in changing their jobs. The ratio of changing jobs is increasing and multinational enterprises are likely to

seek more internationally viable employment and human resource system to attract talented professionals and enhance productivity. Japanese firms have been responsible for providing employees with on the job training to raise their skill levels and their productivity.

Recently this practice is declining, as there is no strong motivation for firms to commit themselves to train their employees, partly because there is a fear that trained employees may leave their firms in future (Fujiki, Nakada and Tachibanaki, 2002). Japanese firms reduced training expenditures during the 1990s to reduce the labour cost. The share of direct expenditures on training as percentage of labour cost decreased significantly (METI, 2003). The shift from seniority-based to merit based treatment is another significant change that is taking place in the traditional employment practices. Traditional treatment is now reshuffling and undergoing changes and the remuneration and career systems are increasingly incorporated with job responsibilities and performance appraisal especially for managerial and professional employees. It is argued that Japan's unique employment system *nenko* promotion, *nenko* wages, and "lifetime" employment were common in Japan throughout high growth years in large firms and smaller firms tried to follow these practices. These practices are becoming less common, even in larger firms, as employment practices are shifting towards merit and performance based wages and employment.

Diversification in working style is also occurring and the full time worker is no longer a significant and worth mentioning form of work in Japan. New working styles such as various types of part time, dispatched, contractual and temporary works have increased which have further diversified the workforce. In 1990 the percentage of part time worker was 18.8%, which increased to 25.5% in 2002 (Hashimoto and Higuchi, 2005). Large employers, those with 1000 or more employees, have been relying heavily on part time workers. Moreover, the percentage of labour force employed in agriculture and forestry is declining whereas the numbers of workers are increasing in the service industries. Furthermore, the unemployment rate has remained high among the young generation and various mismatches are existing in the labour market.

Different studies found that Japanese firms responses to the diverse and negative economic shocks with some strategies such as reduction in working hours and overtime payment for full time worker, less employment to the new graduates and increase in temporary transfers between firms and transfer to other companies (Tachibanaki, 1987, 1998, cited in Fujiki, Nakada and Tachibanaki, 2001). These adjustment processes are used and are successful to some extent to prevent unemployment of workers in large firms. Consequently, these practices

effectively relocate worker in the internal labour market. Following the recent drop in the birth rate in Japan, it is estimated that the young population will dramatically decrease from now onwards, consequently it will reduce the labour supply. There is a growing proportion of older workers in the labour market since Japanese society is aging and birth ratio is decreasing. Japan's population is projected to become the world's oldest by 2025 (The Economist, September 27, 2003). Moreover, the structure and the nature of the industries have been changing to accommodate the globalised and service-oriented economy.

Japanese labour market was continually downsized for more than 10 years and if the decline accelerates, the labor force participation ratio will follow a fairly consistent downward trend (Higashino, 2005). To remove barriers to immigration would be a countermeasure to tackle the problems of labour supply. Though the Japanese government has been reluctant to remove the immigration barriers, it is an increasingly important feature in a globalising world. Globalisation along with other local factors has made it inevitable, complex and difficult. In Japan, the 1989 Immigration Control Law recognized visa categories, granting more recognition of the need to the permit entry of highly skilled professionals, while reaffirming the need to discourage unskilled worker entry (Lucas, 2005).

The influx of foreign workers is an important recent phenomenon in Japanese labour market as the number of registered labourers has been increasing steadily. It reached to an all-time high of 1.852 million persons in 2003, which was 1.45% of total population (Japan Immigration Association, 2003). North and South Koreans accounted the majority of Japan's foreign workers previously, which has been decreasing recently. According to the statistics of 2002 they accounted for 33.8% of foreign population. On the other hand, the percentage of population from China and from other Asian countries has been increasing and the percentage of Chinese population has made up more than 20% of the foreign population since 2001 (JILPT, 2005).

Comparison between Japanese and Bangladeshi Employment Practices and Labour Market

Labour market in Bangladesh is characterized by high rate of labour force growth, low rate of employment, predominance of employment in agriculture followed by service sector, existence of under employment and low wage rate etc. Regarding labour mobility, Japanese workers tend to stay with one employer and change employers less frequently than that of Bangladeshi worker. Average job tenure in Bangladesh is less longer than that of Japan. It varies in public and private sector. In Bangladesh, job tenure in one particular employment in public sector is longer than that of the private sector. The expression 'lifelong employment', which

signifies that employees stay in one company until retirement, is used to characterize the Japanese employment system, is not common in the private sector in Bangladesh. Regarding wages and promotion, employers in Japan pay wages and determine the promotion possibilities of employees largely by workers' seniority, job tenures and ages, while the wages and promotions for Bangladeshi employees in private sector are determined by on the basis of their productivity and performance. But in the public sector in Bangladesh there are some similarities with Japanese promotion system to some extent followed by some guided service rules and policies. In the public sector promotion and the tenure of the job is based on seniority not on productivity and performance. Regarding unionism, in Bangladesh the organizations of unions are based on workers' occupation, but unions in Japan are organized at the enterprise level.

In Bangladesh, the majority of the economically active population is male. The average number of economically active people per household is 1.5, of these, on an average, 1.2 is male and 0.3 is female. The overall rate of underemployment is 16.6%, where the female underemployment rate is very high, which is 52.8% and male underemployment rate is only 7.4% (BBS, 2002) Females are busy with household work and they have less opportunity to search for jobs. But in Japan women constitute almost 40% of the total labour force (JILPT, 2005). Traditionally, females are responsible for household work and they are paid less for their labour in Bangladesh. The wage gap between males and females is high. The average daily wage for males is 65 Tk whereas it is only 38 Tk for females (BBS, 2002). The wage gap is more severe in rural areas than in urban areas. The large wage gap contributes to the high underemployment rate for females. With high population growth continuing to expand the economically active population and the simultaneous employment cuts in privatized industries, the labour market situation in Bangladesh is fragile. Relatively high rate of inflation combined with high level of unemployment has lowered down the real wages. This has accelerated the fall of aggregate demand for labour. Minimum wages of the workers in the private sector are not protected. Trade liberalization and privatization has accelerated social insecurity and has aggravated unemployment and underemployment situation.

Another important feature of the Japanese labour market is the friendly policies for the benefit of the "double-income households". There are many different forms of supporting policies for double-income households. But in Bangladesh still supporting policies for double income households are very limited, which discourages women to take part in the labour force.

⁴ "Double-income households" means the households with both working husbands and wives, which currently exceed 13 million (JILPT,2005).

Japan has no law to govern labour-management consultation processes, but this practice has taken root in many Japanese companies. Usually unions resolve labour disputes at individual company level. They resort to collective bargaining to discuss employment practices, personnel affairs and wage as well. On the other hand, they use the labour management consultation process for discussing employment practices and other issues. There are many possibilities to emulate and adopt the collective bargaining and joint labour-management consultation process of Japan in Bangladesh as these processes are weak, feeble and unions in the big corporations in Bangladesh faces the challenges of unrest and conflict among labor unions.

Conclusion

It is argued that the long term employment practices promote efficient acquisition and utilization of company specific skills and it provide incentives for worker as agent of their employer to be diligent and loyal to their effort of the employer behalf. These are the unique economic rationales of the Japanese employment practices. Thus Japanese employment practices and industrial relations are a continued source of great interest and wonder. Policy makers in other countries have paid great attention to Japanese practices and often sought to imitate and emulate them. Bangladesh can emulate and imitate some of them considering the socio economic and cultural perspective. Over the last two decades, the environmental conditions surrounding the Japanese economy have changed substantially, making a significant impact both on the country's industrial relations and its labour market. Economic, social and cultural changes have affected the Japanese labour market. But still the human-oriented aspect of the Japanese employment practices is not negligible. By securing the long-term commitment, the company provides a variety of services and the employees contribute to their companies from a long-term perspective. Since long-term customer relation is vital for the success of the tertiary industries, the Japanese employment practices will effectively work in such industries. The Japanese economy achieved remarkable growth especially in the labor-intensive secondary industry since the so-called Japanese employment practices worked most effectively in such industry. These practices are also considered as significant to emulate in the tertiary industries of Bangladesh.

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মাদকাসক্তদের আর্থ-সামাজিক ও জনসংখ্যাতাত্ত্বিক মর্যাদা: খুলনা নগরীর চিকিৎসাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের উপর একটি সমীক্ষা

সেলিনা আহমেদ*

ড. খ. ম. রেজাউল করিম**

Abstract: Drug abuse and illicit trafficking is the curse for the human nation. Drug abuse has been considered as one of the devastating national problems of Bangladesh, crossing all social, economic, cultural and political boundaries. Bangladesh has been affected by the problem and it has become a main agenda of discussion. Drug addiction is not only a problem of the addicts; it also affects their family, community and society as a whole. Due to drug addiction, the criminal and other illegal activities are increasing at an alarming rate in all over the country especially in Khulna City. This study is primary data based. It has been conducted to focus on the socio-economic and demographic status of drug addicts (who are under treatment in different drug addiction treatment centres in Khulna City) and the nature and causes of drug addiction.

ভূমিকা

মাদকাসক্তি হচ্ছে এমন একটি অভ্যাস বা অবস্থা যখন একজন মানুষ বিভিন্ন রকম মাদকের (আফিম, মরফিন, হেরোইন, ফেনসিডিল, গাঁজা প্রভৃতি) নিয়মিত ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে তার শরীর ও মনকে ঐ সমস্ত মাদকের উপর পুরোপুরি নির্ভর করে তোলে, যার ফলশ্রুতিতে সমাজে শান্তি ও ভারসাম্যের উপর হুমকির সৃষ্টি হয়। মাদকাসক্তির বৈশিষ্ট্য হলো : (ক) মাদক গ্রহণের অদম্য আকাঙ্ক্ষা ও প্রয়োজনীয়তা এবং মাদক সংগ্রহের অপ্রতিরোধ্য প্রচেষ্টা; (খ) মাদকদ্রব্য ব্যবহারের মাত্রা বাড়ানোর প্রবণতা; (গ) মাদকের উপর মানসিক ও শারীরিক নির্ভরশীলতা; (ঘ) ব্যক্তি ও সমাজের উপর এর ক্ষতিকর প্রভাব (হক, ১৯৯০:২৩)।

মানব সভ্যতা আজ যেসব ভয়াবহ সংকটের মুখোমুখি তন্মধ্যে মাদক সমস্যা অন্যতম। মাদকাসক্তিকে বিংশ শতাব্দীর সত্তরের দশক অবধি একটি আমেরিকান সমস্যা হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা হতো। কেননা সে সময়ে আমেরিকায় বসবাসকারী জনগণের অধিকাংশই মাদকাসক্ত ছিল। কিন্তু বর্তমানে মাদকাসক্তি একটি আন্তর্জাতিক সমস্যা হিসেবে পরিগণিত। যদিও উন্নত বিশ্বে এ সমস্যার প্রকোপ সব থেকে বেশি, কিন্তু দরিদ্র দেশসমূহও মাদকাসক্তির কালো থাবা থেকে মুক্ত নয়। মাদকাসক্তি সমস্যার ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশকে এখনও একটি প্রান্তিক দেশ হিসেবে গণ্য করা হয়। তবে সঠিক পরিসংখ্যানের অভাবে এখানে সমস্যাটির প্রকৃত গভীরতা নির্ণয় করা একটা দুরূহ ব্যাপার হয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে। বস্তুত বাংলাদেশ কোন মারাত্মক মাদক উৎপাদনকারী দেশ নয়। তবে ভৌগোলিক দিক থেকে বাংলাদেশ গোল্ডেন ট্রায়্যাঙ্গল,

* সহকারী অধ্যাপক, সমাজবিজ্ঞান ডিসিপ্লিন, খুলনা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, খুলনা।

** প্রভাষক, সমাজবিজ্ঞান বিভাগ, সরকারি বি. এল. বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কলেজ, খুলনা।

গোল্ডেন ক্রিসেন্ট ও গোল্ডেন ওয়েজের মধ্যবর্তী অবস্থানের কারণে পাশ্চাত্য বিশ্বের মাদক চোরাচালানের ট্রানজিট হিসেবে ব্যবহৃত হচ্ছে (নাস্টম, ২০০২:৫১)। ফলে মাদকদ্রব্যের অপব্যবহার ইদানিং দেশে একটি গুরুতর সমস্যা রূপে দেখা দিয়েছে। বাংলাদেশে মাদকাসক্তের সঠিক সংখ্যা জানা না থাকলেও এক পরিসংখ্যানে দেখা যায়, দেশে প্রায় দেড় কোটি মানুষ মাদকাসক্ত (দৈনিক ইত্তেফাক, ১ এপ্রিল ২০০২)। এরমধ্যে শুধু হেরোইন আসক্তের সংখ্যা কমপক্ষে ২১ লক্ষ (Taher, ১৯৯৫: ১৬৩)। সমাজ পরিবর্তনের সাথে সাথে অনেক নতুন ধরনের মাদকদ্রব্য দেশের বাজারে অবাদে প্রবেশ করছে। বিভিন্ন ব্রান্ডের দামী সিনথেটিক ড্রাগ সমাজের অভিজাত শ্রেণীর মানুষ বেশি ব্যবহারের সুযোগ পাচ্ছে। অন্যদিকে মধ্যবিত্ত ও নিম্নবিত্ত শ্রেণীর মানুষ গাঁজা, হেরোইন, ফেনসিডিল, দেশি মদ, তাড়ি ইত্যাকার মাদকদ্রব্য সেবনে আসক্ত। জানা যায়, দেশে মাদকাসক্তদের অধিকাংশই তরুণ-তরুণী। এক পরিসংখ্যান অনুযায়ী দেশে প্রায় ৯১ ভাগ মাদকসেবীই বয়সে কিশোর, তরুণ এবং যুবক। এসব মাদকাসক্তদের শতকরা ৪০ শতাংশের বয়স ১৫ থেকে ২৫ বছর এবং ৫০ শতাংশের বয়স ২৬ থেকে ৩৭ বছরের মধ্যে (ইনকিলাব, ১৯ আগস্ট ২০০৪)।

বাংলাদেশে মাদকাসক্তি একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সমস্যা হিসাবে পরিগণিত হবার প্রেক্ষাপটে মাদকাসক্তের চিকিৎসা ও পুনর্বাসনের প্রচেষ্টা শুরু হয়েছে মাত্র ১১ বছর আগে। মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ আইন ১৯৯০ এবং মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ অধিদপ্তরের একটি অন্যতম প্রধান লক্ষ্য হল মাদকাসক্তদের চিকিৎসা ও পুনর্বাসনের ব্যবস্থা করা। জানা গেছে, বর্তমানে দেশে সরকারি এবং বেসরকারি মিলিয়ে মাত্র ৮৭ টি মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় কেন্দ্র রয়েছে (Sikder, 2005:39)। এরমধ্যে মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ অধিদপ্তরের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীনে ঢাকায় ৪০ বেডের এবং রাজশাহী, চট্টগ্রাম ও খুলনায় ৫ বেডের তিনটি মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় কেন্দ্র রয়েছে, যেখানে শয্যা সংখ্যা মাত্র ৫৫৫টি। এ সুযোগ দেশের প্রায় ২ মিলিয়ন মাদক অপব্যবহারকারী জনসংখ্যার চাহিদার তুলনায় খুবই অপ্রতুল। তাছাড়া সঠিক চিকিৎসার ধরন ও পেশাগত দক্ষতার অভাবে এ সমস্ত নিরাময় কেন্দ্রে মান সম্মত চিকিৎসা পাওয়া যায় না। উপরন্তু এ কার্যক্রমে সঠিক যত্ন, অনুকরণ, প্রশিক্ষণ, পরামর্শ, দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন, প্রশিক্ষণ, পুনর্বাসন এবং সামাজিক একীভূতকরণ প্রভৃতি কার্যক্রমের মধ্যে সমন্বয় নেই। এ কেন্দ্রগুলো শুধুমাত্র ডিটক্সিফিকেশন সুবিধা প্রদান করে থাকে। এছাড়া যন্ত্রপাতির অভাবে এ সমস্ত নিরাময় কেন্দ্রগুলোতে কোন প্রকার পরীক্ষার সুযোগ নেই। ফলে এখানে যে চিকিৎসা দেয়া হয় তা মূলত সাময়িক ধরনের। এক তথ্য মতে, বাংলাদেশে ৮০ ভাগের বেশি মাদকাসক্ত চিকিৎসার পর আবার পূর্বাবস্থায় ফিরে এসেছে (Sikder and Taleb, 2005:13)। যদিও বাকী ২০ ভাগ চিকিৎসা সেবা গ্রহণকারীর সম্পর্কে সুনির্দিষ্ট তথ্য পাওয়া যায় না, তবে ধারণা করা হয় যে, তারা পুনরায় মাদকে আসক্ত হয়নি। নিচে দেশে বিদ্যমান মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ অধিদপ্তরের নিরাময় কেন্দ্রগুলোতে গত পাঁচ বছরের চিকিৎসা সংক্রান্ত পরিসংখ্যান তুলে ধরা হল :

^১ ঢাকার ৪০ শয্যাবিশিষ্ট কেন্দ্রীয় মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় কেন্দ্রকে ১০০ বেডের এবং ১৫০ বেডের পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্রে রূপান্তরের প্রকল্প প্রক্রিয়াধীন রয়েছে। বেসরকারি পর্যায়ে মাদকাসক্তি চিকিৎসা ও পুনর্বাসন কার্যক্রমের নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও তত্ত্বাবধানের জন্য মাদকাসক্তি চিকিৎসা ও পুনর্বাসন বিধিমালা প্রণীত হয়েছে এবং এর আওতায় সারাদেশের সকল বেসরকারি মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় কেন্দ্রকে তালিকাকৃত করা এবং লাইসেন্স প্রদান করা হচ্ছে।

সারণি-১: নিরাময় কেন্দ্রে চিকিৎসা ও পুনর্বাসন কার্যাবলীর হিসাব (২০০১-২০০৫)

বছর	চিকিৎসাপ্রাপ্ত রোগীদের সংখ্যা	আশু:বিভাগ	বহি:বিভাগ	পুরুষ	মহিলা
২০০১	১২,৭৭৫	৩,৪১৪	৯,৩৬১	১২,৭৫১	২৪
২০০২	১০,১৫৭	৩,৮০৩	৬,৩৫৪	১০,১৩৩	২৪
২০০৩	৯,০৮৯	৩,৬৩৮	৫,৪৫১	৯,০৭৫	১৪
২০০৪	১৩,৩০০	৩,৬২৭	৯,৬৭৩	১৩,০৮৫	২১৫
২০০৫ (মে পর্যন্ত)	৪,৪৭৯	১,০০৫	৩,৪৭৪	৪,৪৬৭	১২

সূত্র: আহমেদ, ২০০৫:২৯

বাংলাদেশে মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ : ঐতিহাসিক প্রেক্ষিত

বাংলাদেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক, সাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহাসিক প্রেক্ষাপটে মাদকদ্রব্যের উপস্থিতি অতি প্রাচীন। পূজা-পার্বন, সামাজিক আচার-অনুষ্ঠান এবং বিনোদনে এদেশের অনেক আদি জনগোষ্ঠীর মধ্যে মদ, তাড়ি, পচুই, গাঁজা-ভাং এর প্রচলন ছিল। বৃটিশ ইষ্ট ইন্ডিয়া কোম্পানি তাদের বাণিজ্যিক স্বার্থে এদেশে আফিম চাষ ও অফিম ব্যবসা শুরু করে। ১৮৫৭ সালে বৃটিশ ইন্ডিয়ান সরকার আফিম ব্যবসাকে সরকারি নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীনে এনে এর পরিচালনা ও তত্ত্বাবধানের জন্য প্রথম আইন প্রবর্তন করে এবং আফিম বিভাগ প্রতিষ্ঠা করা হয়। পরবর্তীতে ১৮৭৮ সালে সংশোধিত আফিম আইন প্রণয়ন করা হয়। অতঃপর গাঁজা ও মদ থেকেও রাজস্ব আদায় শুরু হয় এবং ১৯০৯ সালে বেঙ্গল এক্সাইজ এ্যাক্ট প্রণয়ন ও বেঙ্গল এক্সাইজ ডিপার্টমেন্ট প্রতিষ্ঠা করা হয়। মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণের দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত বেঙ্গল এক্সাইজ ডিপার্টমেন্টকে ষাটের দশকে এক্সাইজ এন্ড ট্যাক্সেশন ডিপার্টমেন্ট হিসেবে নামকরণপূর্বক অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়ের অধীনে ন্যস্ত করা হয়। ১৯৭৬ সালে এ ডিপার্টমেন্টকে পুনরায় নারকটিক্স এন্ড লিকার পরিদপ্তর নামে জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের অধীনে ন্যস্ত করা হয়।

১৯৮৯ সাল পর্যন্ত নারকটিক্স এন্ড লিকার পরিদপ্তরের মূল লক্ষ্য ছিল দেশে উৎপাদিত মাদকদ্রব্য থেকে রাজস্ব আদায় করা। আশির দশকে সারা বিশ্বে মাদকদ্রব্যের অপব্যবহার ও অবৈধ পাচার আশঙ্কাজনকভাবে বেড়ে যায়। ১৯৯০ সালে বাংলাদেশে মাদকদ্রব্যের অপব্যবহার ও অবৈধ পাচার রোধ, মাদকের ক্ষতিকর প্রতিক্রিয়া সম্পর্কে গণসচেতনতার বিকাশ এবং মাদকাসক্তদের চিকিৎসা ও পুনর্বাসনকল্পে মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ আইন, ১৯৯০ সালে প্রণয়ন এবং মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ আইনকে যুগোপযোগী করার জন্য ২০০০, ২০০২, এবং ২০০৪ সালে সংশোধন করা হয়েছে এবং অধিদপ্তরের উন্নয়ন কার্যক্রমও প্রক্রিয়াধীন রয়েছে (ইসলাম, ২০০৭ : ১২)।

খুলনা নগরীতে মাদকাসক্তি পরিস্থিতি

এ কথা সবারই জানা যে, মাদকের অবৈধ ব্যবহার অনেক জীবন এবং সমাজকে ধ্বংসের মুখে ঠেলে দেয়। এক তথ্যানুযায়ী খুলনা বিভাগে মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা প্রায়

২৫ থেকে ৩০ লক্ষ (দৈনিক ইন্তেফাক ১ এপ্রিল ২০০২)। কিন্তু এককভাবে খুলনা নগরীর মাদকাসক্তদের সম্পর্কে তেমন কোন পরিসংখ্যান নেই। তবে পরিসংখ্যান না থাকলেও খুলনা নগরীতে অবস্থিত মাদকাসক্ত নিরাময় কেন্দ্রের সংখ্যাই (৮টি)। এটি প্রমাণ করে যে, এখানে মাদকাসক্তি ইতোমধ্যেই একটি সমস্যা হিসেবে দেখা দিয়েছে। জানা যায়, খুলনার প্রায় প্রতিটি মহল্লায় প্রায় ১৫ থেকে ২৫ জন ব্যক্তি বিভিন্ন ধরনের মাদক গ্রহণ করে থাকে। এখানে ব্যবহৃত মাদকের মধ্যে মদ, গাঁজা, তাড়ি, হেরোইন, ফেনসিডিল, মরফিন ও রাম অন্যতম। তবে সবচেয়ে বেশি ব্যবহৃত মাদকের মধ্যে দেশি মদ, গাঁজা, হেরোইন, ফেনসিডিল, দেশি মদ ও তাড়ি অন্যতম। এখানকার মাদকাসক্তরা পেশায় বেকার যুবক, ছাত্র, ব্যবসায়ী, শিল্পকর্মী, পরিবহন কর্মী, বস্তিবাসী, যৌনকর্মী ও অন্যান্য। মাদকাসক্তরা বিভিন্ন প্রকার মাদক গ্রহণ করলেও যুবক ও ছাত্রদের মধ্যে ফেনসিডিল, হেরোইন ও গাঁজাই বেশি জনপ্রিয়। নিচে এদের চিকিৎসার জন্য খুলনা নগরীতে গড়ে ওঠা মাদকাসক্ত নিরাময় কেন্দ্রে ভর্তি হওয়া মাদকাসক্তদের সংখ্যা ও পেশা তুলে ধরা হল:

সারণি- ২: খুলনা নগরীর বিভিন্ন কেন্দ্রে চিকিৎসাধীন রোগীর সংখ্যা ও পেশা

ক্রমিক	চিকিৎসা কেন্দ্র	ছাত্র	বেকার	ব্যবসায়ী	অন্যান্য	মোট	শতকরা হার
০১	মুক্তি	০৫	১৫	০৬	০৪	৩০	৩৪.০৯
০২	প্রতীক	০৮	০০	০০	০০	০৮	০৯.০৯
০৩	প্রমিজ	০২	০৪	০৫	০১	১৬	১৮.১৮
০৪	প্রগতি	০০	০৪	০০	০০	০৪	০৪.৫৪
০৫	নেশা	০২	০৪	০১	০৩	১০	১১.৩৬
০৬	অশ্রু	০৬	০৫	০৪	০১	১৬	১৮.১৮
০৭	টিসিএল	০১	০২	০৭	০১	১১	১২.৫০
০৮	সরকারি	০১	০১	০১	০০	০৩	০৩.৪০
	মোট	১৯	৩৫	২৪	১০	৮৮	১০০.০০

সূত্র: মাঠ পর্যায়ে জরিপ, মার্চ ২০০৪

উপর্যুক্ত সারণিতে দেখা যায়, চিকিৎসাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের মধ্যে অধিকাংশই বেকার যুবক, শিক্ষার্থী কিংবা ব্যবসায়ী। দিনে দিনে এ নগরীতে মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা বেশ দ্রুতই বেড়ে চলেছে। সাম্প্রতিক এক তথ্য মতে, নগরীর ৮০টি স্পটে প্রতিদিন কমপক্ষে ৫ লক্ষ টাকার মাদক বেচাকেনা হয়। এগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে হেরোইন, ফেনসিডিল, দেশি মদ, গাঁজা ও তাড়ি। জানা যায়, নগরীর মাদক ব্যবসা কেন্দ্র হিসাবে চিহ্নিত বর্মাশীল ও হেলাতলায় মূলত মাদক ব্যবসা নিয়ন্ত্রিত হয়ে থাকে (দৈনিক ইনকিলাব, ১৯ আগস্ট ২০০৪)। খুলনা শহরের মাদক বিরোধী কর্মকাণ্ডে নিয়োজিত 'ড্রাগওয়াচ' নামের একটি সংস্থা খুলনা নগরীর ২১০ জন মাদকাসক্তের উপর সম্প্রতি একটি জরিপ চালিয়েছে। এতে দেখা গেছে উক্ত ২১০ জন মাদকাসক্তের মধ্যে ৭২ শতাংশ হেরোইনে আসক্ত এবং এদের বয়স ১৯ থেকে ৩৫ বছরের মধ্যে।

গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য

গবেষণাকে ধারাবাহিক এবং বৈজ্ঞানিকভাবে সম্পন্ন করার জন্য এর প্রধান উদ্দেশ্যকে চারটি সুনির্দিষ্ট উদ্দেশ্যে ভাগ করা হল। যথা :

- মাদকাসক্তের আর্থ-সামাজিক ও জনসংখ্যাতাত্ত্বিক মর্যাদা জানা;
- মাদকাসক্তের কারণ অনুসন্ধান;
- খুলনা নগরীতে বিদ্যমান মাদকাসক্ত নিরাময় কেন্দ্রসমূহে চিকিৎসা ও সেবার মূল্যায়ন; এবং
- প্রাপ্ত ফলাফলের ভিত্তিতে প্রয়োজনীয় সুপারিশ প্রণয়ন।

গবেষণা পদ্ধতি

বর্তমান গবেষণায় পদ্ধতি হিসাবে জরিপ পদ্ধতির সাহায্য নেয়া হয়েছে। গবেষণার তথ্যের জন্য প্রাথমিক ও গৌণ উভয় প্রকার উৎস ব্যবহার করা হলেও, প্রাথমিক উৎসের উপরই বেশি গুরুত্ব দেয়া হয়েছে। গবেষণার জন্য প্রাথমিক তথ্য মার্চ পর্যায় থেকে সংগ্রহ করা হয়েছে। গৌণ উৎসসমূহের মধ্যে বিভিন্ন গ্রন্থ, জার্নাল, ম্যাগাজিন, সংবাদপত্র ইত্যাদি ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে। গবেষণাটিতে খুলনা নগরীর বিভিন্ন মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় কেন্দ্রে চিকিৎসারত ৪০ জন মাদকাসক্তকে দৈবচয়িত নমুনায়নের মাধ্যমে নির্বাচিত করে সাক্ষাৎকার গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। ২০০৫ সালের জানুয়ারি-ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে খুলনা মহানগরীতে এ জরিপ চালানো হয়। সংশ্লিষ্ট তথ্যসমূহ সংগ্রহের কৌশল হিসাবে কাঠামোবদ্ধ সাক্ষাৎকার অনুসূচি ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে। এতে উন্মুক্ত ও আবদ্ধ উভয় প্রকারের প্রশ্ন সন্নিবেশিত ছিল। সংগৃহীত তথ্যাবলী কম্পিউটার প্রোগ্রাম বিশেষ করে এসপিএসএস-এর সাহায্যে বিশ্লেষণ করা হয়েছে এবং বিশ্লেষিত তথ্যাবলী বর্ণনামূলক ও সরল সারণির মাধ্যমে উপস্থাপন করা হয়েছে। বর্তমান গবেষণায় এলাকা হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করা হয়েছে খুলনা নগরীকে।

মাদকাসক্তদের আর্থ-সামাজিক ও জনসংখ্যাতাত্ত্বিক মর্যাদা

বয়স কাঠামো

মাদকদ্রব্যের সবচেয়ে বিপজ্জনক দিক হচ্ছে এটি সমাজের তরুণ সম্প্রদায়কে আকৃষ্ট করে সর্বাধিক। ফলে সমাজের তরুণরা মাদকদ্রব্যের ছোবলে পড়ে নানা সামাজিক ও অপরাধমূলক কাজে জড়িয়ে পড়ছে প্রতিদিন (সামাদ, ২০০৩:৮৫-৮৬)। বলা হয়ে থাকে, মাদকাসক্ত হল যৌবন বয়সের রোমান্টিক ও উত্তেজনাধীন অভিজ্ঞতার ফল। তবে সর্বক্ষেত্রেই তা সত্য হবে এমনও নয়। বেশি বয়সে মাদকাসক্ত হওয়ার ঘটনাও সমাজে লক্ষ্য করা যায়। বর্তমান গবেষণায় খুলনা নগরীর মাদকাসক্তদের বয়স কাঠামো জানার চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে। নিচে সারণি-৩ এ মাদকাসক্তদের বয়স শ্রেণী তুলে ধরা হল। যা থেকে দেখা যাচ্ছে, খুলনা নগরীর অধিকাংশ মাদকাসক্তই যুবক শ্রেণীর অন্তর্ভুক্ত। সাম্প্রতিক মাদক বিষয়ে অন্য কয়েকটি গবেষণায়ও একই তথ্য প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে।

সারণি-৩ : মাদকাসক্তদের বয়স কাঠামো

ক্রমিক	বয়স	মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা	শতকরা হার (%)
০১	১৭-২০	০৬	১৫.০০
০২	২১-২৪	০৯	১২.০০
০৩	২৫-২৮	১২	৩০.০০
০৪	২৯-৩২	০৮	২০.০০
০৫	৩৩-৩৬	০৫	১২.০০
	মোট	৪০	১০০.০০

লিঙ্গ কাঠামো

বর্তমান গবেষণায় প্রাপ্ত তথ্য থেকে এটা প্রতীয়মান হয় যে, খুলনা নগরীতে চিকিৎসাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের সকলেই পুরুষ। অর্থাৎ এখানে কোন মহিলা মাদকাসক্ত নেই। তবে এ তথ্য থেকে এ সিদ্ধান্তে পৌঁছানো নির্বুদ্ধিতার পরিচয় হবে যে, খুলনা নগরীতে মাদকাসক্তদের সকলেই পুরুষ। বরং মহিলা মাদকাসক্তরা সামাজিক, পারিবারিক ও ব্যক্তিগত লজ্জার কারণে চিকিৎসা বা পরামর্শ গ্রহণে বিরত থাকে।

বৈবাহিক মর্যাদা

বর্তমান গবেষণার ফলাফল হতে জানা যায়, চিকিৎসাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের অধিকাংশই বিবাহিত। এ তথ্য অন্যান্য গবেষণা ফলাফলের বিপরীত চিত্র প্রতিফলিত করে। কারণ এখানে অধিকাংশ তরুণ-তরুণীদের মাদকাসক্তের কথা পরিবারের অনেক অভিভাবকেরই অজানা। পক্ষান্তরে বিবাহিত মাদকাসক্তরা মাদকের অর্থের জন্য পরিবারের সদস্যদের উপর প্রতিনিয়ত চাপ প্রয়োগ করে থাকে। ফলে স্ত্রী, সন্তান ও পরিবারের অন্যান্য সদস্যরা বাধ্য হয়ে মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় কেন্দ্রে ভর্তি করে দিয়েছেন। এরা মূলত তাদের স্ত্রী-সন্তানাদির ভবিষ্যতের কথা চিন্তা করেই চিকিৎসা নিচ্ছে। তাই চিকিৎসাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের মধ্যে বিবাহিতের সংখ্যাই বেশি চোখে পড়ে। অন্যদিকে অবিবাহিত মাদকাসক্তদের অনেকেই তাদের পিতামাতা, আত্মীয় স্বজন এবং পুনরায় শারীরিক জটিলতা থেকে মুক্তি পাবার জন্য চিকিৎসা গ্রহণ করছে।

শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা

সাধারণত অশিক্ষিত মাদকাসক্তরা মাদকের ক্ষতিকর দিক সম্পর্কে অসচেতনতার কারণেই সহজে মাদক গ্রহণের দিকে ঝুঁকে পড়ে। অন্যদিকে উচ্চশিক্ষা অর্জনে ব্যর্থতা কিংবা উচ্চ শিক্ষা গ্রহণ করেও সময়মত চাকরি না পাওয়া বা উপযুক্ত চাকরি না পাওয়ার কারণে হতাশার জন্ম হয় তাও অনেককে মাদক গ্রহণে উৎসাহিত করে। সারণি-৪ এ গবেষণাধীন এলাকার চিকিৎসাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা তুলে ধরা হল:

সারণি-৪: মাদকাসক্তদের শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা

ক্রমিক	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা	শতকরা হার (%)
০১	অশিক্ষিত	০৪	১০.০০
০২	সাক্ষর	০৮	২০.০০
০৩	ডিগ্রিহীন	০৮	২০.০০
০৪	এস এস সি	০৬	১৫.০০
০৫	এইচ এস সি	০২	৫.০০
০৬	ডিগ্রি পাশ	১০	২৫.০০
০৭	মাস্টার্স ডিগ্রি	০২	৫.০০
	মোট	৪০	১০০.০০

সারণি-৪ হতে জানা যায়, শতকরা ২৫ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত ডিগ্রি পাশ এবং শতকরা ২০ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত পড়াশুনা করলেও কোন ডিগ্রি অর্জন করেনি। অন্য ২০ ভাগ সাক্ষর করতে পারে মাত্র। পাশাপাশি শতকরা ১০ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত অশিক্ষিত এবং ৫ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত মাস্টার্স ডিগ্রিধারী। সুতরাং দেখা যাচ্ছে, শিক্ষিত শ্রেণীর মধ্যে মাদক গ্রহণের মাত্রা বেশি। তবে, এ থেকে এমন সিদ্ধান্তে আসা উচিত হবে না যে খুলনা নগরীতে মাদকাসক্তদের মধ্যে অধিকাংশই শিক্ষিত। কেননা এমনও হতে পারে যে অর্থের অভাব, অসচেতনতা ও পারিবারিক সহযোগিতার অভাব অশিক্ষিত মাদকাসক্তের চিকিৎসা সেবা নিতে ততখানি উৎসাহিত করছে না।

পেশার ধরন

পর্যবেক্ষণে জানা যায়, খুলনা নগরীর একটি বিশেষত্ব হল এখানকার অধিকাংশ তরুণ ও যুবক শ্রেণীই কোন না কোন পেশার (বিশেষ করে ব্যবসা সাথে) সাথে জড়িত এবং তারা প্রয়োজনীয় অর্থ উপার্জন করে নিজের চাহিদা পূরণ করে থাকে। আর তরুণ ও যুবক শ্রেণীর হাতে নগদ অর্থ, মাদকাসক্ত বন্ধুদের সাথে মেলামেশার কারণে অনেকই মাদকাসক্ত হয়ে পড়ে। বর্তমান গবেষণাধীন মাদকাসক্তরা বিভিন্ন ধরনের পেশার সাথে যুক্ত এবং সাধারণত মাদকের টাকা তারা নিজেরাই উপার্জন করে থাকে। নিচের সারণিতে মাদকাসক্তদের পেশার ধরন তুলে ধরা হল:

সারণি- ৫ : মাদকাসক্তদের পেশার ধরন

ক্রমিক	পেশার ধরন	মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা	শতকরা হার (%)
০১	ব্যবসা	২৮	৭০.০০
০২	বেকার	০৮	১০.০০
০৩	ছাত্র	০২	০৫.০০
০৪	অন্যান্য	০৬	১৫.০০
	মোট	৪০	১০০.০০

উপর্যুক্ত সারণি থেকে জানা যায়, মাদকাসক্তদের শতকরা ৭০ ভাগের পেশা ব্যবসা, ৫ ভাগ ছাত্র, ১০ ভাগ বেকার এবং বাকী ১৫ ভাগ অন্যান্য পেশাভুক্ত। এখানে অন্যান্য পেশার মধ্যে শ্রমিক, শিল্প-শ্রমিক, ট্রাক চালক, বাস চালক বিদ্যমান। সুতরাং এটা বলা যায় যে, মাদকাসক্তদের বেশির ভাগই কোন না কোন পেশায় নিয়োজিত। এখানে একটি বিষয় উল্লেখ্য যে, খুলনা নগরীর অধিকাংশ যুবক শ্রেণীই কোন না কোন পেশার সার্শে জড়িত এবং তারা প্রয়োজনীয় অর্থ উপার্জন করে নিজের চাহিদা পূরণ করে থাকে।

আয়ের ধরন

পেশা এবং আয়ের মধ্যে একটি ঘনিষ্ঠ সম্পর্ক বিদ্যমান। পেশার কারণে মাসিক আয়ের তারতম্য ঘটে থাকে। সারণি-৬ এ গবেষণাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের মাসিক আয় তুলে ধরা হল :

সারণি- ৬ : মাদকাসক্তদের মাসিক আয়

ক্রমিক	মাসিক আয়	মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা	শতকরা হার (%)
০১	১৫০০-৩০০০	০৮	২০.০০
০২	৩০০০-৫০০০	১২	৩০.০০
০৩	৫০০০-৭০০০	১০	২৫.০০
০৪	৭০০০-৯০০০	০৬	১৫.০০
০৫	৯০০০- তদূর্ধ্ব	০৪	১০
	মোট	৪০	১০০.০০

উপর্যুক্ত সারণি থেকে লক্ষ্য করা যায় যে, গবেষণাধীন কোন মাদকাসক্তের মাসিক আয় ১০,০০০ টাকার উর্ধ্ব নয় এবং এদের শতকরা ৭৫ জনের আয় ১০০০-৭০০০ টাকার মধ্যে, যা বর্তমান সময়ের প্রেক্ষাপটে উচ্চবিত্ত তো নয়ই, বরং মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রেণীর আয়ের সাথেও সঙ্গতিপূর্ণ নয়। সুতরাং এটা বলা যায় যে, দরিদ্র শ্রেণীর মধ্যে মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা তুলনামূলকভাবে বেশি।

মাদকাসক্তির কারণ

সাধারণত মাদকাসক্তের সঙ্গ ও সামাজিক পরিবেশ মুখ্যত মাদকাসক্তির জন্য দায়ী। মাদকাসক্তির প্রধান কারণসমূহ হচ্ছে সঙ্গীদের চাপ, কৌতুহল, অজ্ঞতা, হতাশা, শহরায়ন, শিল্পায়ন, সামাজিক পরিবর্তন ইত্যাদি (সামাদ, ২০০৩:৯০)। এক দশক আগে বাংলাদেশ সরকার ও বিশ্ব স্বাস্থ্য সংস্থার যৌথ উদ্যোগে ঢাকা শহরের প্রায় ৫ হাজার ছাত্র/ছাত্রীর উপর পরিচালিত এক গবেষণায় দেখা গেছে, ছাত্রদের মধ্যে মাদকাসক্তির প্রধান কারণ হল সঙ্গদোষ, স্থানান্তর, পিতামাতার অবহেলা, ধর্মীয় শিথিলতা ইত্যাদি (Bangladesh Observer, 16 January, 1989)। খুলনা নগরীতে মাদকাসক্তরা বিভিন্ন কারণে মাদক গ্রহণ করে থাকে। নিচের সারণিতে মাদকাসক্তের কারণসমূহ তুলে ধরা হল:

সারণি-৭: মাদকাসক্তির কারণ

ক্রমিক	মাদকাসক্তির কারণ	মাদকাসক্তির সংখ্যা	শতকরা হার (%)
০১	কৌতুহল	০৮	২০.০০
০২	আসক্তি/ অভ্যাস	০৩	৭.৫০
০৩	পারিবারিক সমস্যা	০৩	৭.৫০
০৪	কাজের ক্লান্তি থেকে মুক্তি	০২	৫.০০
০৫	সময় কাটানো	০৪	১০.০০
০৬	মজা করা	০৬	১৫.০০
০৭	হতাশা দূর করা	০২	৫.০০
০৮	বেকারত্ব	০৪	১০.০০
০৯	প্রেমে ব্যর্থতা	০১	২.৫০
১০	বন্ধুদের প্ররোচনায়	০৭	১৭.৫০
	মোট	৪০	১০০.০০

সারণি-৭ থেকে দেখা যায়, গবেষণাধীন এলাকায় মাদকাসক্তদের মধ্যে বেশির ভাগই (২০%) কৌতুহল বশবর্তী হয়ে মাদক গ্রহণ করেছে। এছাড়া অনেকেই বন্ধুদের প্ররোচনায় (১৭.৫%), মজা করতে গিয়ে (১৫%), বেকারত্বের কারণে (১০%), নিছক সময় কাটাতে (১০%), অভ্যাসের ফলে (৭.৫%), পারিবারিক সমস্যার কারণে (৭.৫%), ক্লান্তি থেকে মুক্তি পেতে (৫%), হতাশা দূর করতে (৫%), বেকারত্ব অভিলাষে (১০%), প্রেমে ব্যর্থ হয়ে (২.৫%), মাদক গ্রহণ করেছে।

মাদক ক্রয়ের অর্থের উৎস

মূলত পঞ্চাশের দশক থেকে অদ্যাবধি আন্তর্জাতিক পাচারকারীচক্র বাংলাদেশকে মাদকদ্রব্য চোরাচালানোর 'করিডোর' হিসাবে ব্যবহার করে আসছে। এমনকি পাকিস্তান ও ভারতের মাদকদ্রব্য বাংলাদেশের মধ্য দিয়ে পাচার হয়ে পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য দেশে চলে যায় (ইত্তেফাক, ৩১ অক্টোবর, ১৯৮৯)। খুলনার অবস্থান দেশের সীমান্তবর্তী এলাকায় হওয়ায় এখানে মাদকদ্রব্যের সরবরাহ বেশি বলে ধারণা করা হয়। মূলত খুলনা নগরীতে মাদক পাশ্চবর্তী দেশ ভারত থেকে আসে। এছাড়া এখানে স্থানীয়ভাবে কিছু মাদক (দেশি মদ) উৎপন্ন হয়ে থাকে। মাদকাসক্তরা সাধারণত দালাল (ভ্রাম্যমান), ঔষধের দোকান, বন্ধুবান্ধব এবং সহপাঠীদের কাছ থেকে মাদক সংগ্রহ করে থাকে। গবেষণাধীন এলাকায় মাদকাসক্তরা প্রতিদিন গড়ে ৫০ টাকা মাদকের পিছনে ব্যয় করে থাকে। সাধারণত এরা সবাই মাদকের অর্থ নিজেরাই সংগ্রহ করার মানসিকতা রাখে। তবে শারীরিক সমস্যা প্রকট আকার ধারণ করার ক্ষেত্রে পরিবার, বন্ধুবান্ধব এবং আত্মীয় স্বজনরা এগিয়ে আসেন। এ গবেষণায় দেখা যায় অধিকাংশ মাদকাসক্তের চিকিৎসার প্রয়োজনীয় অর্থ তাদের পরিবার ও আত্মীয় স্বজনরা সরবরাহ করেছে। এছাড়া শতকরা ১৫ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত এ অর্থের ব্যবস্থা নিজেরাই করেছে এবং বাকী ৩০ ভাগের অর্থ তাদের পিতামাতা সরবরাহ করে থাকে। তবে এ অর্থ স্বাভাবিক পথে সংগ্রহ করতে না পারলেই তারা নানা প্রকার অপরাধমূলক

কর্মকাণ্ডে জড়িয়ে হয়ে পড়ে। এক গবেষণায় দেখা যায় চিকিৎসা নিতে আসে এমন মাদকাসক্তদের শতকরা ২৫ জনই ছাত্র এবং এদের শতকরা ৮০ জন কোন না কোন অপরাধের সঙ্গে জড়িত (Hossain,1989).

চিকিৎসা পূর্বে ব্যবহৃত মাদক

একজন মাদকাসক্তের কাছে মাদক নির্বাচন বিভিন্ন উপাদানের উপর নির্ভর করে। যেমন, প্রাপ্যতা, মূল্য, স্বাদ ইত্যাদি। সুতরাং এটা বলা যায়, একজন মাদকাসক্ত সর্বদা একই পদের মাদক ব্যবহারে স্থির থাকে না। বর্তমান গবেষণায় দেখা যায়, অধিকাংশ মাদকাসক্ত ইনজেকশনের চেয়ে মৌখিক পদকেই বেশি পছন্দ করে। বিশেষ করে তারা মদ, হেরোইন, গাঁজা এবং ফেনিডিল সবচেয়ে বেশি ব্যবহার করে। বস্তুত মাদকদ্রব্য ব্যবহারের হার নির্ভর করে সেটি কত সহজ প্রক্রিয়ায় ব্যবহার করা যায় তার উপর। অর্থাৎ যে মাদকের ব্যবহার প্রক্রিয়া যত জটিল তার ব্যবহারের মাত্রাও তত কম।

চিকিৎসা গ্রহণের কারণ

মাদকাসক্তদের চিকিৎসা গ্রহণের পিছনে বিভিন্ন কারণ বিদ্যমান। বৃহৎ অর্থে এই কারণ দুই প্রকার যেমন, মানসিক বা দৈহিক কারণ এবং আর্থ-মনস্তাত্ত্বিক কারণ। নিচের সারণিতে গবেষণাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের চিকিৎসা গ্রহণের কারণ তুলে ধরা হল:

সারণি-৮ : মাদকাসক্তদের চিকিৎসা গ্রহণের কারণ

ক্রমিক	চিকিৎসা গ্রহণ	মাদকাসক্তের সংখ্যা	শতকরা হার (%)
০১	শারীরিক ব্যুঁকি	১৮	৪৫.০০
০২	পারিবারিক শান্তি ও সুখ বিনষ্ট	১২	৩০.০০
০৩	উপসর্গ থেকে মুক্তি	০৪	১০.০০
০৪	অর্থ অপচয় রোধ	০৫	১২.৫০
০৫	সমাজচ্যুত হওয়া	০১	২.৫০
	মোট	৪০	১০০.০০

উপর্যুক্ত সারণি থেকে লক্ষ্য করা যায় যে, শতকরা ৪৫ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত শারীরিক ব্যুঁকি (যেমন অক্ষমতা, সার্বক্ষণিক মাথাব্যথা, একঘেয়েমি অনুভূতি, বমি-বমি ভাব ইত্যাদি) এড়ানোর জন্য চিকিৎসা নিচ্ছেন। এছাড়া প্রায় শতকরা ৩০ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত পারিবারিক শান্তি ও স্থিতিশীলতা পুনরুদ্ধারের জন্য চিকিৎসার দারস্থ হয়েছেন। অন্যদের মধ্যে কিছু কিছু মাদকাসক্ত মাদক ব্যবহারের উপসর্গ থেকে মুক্তি পেতে, কিছু মাদকাসক্ত অর্থ অপচয় রোধ করতে এবং কিছু মাদকাসক্ত সমাজচ্যুত হবার ভয়ে চিকিৎসা নিচ্ছেন।

চিকিৎসা ব্যবস্থার মূল্যায়ন

আগেই বলা হয়েছে এ দেশে নিরাময় কেন্দ্রে মাদকাসক্তদের স্বাস্থ্য পরিচর্যার ইতিহাস খুব বেশি পুরানো নয়। এটি চিকিৎসা ক্ষেত্রে একটি নতুন মাত্রা। গবেষণা থেকে জানা যায় খুলনা নগরীতে সামান্য কিছু সংখ্যক নিরাময় কেন্দ্র সুসংগঠিত হলেও বাকীগুলো সুসংগঠিত নয় বরং তা অনেকটাই সমস্যাপূর্ণ। এ ক্ষেত্রে গবেষণাধীন মাদকাসক্তদের গৃহীত চিকিৎসা ব্যবস্থার মূল্যায়ন সম্পর্কে মন্তব্য করতে বলা হয়েছিল। এতে দেখা গেছে শতকরা ২৫ ভাগ মাদকাসক্ত চিকিৎসা ব্যবস্থায় সন্তুষ্ট, যেখানে শতকরা ১৫ ভাগ অসন্তুষ্ট প্রকাশ করেছে। এছাড়া অধিকাংশের মতে, তাদের সেবার মান ভাল নয় এবং তারা চিকিৎসা ব্যবস্থার সুবিধাদি বাড়ানোর সুপারিশ করেছে। অনেকে মাদকাসক্তের চিকিৎসার ব্যাপারে আরো সচেতনতা আশা করেন। এছাড়া অধিকাংশই চিকিৎসার সময়সীমা বাড়ানো এবং নার্সদেরকে রোগীর প্রতি আরো সহযোগিতাপূর্ণ আচরণ করার জন্য আবেদন জানান।

মাদকদ্রব্যের অপব্যবহার নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও মাদকাসক্তির চিকিৎসা সংক্রান্ত সুপারিশ

ইদানিং মাদকাসক্তি প্রতিরোধে দেশে সরকারি উদ্যোগের পাশাপাশি বেসরকারি পর্যায়ে বেশ কিছু প্রতিষ্ঠান মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও মাদকাসক্তদের চিকিৎসায় কাজ করে যাচ্ছে। এছাড়া কেন্দ্রীয় মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় হাসপাতাল এবং বিভাগীয় পর্যায়ে মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় কেন্দ্র রয়েছে। বর্তমান গবেষণা একটি বিভাগীয় নগরীতে চালানো হলেও, দেশের অন্যান্য অঞ্চলগুলির অবস্থাও প্রায় একই রকম বলে ধরে নেয়া যায়। সেহেতু বর্তমান গবেষণার ভিত্তিতে মাদক অপব্যবহার রোধ ও মাদকাসক্তির চিকিৎসা সংক্রান্ত যে সুপারিশগুলো নিচে দেয়া হল তা জাতীয় পর্যায়ে কার্যকর হলে, সুফল পাওয়া যাবে বলে আশা করা যায়।

- ক) মাদক বিষয়ে সরকারি ও বেসরকারি পর্যায়ে বিস্তারিত শুমারী হওয়া উচিত যা দেশের মাদকাসক্ত সম্পর্কে পরিস্কার ধারণা প্রদান করবে।
- খ) মাদকাসক্তি প্রতিরোধ, মাদকাসক্ত হওয়া এবং মাদকাসক্তি ব্যবস্থাপনায় পরিবারের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রয়েছে। তাই পরিবারের সদস্যদেরকেও এ কার্যক্রমে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা প্রয়োজন।
- গ) মাদকদ্রব্যের চোরাচালান, বিক্রয়, বিপণন ও ব্যবহার নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে বিভিন্ন সরকারি সংস্থা যেমন পুলিশ, বিডিআর, সেনাবাহিনী প্রভৃতিতে আরো শক্তিশালী, কার্যকর ও বাস্তবধর্মী পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করা দরকার।
- ঘ) শিশু ও কিশোরদের মাদকদ্রব্যের প্রভাব থেকে মুক্ত করার নিমিত্তে প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয় থেকে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় স্তর পর্যন্ত মাদক ব্যবহারের কুফল, তার প্রতিরোধ, প্রতিকার ইত্যাদি বিষয়ে ছাত্রছাত্রীদেরকে প্রয়োজনীয় জ্ঞানদানের ব্যবস্থা শিক্ষা কারিকুলামে থাকা উচিত।
- ঙ) মাদকাসক্তি প্রতিরোধের জন্য গণমাধ্যমগুলোর ভূমিকা খুবই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ।

তাই মাদকাসক্তির বিরুদ্ধে প্রচার মাধ্যমসমূহে ব্যাপক বিজ্ঞাপন, নাটক, চলচ্চিত্র প্রদর্শনসহ বিভিন্ন গণসচেতনতামূলক কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ করতে হবে, যাতে এ সম্পর্কে জনসাধারণের মধ্যে সচেতনতা ও গণপ্রতিরোধ পরিবেশ গড়ে ওঠে।

- চ) মাদকাসক্তি নিরাময় ও মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ প্রচেষ্টায় নিয়োজিত প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোকে প্রয়োজনীয় সংখ্যক প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত পেশাদার সমাজকর্মী নিয়োগের ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা যেতে পারে যেন তারা আসক্তদের ফলো-আপ, গৃহপরিদর্শন, পুনর্বাসন ও পারিবারিক পর্যায়ে অংশগ্রহণসহ দলীয় আলোচনার ভিত্তিতে কমিউনিটি জনগণের মধ্যে সচেতনতা আনয়ন করতে পারে।

উপসংহার

মাদক সমস্যা একটি অত্যন্ত জটিল সমস্যা। সমাজের অন্যান্য সমস্যা ও সংকটসমূহের সঙ্গে এর প্রত্যক্ষ বা পরোক্ষ যোগসূত্র আছে। দেশের জনগণ ক্রমান্বয়ে শিক্ষিত হচ্ছে, জনসচেতনতার হার বেড়েছে। তবুও মাদকাসক্তিকে সমাজ থেকে দূর করা সম্ভব হচ্ছে না, বরং তা দিনকে দিন আরো ভয়াবহ রূপ ধারণ করছে। মাদকাসক্তি রোধে সরকারেরও সদিচ্ছার অভাব নেই। বাংলাদেশ সরকার ইতোমধ্যে জাতিসংঘের মাদক সংক্রান্ত ৩টি কনভেনশন স্বাক্ষর করেছে এবং এ সকল কনভেনশনের আওতায় ১৯৮৪ সালে আফিম আমদানী ও ব্যবহার বন্ধ করা হয় এবং ১৯৮৭ সালে নওগাঁয় গাঁজা চাষ বন্ধ করাসহ অবৈধ মাদকদ্রব্য উৎপাদনে ব্যবহৃত ২২ প্রকার প্রকারসর কেমিক্যালস মাদকদ্রব্য নিয়ন্ত্রণ আইনের অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা হয়েছে। মাদকবিরোধী সার্ক কনভেনশন ১৯৯০ স্বাক্ষর করা হয়েছে। জাতিসংঘের মাদকবিরোধী সংস্থাসহ অন্যান্য আন্তর্জাতিক সংস্থাসমূহের সাথে সার্বক্ষণিক যোগাযোগ রক্ষা করে বিভিন্ন কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করে আসছে। দেশে কর্মরত বেসরকারি সংস্থাগুলোও এ ব্যাপারে তৎপর। তবে সাধারণ মানুষের মধ্যে মাদক বিরোধী আইন সংক্রান্ত সচেতনতার অভাব থাকার কারণেই সকল প্রয়াস ব্যহত হচ্ছে। এ ব্যাপারে শুধুমাত্র আইন প্রণয়নই যথেষ্ট নয়, সামাজিক প্রতিরোধ ব্যবস্থাও গড়ে তুলতে হবে। সুতরাং ব্যাপক সামাজিক সচেতনতা সৃষ্টি এবং আইনের কঠোর ও যথাযথ প্রয়োগ এবং সরকারি ও বেসরকারি সংস্থাগুলোর সক্রিয় সহযোগিতা ও সমর্থন এবং সমাজের সকল স্তরের মানুষের স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত এবং সক্রিয় অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিত করতে না পারলে মাদক সমস্যার সমাধানে উল্লেখযোগ্য সাফল্য লাভ করা সম্ভব নয়।

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