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সংখ্যা: ৬২

ফাল্গুন ১৪২০/মার্চ ২০১৪

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মোঃ সানোয়ার জাহান ভূঁইয়া

সহযোগী সম্পাদক

সামসুল আলম খন্দকার

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লোক-প্রশাসন সাময়িকীর প্রবন্ধসমূহে প্রকাশিত মতামত প্রবন্ধকারদের একান্ত নিজস্ব, এর জন্য সম্পাদনা পরিষদ কোন দায়িত্ব বহন করে না।

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Impacts of Trade Liberalization on Balance of Trade of Bangladesh: An Econometric Exercise

Dr. Md. Moniruzzaman*
S.M. Soheli Rana**

Abstract: The broad objective of the study is to empirically analyze the impacts of trade liberalization on trade balance of Bangladesh and to find out causal relationship between trade liberalization and export, import, balance of trade. Trade Balance is a systematic record of export and import between a country and the rest of the world in a given period of time, usually one year. Trade deficit is conventionally defined as the difference between export earnings and import payments. For estimation purpose the term 'Trade Balance' is used instead of 'Trade Deficit' and the absolute values of the trade deficits over the study period are considered. The growth trend of trade balance, stability test, stationarity test of the variables, cointegration test, model estimation by OLS, Granger Causality test, estimation of VCEM and VAR model, long run and short run elasticities of trade balance in respect of each independent variable, long run relationship between export and import are presented here. Bangladesh has been experiencing persistent trade deficit since independence. The policy makers should pay due attention to address this issue through formulation a comprehensive trade policy for the country.

Introduction:

Trade liberalization has become the centre point of both economic researches and policy debates in many countries for economic growth and development. A number of empirical studies show positive impact of trade liberalization on trade performance and economic growth while some studies show very little or inconclusive impact of trade liberalization. Trade liberalization has been one of the major policy reforms in Bangladesh since 1980s. Bangladesh, as one of the founding member countries of WTO, started a wide range of trade liberalization programs in the mid-1980s which gained momentum in early 1990s. The major objective of trade liberalization is to shift the economy from anti-export bias to export oriented economy. The liberalization programs include various measures such as removal of major tariff and non-tariff

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barriers, reduction of import quota, reduction of tariff rates, rationalization of tariff structure, tariff escalation, incentives for exports, duty drawback system, simplification of custom procedures, export diversification programs, regional and bi-lateral trade negotiations etc. This study is intended and designed to examine the impacts of trade liberalization on exports, imports, balance of trade of Bangladesh by using both conventional statistical tools as well as modern time series econometric modeling. The broad objective of the study is to empirically analyze the impacts of trade liberalization on trade balance of Bangladesh and to find out causal relationship between trade liberalization and export, import, balance of trade.

2.0 Trade Balance of Bangladesh

The trade deficit of Bangladesh, growth rate of trade balance and trade deficit as percentage of GDP from 1972-1973 to 2008-2009 are presented in Table 1. The trade deficit was ranged from Taka 4280 million in 1973-1974 to Taka 74760 million in 1989-1990 during the pre-liberalization regime. The phenomenal trade deficits were Taka 7150 million in 1974-1975 with 67.06 per cent growth rate, Taka 14290 million in 1975-1976 with 99.86 per cent growth rate, Taka 14090 million in 1977-1978 with 136.81 per cent growth rate, Taka 23980 million in 1979-1980 with 49.13 per cent growth rate and Taka 37660 million in 1981-1982 with 28.44 per cent growth rate. The trade deficits have been widen without few exceptions over the years. During the post-liberalization regime it ranged from Taka 59300 million in 1991-1992 to Taka 382400 million in 2006-2007. The trade deficits were Taka 71340 million in 1992-1993 with 20.30 per cent growth rate, Taka 103250 million in 1994-1995 with 48.20 per cent growth rate, Taka 144470 million in 1995-1996 with 39.92 per cent growth rate, Taka 176290 million in 1998-1999 with 27.84 per cent growth rate, Taka 226760 million in 2002-2003 with 25.18 per cent growth rate and Taka 382400 million in 2006-2007 with 97.52 per cent growth rate.

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Table 1: Trade Balance Bangladesh

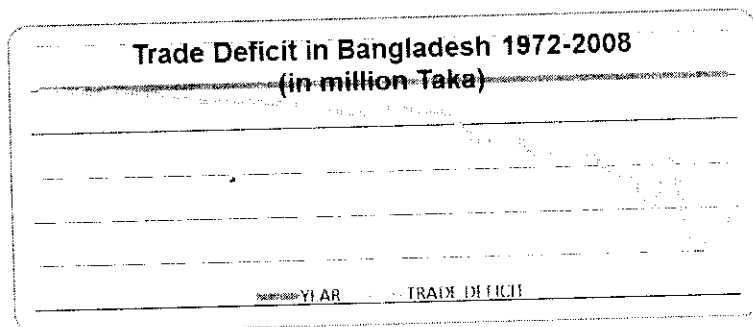
(Value in million Taka)

Regime	Fiscal Year	Trade Deficit (Export- Import) (in million Taka)	Growth Rate (%) of trade deficit	TD as % of GDP
Pre-liberalization	1972-1973	(-) 4820		-7.11
	1973-1974	(-) 4280	-11.20	-4.15
	1974-1975	(-) 7150	67.06	-4.23
	1975-1976	(-) 14290	99.86	-9.52
	1976-1977	(-) 5950	-58.36	-3.77
	1977-1978	(-) 14090	136.81	-7.13
	1978-1979	(-) 16060	13.98	-6.78
	1979-1980	(-) 23950	49.13	-8.53
	1980-1981	(-) 29320	22.42	-9.10
	1981-1982	(-) 37660	28.44	-10.41
	1982-1983	(-) 36520	-3.03	-8.94
	1983-1984	(-) 38180	4.55	-7.80
	1984-1985	(-) 43530	14.01	-7.75
	1985-1986	(-) 43480	-0.11	-6.87
	1986-1987	(-) 49620	14.12	-6.82
	1987-1988	(-) 56240	13.34	-7.03
	1988-1989	(-) 66290	17.87	-7.44
Post-liberalization	1989-1990	(-) 74760	12.78	-7.45
	1990-1991	(-) 63960	-14.45	-5.79
	1991-1992	(-) 59300	-7.29	-4.96
	1992-1993	(-) 71340	20.30	-5.69
	1993-1994	(-) 69670	-2.34	-5.15
	1994-1995	(-) 103250	48.20	-6.77
	1995-1996	(-) 144470	39.92	-8.69
	1996-1997	(-) 139760	-3.26	-7.73
	1997-1998	(-) 137900	-1.33	-6.89
	1998-1999	(-) 176290	27.84	-8.02
	1999-2000	(-) 172080	-2.39	-7.26
	2000-2001	(-) 179520	4.32	-7.08
	2001-2002	(-) 181150	0.91	-6.63
	2002-2003	(-) 226760	25.18	-7.54
	2003-2004	(-) 236760	4.41	-7.11
	2004-2005	(-) 300600	26.96	-8.11
	2005-2006	(-) 193600	-35.60	-4.66
	2006-2007	(-) 382400	97.52	-8.09
	2007-2008	(-) 380000	-0.63	-6.96
	2008-2009	(-) 323900	-14.76	-4.69

Source: BBS, Foreign Statistics of Bangladesh, various issues, GOB, Bangladesh Economic Review, various issues.

However the deficit became slightly improved in 2008-2009 when it reached Taka 323900 million with a growth rate of (-) 14.76 per cent. The trend of the trade deficits is shown in Figure 1.

Figure-1: Trade Deficit in Bangladesh



2.1 Growth Trend of Trade Balance

There are some improvements in the current account of the balance of payment but deficits in the trade balances remain permanent'. The Trend Growth Rate(TGR) and Compound Annual Growth Rate(CAGR) of trade balance are estimated separately for the pre-liberalization and post-liberalization regimes covering the period from 1972-1973 to 2009-2010 (Table-2). It is observed that the TGR of trade balance in the pre-liberalization regime i.e. from 1972-1973 to 1989-1990 is 17.82 per cent while the same is 10.41 per cent in the post-liberalization period i.e. from 1990-1991 to 2009-2010. The TGR for the whole study period i.e. from 1972-1973 to 2009-2010 is estimated as 11.74 per cent. It is observed that the CAGR of trade balance in the pre-liberalization regime i.e. from 1972-1973 to 1989-1990 is 8.54 per cent while the same is 11.88 per cent in the post-liberalization period i.e. from 1990-1991 to 2009-2010. The CAGR for the whole study period i.e. from 1972-1973 to 2009-2010 is estimated as 10.63 per cent. It indicates that the growth rates of trade deficit are lower in the post-liberalization period as compared the pre-liberalization regime. Therefore, it can be concluded here that the trade liberalization has positive impact on trade balance.

¹ Md. Abdur Razzaque, Balance of Payments of Bangladesh: Trends and Challenges, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (Rajshahi: Institute of Bangladesh Studies, University of Rajshahi, 2008), p. 1.

Table 2: TGR and CAGR of Trade Balance

Period	Estimated Trend Regression Log(TD) = C + bT + u	TGR ¹ (%)	CAGR ² (%)
Pre-liberalized 1972-1973 to 1989-1990	Log(TD) = 8.46 + 0.164T*	17.82	8.54
Post-liberalized 1990-1991 to 2009-2010	Log(TD) = 9.20 + 0.099T*	10.41	11.88
Overall 1972-73 to 2009-2010	Log(TD) = 8.92 + 0.111T*	11.74	10.63

1. TGR = [Anti-log of estimated b - 1] X 100, log means natural logarithm

2. CAGR = [Ending Value/Beginning Value]^{1/N} - 1

3. * represents that the estimated trend coefficients are highly significant since p-values are 0.000.

Source: Estimated from Table-1.

2.2 Test of Hypothesis

Using t-test the following hypothesis is tested whether trade liberalization has positive impact on trade balance in Bangladesh.

H_0 : There is no change in trade balance between pre and post trade liberalization regime.

H_1 : There is significant positive change in trade balance between pre and post trade liberalization regime.

The t-test is performed on the basis of trend regression of the pre-liberalization and post-liberalization periods.

$$t_{37df} = (b_1 - b_2) / \sqrt{(seb_1)^2 + (seb_2)^2}$$

Here, b_1 = slope coefficient of time variable in the pre-liberalization period, b_2 = slope coefficient of time variable in the post-liberalization period, se = standard error of slope coefficient. Now the putting the values in the formula t-statistic is computed as:

$$\begin{aligned} t_{37df} &= (0.037 - 0.049) / \sqrt{(0.002)^2 + (0.002)^2} \\ &= -4.26 \end{aligned}$$

Decision: The table value of t-statistic at 37 degree of freedom is 1.65 and the absolute value of calculated t-statistic is 4.26. Since the calculated value is higher than the critical t-value so the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected and the alternative hypothesis H_1 is accepted at 5 per cent significance level implying that the trade deficit is significantly decreased in the post-liberalization regime.

2.3 Improvement of Balance of Trade

A country facing with chronic trade deficit takes resort to devaluation of its own currency to boost up exports and reduce import dependency. This situation can be explained by the Marshall-Lerner(M-L) condition. The M-L condition² states that devaluation improves trade balance of a country and appreciation worsen it if the sum of elasticities of export demand and import demand is greater than one. Four cases³ can be explained from the M-L condition such as :

Case One: When the elasticity of export demand is zero ($ED_x = 0$) and elasticity of import demand is greater than one ($ED_m > 1$) then devaluation will improve trade balance.

Case Two: When the elasticity of import demand is zero ($ED_m = 0$) and elasticity of export demand is greater than one ($ED_x > 1$) then devaluation will improve trade balance.

Case Three: When the elasticity of both export demand and import demand is less than one but their sum is greater than one ($ED_x < 1$, $ED_m < 1$ but $ED_x + ED_m > 1$) then devaluation will improve trade balance.

Case Four: When the elasticity of export demand is greater than one ($ED_x > 1$) and elasticity of import demand is greater than one ($ED_m > 1$) then devaluation will improve trade balance.

Therefore, before taking any decision on devaluation the policy makers should consider the above four cases of elasticity of export demand and the elasticity of import demand. In this study we have found that M-L condition is satisfied since the sum of elasticities of export demand and import demand is greater than one. It indicates that devaluation will improve trade balance of Bangladesh because it will increase export earning and reduce import payment at the same time.

2.4 Chow Breakpoint Test

Chow Test is conducted to find out the structural change in trade balance of Bangladesh due to the liberalization of trade.

² Charles P. Kindleberger. International Economics. 8th ed. (Illinois: Richard D. Irwin Inc. 1991).

³ Abdul Bayes. International Economics. (Dhaka: The Registrar, Jahangirnagar University. 1980). pp.125-128.

Table 3 : Chow Breakpoint Test: 1989

F-statistic	14.02954	Prob. F(2,33)	0.000039
Log likelihood ratio	22.76737	Prob. Chi-Square(2)	0.000011

Chow Breakpoint test is conducted based on 1989-90 and it is found (Table-3) that F-statistic is greater than F critical value at 2, 33 degree of freedom and the p-value 0.000 meaning that the null hypothesis H_0 of structural stability is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a structural change in the trade balance of Bangladesh.

2.5 Test of Stationarity of the Variables of Trade Balance Model

The stationarity of the variables, expect the liberalization dummy, of the trade balance model is conducted by Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) tests both at levels and at the first difference. The test results are presented in summarized form in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4: Results of ADF Unit Root Test

Null Hypothesis: H_0 : The concerned variable has a unit root

Variables	Level / First Difference	Intercept	Intercept and Trend	Conclusion
LTD	Level	-4.247 (0.002)	-2.479 (0.335)	I(1) and I(0) Inconclusive
	First Difference	-6.428 (0.000)	-8.34 (0.000)	I(0) and I(0) Stationary
LREER	Level	-2.685 (0.086)	-2.162 (0.494)	I(1) and I(1) Non Stationary
	First Difference	-5.426 (0.000)	-5.413 (0.000)	I(0) and I(0) Stationary
LRGDP	Level	-0.652 (0.845)	-2.079 (0.539)	I(1) and I(1) Non-stationary
	First Difference	-6.555 (0.000)	-6.471 (0.000)	I(0) and I(0) Stationary
LTOT	Level	-2.345 (0.164)	-3.634 (0.044)	I(1) and I(0) Inconclusive
	First Difference	-5.480 (0.000)	5.442 (0.000)	I(0) and I(0) Stationary

Note: 1. ADF test Critical Values for model with intercept: -3.62 for 1% level of significance, -2.94 for 5% level of significance and -2.61 for 10% level of significance.

2. ADF test Critical Values for model with intercept and trend: -4.23 for 1% level of significance, -3.54 for 5% level of significance and -3.20 for 10% level of significance.

3. The optimum lag is selected by using SIC. Unit Root Tests are performed by Econometric Software E-Views 5.1.

Source: Estimated from Appendix-I

It is observed from the ADF test (Table 4) that most of the variables are non-stationary i.e. $I(1)$ at the level for model with intercept and intercept and trend. But it is interesting to note that all the variables are $I(0)$ i.e. stationary at the first differences for both models. The similar test result is found in case of Phillips-Perron test (Table 5).

Table 5 : Results of Phillips-Perron Unit Root Test

Null Hypothesis: H_0 ; The concerned variable has a unit root

Variables	Level / First Difference	Intercept	Intercept and Trend	Conclusion
LTD	Level	-2.685 (0.086)	-2.155 (0.498)	$I(1)$ and $I(1)$ Non Stationary
	First Difference	-10.125 (0.000)	-14.682 (0.000)	$I(0)$ and $I(0)$ Stationary
LREER	Level	-1.178 (0.673)	-2.188 (0.481)	$I(1)$ and $I(1)$ Non Stationary
	First Difference	-5.426 (0.000)	-5.410 (0.000)	$I(0)$ and $I(0)$ Stationary
LRGDP	Level	-0.64 (0.848)	-2.11 (0.520)	$I(1)$ and $I(1)$ Non-stationary
	First Difference	-6.54 (0.000)	-6.46 (0.000)	$I(0)$ Stationary
LTOT	Level	-2.968 (0.047)	-2.88 (0.178)	$I(0)$ and $I(1)$ Inconclusive
	First Difference	-7.198 (0.000)	-8.090 (0.000)	$I(0)$ and $I(0)$ Stationary

Note:

1. PP test Critical Values for model with intercept: -3.62 for 1% level of significance, -2.94 for 5% level of significance and -2.61 for 10% level of significance.
 2. PP test Critical Values for model with intercept and trend: -4.23 for 1% level of significance, -3.54 for 5% level of significance and -3.20 for 10% level of significance.
 3. The optimum lag is selected by using SIC. Unit Root Tests are performed by E-Views 5.1.
- Source: Estimated from Appendix 1.

PP unit root test (Table 7.5) shows that most of the variables are non-stationary at the level for model with intercept and intercept and trend. But all the variables are $I(0)$ i.e. stationary at the first differences both for model with intercept and intercept and trend.

2.6 Co-integration Test

Co-integration test is conducted to examine the existence of long run relationship among the variables of the trade balance model. Johansen and Juselius co-integration test is applied here. Two tests namely the trace test and the maximal eigenvalue test are used to determine the number of cointegrating vectors. The cointegration test results are shown in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6: Johansen Co-integration Test Based on Maximum Eigenvalue

Trend assumption: Linear deterministic trend

Unrestricted Cointegration Rank Test (Maximum Eigenvalue)

Hypothesis		Eigenvalue	Max -Eigen Statistics	0.05% Critical Value	p-value**
Null	Alternative				
$r^* = 0$	$r = 1$	0.894	78.59	33.87	0.000
$r \leq 1$	$r = 2$	0.424	19.31	27.58	0.391
$r \leq 2$	$r = 3$	0.313	13.15	21.13	0.438
$r \leq 3$	$r = 4$	0.215	8.49	14.26	0.330

Max-eigenvalue test indicates 1 cointegrating eqn(s) at the 0.05 level

* denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level

**MacKinnon-Haug-Michelis (1999) p-values

Source: Estimated from Appendix 1.

It is observed from Table 6 that only one null hypothesis of 'no co-integrating vector' is rejected at 5 per cent level of significance (maximum eigenvalue statistics is 78.59). Therefore, it can be concluded that there are long run co-integrating relationship among the variables of the model. The same result is found by trace test (Table 7).

Table 7: Johansen Co-integration Test Based on Trace Test

Trend Assumption: Linear Deterministic Trend

Unrestricted Cointegration Rank Test (Trace)

Hypothesis		Eigenvalue	Trace Statistics	0.05% Critical Value	p-value**
Null	Alternative				
$r^* = 0$	$r = 1$	0.894	122.82	69.81	0.000
$r \leq 1$	$r = 2$	0.424	44.22	47.85	0.105
$r \leq 2$	$r = 3$	0.313	24.91	29.79	0.164
$r \leq 3$	$r = 4$	0.215	11.76	15.49	0.168

Trace test indicates 1 cointegrating eqn(s) at the 0.05 level

* denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 0.05 level

**MacKinnon-Haug-Michelis (1999) p-values

It is observed from Table 7 that only one null hypothesis of 'no co-integrating vector' is rejected at 5 per cent level of significance (trace statistics is 122.82). Therefore, it can be concluded that there are long run co-integrating relationship among the variables of the model.

2.7 Long Run Cointegrated Relationship

Based on the co-integration test the long run estimates of the co-integrating vectors are presented in the Table 8.

Table 8: Long Run Co-integration Estimates of Variables

LOG(TD)	LOG(TOT)	LOG(RGDP)	LOG(REER)	LIBD
1.00	4.55	3.71	-1.59	-7.94
Standard Errors	0.649	0.506	0.585	0.588
T-statistics	7.01	5.71	2.71	13.50
Significance Level	Significant at 1%	Significant at 1%	Significant at 1%	Significant at 1%

Note: Log Likelihood 101.2528

From Table 8 it is evident that trade deficit (TD) is positively correlated with terms of trade (TOT) and real GDP (RGDP) while it is negatively correlated with real effective exchange rate (REER) and liberalization dummy (LIBD). All the estimated coefficients are found significant at 1 per cent level. The co-integrating relationship is shown in Figure 2. The curve is fluctuating but it shows the trend of long run convergence.

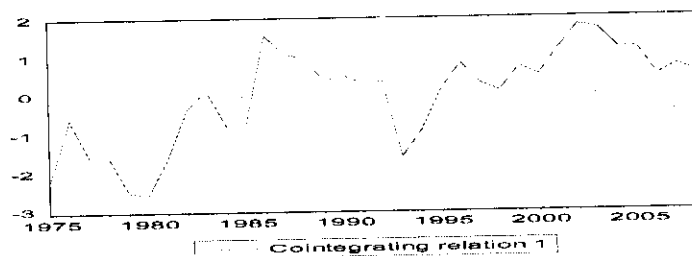


Figure 2: Co-integrating Relationship of Trade Balance Model

2.8 Causality between Variables of Trade Balance Model

The results of Granger causality test is shown in Table 9 and the direction of causality on the basis of test statistic is shown in Table 10.

Table 9: Granger Causality Test of the Trade Balance Model

Sl.	Null Hypothesis	F-Statistics	Probability
1	LOG(TOT) does not Granger Cause LOG(TD)	0.060	0.941
2	LOG(TD) does not Granger Cause LOG(TOT)	5.758	0.007
3	LOG(RGDP) does not Granger Cause LOG(TD)	0.681	0.513
4	LOG(TD) does not Granger Cause LOG(RGDP)	0.756	0.477
5	LOG(REER) does not Granger Cause LOG(TD)	0.434	0.651
6	LOG(TD) does not Granger Cause LOG(REER)	1.431	0.254
7	LIBD does not Granger Cause LOG(TD)	1.120	0.339
8	LOG(TD) does not Granger Cause LIBD	1.510	0.237
9	LOG(RGDP) does not Granger Cause LOG(TOT)	1.501	0.239
10	LOG(TOT) does not Granger Cause LOG(RGDP)	1.706	0.198
11	LOG(REER) does not Granger Cause LOG(TOT)	1.987	0.154
12	LOG(TOT) does not Granger Cause LOG(REER)	0.808	0.454
13	LIBD does not Granger Cause LOG(TOT)	1.124	0.338
14	LOG(TOT) does not Granger Cause LIBD	0.808	0.454
15	LOG(REER) does not Granger Cause LOG(RGDP)	1.810	0.181
16	LOG(RGDP) does not Granger Cause LOG(REER)	3.630	0.038
17	LIBD does not Granger Cause LOG(RGDP)	21.52	0.000
18	LOG(RGDP) does not Granger Cause LIBD	0.491	0.616
19	LIBD does not Granger Cause LOG(REER)	9.410	0.000
20	LOG(REER) does not Granger Cause LIBD	0.188	0.829

Note: Lag=2. Observation=35

Source: Estimated from Appendix-1.

It is evident from the Table 7.9 that the terms of trade has no Granger cause to trade deficit but trade deficit has granger cause to terms of trade. There are no Granger causality between real GDP and trade deficit, real effective exchange rate and trade deficit, liberalization and trade deficit, real effective exchange rate and terms of trade, liberalization and terms of trade. However, liberalization has Granger cause to Real Effective Exchange Rate and liberalization has Granger cause to GDP. Details are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Direction of Causality Based on Granger Test

Null Hypothesis	Results	Conclusion
H ₀ : 1	Accepted	TOT has no Granger cause to Trade Deficit.
H ₀ : 2	Rejected	Trade Deficit has Granger cause to TOT.
Direction of Causality		Uni-directional, TD → TOT
H ₀ : 3	Accepted	GDP has no Granger cause to Trade Deficit.
H ₀ : 4	Accepted	Trade Deficit has no Granger cause to GDP.
Direction of Causality		No casual relationship
H ₀ : 5	Accepted	Real Effective Exchange Rate has no Granger cause to Trade Deficit.
H ₀ : 6	Accepted	Trade Deficit has Granger no cause to Real Effective Exchange Rate.
Direction of Causality		No casual relationship
H ₀ : 7	Accepted	Liberalization has no Granger cause to Trade Deficit.
H ₀ : 8	Accepted	Trade Deficit has no Granger cause to Liberalization.
Direction of Causality		No casual relationship
H ₀ : 9	Accepted	GDP has no Granger cause to TOT.
H ₀ : 10	Accepted	TOT has Granger cause to GDP.
Direction of Causality		No casual relationship
H ₀ : 11	Accepted	Real Effective Exchange Rate has no Granger cause to TOT.
H ₀ : 12	Accepted	TOT has no Granger cause to Real Effective Exchange Rate.
Direction of Causality		No casual relationship
H ₀ : 13	Accepted	Liberalization has no Granger cause to TOT.
H ₀ : 14	Accepted	TOT has no Granger cause to Liberalization.
Direction of Causality		No casual relationship
H ₀ : 15	Accepted	Real Effective Exchange Rate has no Granger cause to GDP.
H ₀ : 16	Rejected	GDP has Granger cause to Real Effective Exchange Rate.
Direction of Causality		Uni-directional, GDP → REER
H ₀ : 17	Rejected	Liberalization has Granger cause to GDP.
H ₀ : 18	Accepted	GDP has no Granger cause to Liberalization.
Direction of Causality		Uni-directional, Liberalization → GDP
H ₀ : 19	Rejected	Liberalization has Granger cause to Real Effective Exchange Rate.
H ₀ : 20	Accepted	Real Effective Exchange Rate has no Granger cause to Liberalization.
Direction of Causality		Uni-directional, Liberalization → REER

Source: Table -9

3.0 Econometric Estimation of Trade Balance Model

The OLS estimation of the trade balance model is:

$$\text{LRTD} = -0.01 - 1.41 \text{LTOT} + 0.84 \text{LRGDP} + 0.73 \text{LREER} + 0.06 \text{LIBD}$$

Table 11: OLS Estimation of Coefficients of Trade Balance Model
Dependent Variable: LRTD

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-0.01	4.983	-0.002	0.998
LTOT	-1.41	0.342	-4.107	0.000
LRGDP	0.84	0.233	3.587	0.001
LREER	0.73	0.302	2.407	0.022
LIBD	0.06	0.278	0.224	0.824
Test Statistics				
R-squared	0.911	Mean dependent var		6.318
Adjusted R-squared	0.900	S.D. dependent var		1.133
S.E. of regression	0.357	Akaike info criterion		0.905
Sum squared resid	4.090	Schwarz criterion		1.123
Log likelihood	-11.759	F-statistic		82.502
Durbin-Watson stat	1.902	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000

Source: Estimated from Appendix-1

All estimated coefficients are in expected sign but all are not statistically significant. The R-squared (R²) of the model is very high i.e. 0.911 and adjusted-R² is 0.900. It signifies that about 91 per cent variation in the dependent variable i.e. real trade deficit (RTD) is explained by the independent variables i.e. Terms of Trade (TOT), real GDP (RGDP) and real gross capital formation (REER). The DW statistic is 1.40. The F-statistics of the model is computed as 82.52 (Table 11). The mean of the dependent variable in logarithm is found as 6.18 and the standard deviation is 1.33. The DW statistics is 1.90, closer to 2, means that there are no presence of multicollinearity in the model.

The TOT is negatively associated to the trade imbalance (-1.41) as expected and the relationship is highly statistically significant meaning that TOT is an important determinant of Trade Imbalance. The coefficient of real GDP is positive(0.84) meaning that the trade imbalance is positively related with real GDP and the relationship is statistically significant. The coefficient of real effective exchange rate is positive meaning that the trade imbalance is positively related (0.73) with real exchange rate and the relationship is statistically significant. The coefficient of liberalization dummy is positive meaning that the trade imbalance is increased in post-liberalization regime but the relationship is not statistically significant. Since all the variables except dummy variable are taken in natural logarithm form, the estimated coefficients represent the respective elasticity of trade balance of Bangladesh. The TOT elasticity of trade imbalance is estimated at 1.41, the GDP elasticity of trade imbalance is estimated at 0.84 and the real exchange rate elasticity of trade imbalance is estimated at 0.73. The estimated coefficient of

liberalization dummy is very low (0.062) and it is not statistically significant meaning that liberalization of trade has not significant impact on the trade balance of Bangladesh.

3.1 VECM Analysis for Trade Balance Model

The estimated coefficients of VECM for trade balance model is shown in Table 12. The short run elasticity of trade balance is -0.84 with respect to its own value at one lag and it is statistically significant at 1 per cent. The short run elasticity of trade balance is -0.31 with respect to terms of trade at one lag and it is statistically significant at 1 per cent level. The short run elasticity of trade balance is -0.24 with respect to real GDP at one lag but it is not statistically significant. The short run elasticity of trade balance is 0.09 with respect to real effective exchange rate and it is statistically significant at 5 per cent level of significance. The coefficient of liberalization is -0.015 and it is not statistically significant.

Table 12: Long Run Cointegrating Estimates of Variables

Repressors	Coefficients	T-statistics	Test Statistics	
			R-squared	0.696
C (Intercept)	0.25	4.36	Adj. R-squared	0.583
$\Delta \text{Log(TD)}(1)$	-0.84	-5.57	Sum sq. resids	1.096
$\Delta \text{Log(TD)}(-2)$	-0.52	-3.49	S.E. equation	0.213
$\Delta \text{Log(TOT)}(1)$	-0.31	-0.97	F-statistic	6.134
$\Delta \text{Log(TOT)}(2)$	-0.005	-0.016	Log likelihood	10.14
$\Delta \text{Log(RGDP)}(1)$	-0.24	-0.92	Akaike AIC	-0.008
$\Delta \text{Log(RGDP)}(2)$	0.02	0.07	Schwarz SC	0.440
$\Delta \text{Log(REER)}(1)$	0.09	0.31	Mean dependent	0.092
$\Delta \text{Log(REER)}(2)$	-0.37	-1.21	S.D. dependent	0.331
$\Delta \text{LIBD}(1)$	-0.02	-0.16	S.E. equation	0.213
$\Delta \text{LIBD}(2)$	-0.05	-0.54	D.W	1.96
EC(-1)	-0.18	-4.73		

Source: Estimated from Appendix 1.

The error correction term, EC at lag one, is negative (-0.18) means that any short run disequilibrium of the variables will be converged in the long run.

3.2 VAR Analysis for Trade Balance Model

The estimated coefficients of VAR for trade balance model is shown in Table 13. The elasticity coefficient of trade balance is 0.17 with respect to its own value at one lag and it is statistically significant at 5 per cent level. The elasticity coefficient of trade balance is 0.09 with respect to terms of trade at one lag and it is statistically significant at 5 per cent. The elasticity of trade balance is -0.04 with respect to real GDP at one lag but it is not statistically significant. The elasticity of trade balance is 0.62 with respect to real effective exchange rate and it is statistically

significant at 5 per cent level of significance. The coefficient of liberalization is -0.02 and it is not statistically significant.

Table 13: Results of VAR Estimates

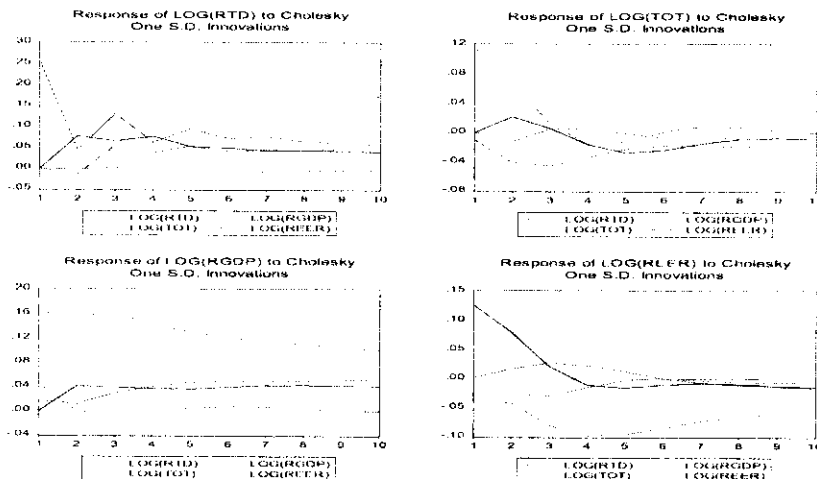
Dependent Variable: Log(TB)

Repressors	Coefficients	T-statistics	Test Statistics	
LOG(RTD(-1))	0.17	0.97	R-squared	0.948
LOG(RTD(-2))	0.42	2.64	Adj. R-squared	0.932
LOG(TOT(-1))	0.09	0.22	Sum sq. resid.	1.705
LOG(TOT(-2))	-0.06	-0.16	S.E. equation	0.256
LOG(RGDP(-1))	0.04	0.15	F-statistic	59.72
LOG(RGDP(-2))	0.48	1.44	Log likelihood	3.215
LOG(REER(-1))	0.61	1.63	Akaike AIC	0.330
LOG(REER(-2))	-0.004	-0.01	Schwarz SC	0.730
C	-6.19	-1.51	Mean dependent	6.461

3.3 Impulse Responses of the variables of Trade Balance Model

The impulse responses of trade balance model in VAR are shown in Figure 3. The impulse responses imply that the variables cannot move 'too far away' from each other independently but move together. The independent variables are well responded with real trade deficit and long run convergence is established. The response of TOT to other variables is correlated and strongly convergent. In case of real GDP other variables move together and long run convergent is seen. In response of real effective exchange rate the variables move together and convergent in the long run.

Figure 3: Impulse Responses of Trade Balance Model in VAR.



Source: Appendix-I

4.0 Long Run Relationship between Export and Import

The main objective of pursuing a liberal trade policy instead of import substitution strategy since late 1980s is to achieve a competitive trade balance. The foreign exchange gap (Export minus Import) is also another concern of Bangladesh economy for development efforts. The import capacity also depends on export receipts. Though Bangladesh has been experiencing negative foreign exchange gap since independence but the gap has been fluctuating over the years. Therefore it is important to examine the long run relationship between export and import for designing appropriate policy option in the external sector.⁴ Husted (2001) explored the long run relationship between exports and imports of the USA using Engle-Granger methodology⁵. Bahmani-Oskooee(1994) studied the long run relationship between export and import of Australia⁶. Dipendra Singha(1999) explored the long run relationship between export and import of Pakistan⁷ with the annual data by applying Cointegration methodology. Naqvi and Morimune (2005) studied the long run convergence⁸ of export and import for Pakistan using Johanson method of Cointegration. C.C. Keong et al. (2004) investigated the long run relationship between export and import of Malaysia⁹ by applying multivariate cointegration technique. The main findings of most these studies reveal that trade gap is a short run phenomenon and it is convergent in the long run. In case of Bangladesh ADF and PP unit root tests and Johanson method of Cointegration are applied to examine the long run relationship between export and import using annual time series data (Figure 4).

⁴ Md. Ezazul Islam and Mst. Nurnaher Begum, "The Long Run Relationship between Export and Import of Bangladesh: A Cointegration Approach", Journal of the Institute of Bankers, Bangladesh, Vol. 52(2) (Dhaka: Institutes of Bankers, 2005), p. 61.

⁵ S. Husted, "The Emerging US Current Deficit in the 1980s: A Cointegration Analysis", Review of Economics and Statistics, Vol. 74 (1995), pp. 159-66.

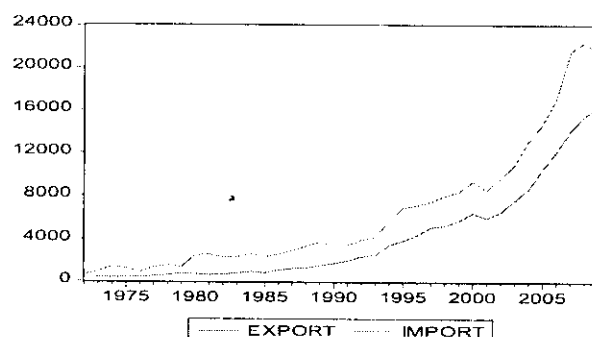
⁶ M. Bahmani-Oskooee, "Are Import and Export of Australia Cointegrated?", Journal of Economic Integration, Vol. 9(1994), pp. 525-33.

⁷ Dipendra Sinha, "The Long Run Relationship between Export and Import of Pakistan", The Indian Economic Journal, Vol. 46(3) (1999), pp. 104-09.

⁸ K.H. Naqvi and Kimio Morimune, "An Empirical Analysis of Sustainability of Trade Deficits", Discussion Paper No. 72, Interfaces for Advanced Economic Analysis, Kyoto University (2005).

⁹ C.C. Keong et al., "Are Malaysian Exports and Imports Cointegrated?", Sunway College Journal, Vol. 1(2004), pp. 29-38.

Figure 4 : Export and Import



Following the literature of export-import relationship we can specify the model as shown below:

$$\text{Model 1: } M_t = \alpha + \beta X_t + u_t ; LM_t = \alpha + \nu LX_t + u_t$$

$$\text{Model 2: } X_t = \alpha + \beta M_t + u_t ; LX_t = \alpha + \beta LM_t + u_t$$

where M_t represents import at time t , X_t stands for export at time t , α stands for intercept, β for slope coefficient and u_t is the error term at time t . LM_t represents import in log form at time t , LX_t stands for export in log at time t . The co-integration method implies that if two or more series are linked to form equilibrium relationship over long run even though they are non-stationary and the first difference of the series is stationary. The first step is to test the order of integration of the variables.

4.1 Test of Stationarity of the Variables of Export-Import Model

Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) tests have been conducted both at levels and at the first difference of each variable of the model. The test results are presented in Table 14 and Table 15.

Table 14: Augmented Dickey-Fuller Unit Root Test

Null Hypothesis: H_0 : The concerned variable has a unit root

Variables	Level / First Difference	Intercept	Intercept and Trend	Conclusion
LM	Level	-0.81 (0.803)	-4.06 (0.015)	I(1) and I(0) Inconclusive
	First Difference	-6.87 (0.000)	-6.76 (0.000)	I(0) Stationary
LX	Level	-0.49 (0.984)	-0.25 (0.292)	I(1) Non-stationary
	First Difference	-5.60 (0.000)	-5.59 (0.000)	I(0) Stationary

Note:

1. ADF test Critical Values for model with intercept: -3.62 for 1% level of significance, -2.94 for 5% level of significance and -2.61 for 10% level of significance.
2. ADF test Critical Values for model with intercept and trend: -4.23 for 1% level of significance, -3.54 for 5% level of significance and -3.20 for 10% level of significance.
3. Unit Root Tests are performed by E-Views 5.1

It is observed from the Table 14 that most of the variables are non-stationary at the level for model with intercept and intercept and trend. But all the variables are $I(0)$ i.e. stationary at the first difference for model with intercept and intercept and trend. The similar test result is found in case of Phillips-Perron test (Table 15).

Table 15: Phillips-Perron Unit Root Test

Null Hypothesis: H_0 ; The concerned variable has a unit root

Variables	Level / First Difference	Intercept	Intercept and Trend	Conclusion
LM	Level	-0.81 (0.803)	-4.06 (0.015)	$I(1)$ and $I(0)$ Inconclusive
	First Difference	-6.87 (0.000)	-6.76 (0.000)	$I(0)$ Stationary
LX	Level	-0.49 (0.984)	-0.25 (0.292)	$I(1)$ Non-stationary
	First Difference	-5.60 (0.000)	-5.59 (0.000)	$I(0)$ Stationary

Note:

1. PP test Critical Values for model with intercept: -3.62 for 1% level of significance, -2.94 for 5% level of significance and -2.61 for 10% level of significance.
2. PP test Critical Values for model with intercept and trend: -4.23 for 1% level of significance, -3.54 for 5% level of significance and -3.20 for 10% level of significance.
3. Unit Root Tests are performed by E-Views 5.1

It is observed from the Table 15 that most of the variables are non-stationary at the level for model with intercept and intercept and trend but all the variables are $I(0)$ i.e. stationary at the first difference.

4.2 Co-integration Test

The co-integration test based on maximum eigenvalue and trace tests are shown in Tables 16 and 17.

Table 16 : Johansen Co-integration Test Based on Maximum Eigenvalue Test

Trend assumption: Linear deterministic trend

Hypothesis		Max-Eigen Statistics	0.05% Critical Value	p-value**
Null	Alternative			
$r^* = 0$	$r = 1$	16.77	15.49	0.031
$r \leq 1$	$r = 2$	0.138	3.84	0.709

Note: Max-eigenvalue test indicates 1 cointegrating eqn(s) at the 0.05 level

*(**) denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 5%(1%) level

**MacKinnon-Haug-Michelis (1999) p-values

Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

It is observed from Table 16 that only one null hypothesis of 'no co-integrating vector' is rejected at 5 per cent level of significance (maximum eigenvalue statistics is 15.49). Therefore, it can be concluded that there are long run co-integrating relationship among the variables of the model.

Table 17: Johansen Co-integration Test Based on Trace Test

Trend assumption: Linear deterministic trend

Hypothesis		Trace Statistics	0.05% Critical Value	p-value**
Null	Alternative			
$r^* = 0$	$r = 1$	16.79	15.49	0.031
$r \leq 1$	$r = 2$	0.138	3.84	0.709

Note: Trace test indicates 1 cointegrating eqn(s) at the 0.05 level

*(**) denotes rejection of the hypothesis at the 5%(1%) level

**MacKinnon-Haug-Michelis (1999) p-values

Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

It is observed from Table 17 that only one null hypothesis of 'no co-integrating vector' is rejected at 5 per cent level of significance (trace statistics is 16.79). Therefore, it can be concluded that there are long run co-integrating relationship among the variables of the model. The normalized co-integrating coefficients are shown in Table 18.

Table 18 : Normalized Cointegrating Coefficients

LM	LX
1.000	-0.76 (0.029)

Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

4.3 Pair wise Granger Causality Test

It is evident from the Table 19 that export Granger cause to import because the null hypothesis 'export does not Granger cause import' is rejected at 1 per cent level. On the other hand import does not Grange cause export is not rejected at any level of significance. It indicates that import of a country is influenced by the export.

Table 19 : Pair wise Granger Causality Test based on Model-1

Null Hypothesis: H_0	F-Statistic	Probability	Conclusion
LOG(EXPORT) does not Granger Cause LOG(IMPORT)	9.62*	0.000	H_0 is rejected meaning Export granger cause to import
LOG(IMPORT) does not Granger Cause LOG(EXPORT)	1.49	0.241	H_0 is not rejected meaning import has no granger cause to export

Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

It is evident from the Table 20 that import does not Granger cause to export because the null hypothesis 'import does not Granger cause export' is not rejected at any level but 'export does not Grange cause import' is rejected at 1 per cent level of significance. It indicates that import of a country is influenced by the export.

Table 20: Pair wise Granger Causality Test based on Model-2

Null Hypothesis: H_0	F-Statistic	Probability	Conclusion
LOG(IMPORT) does not Granger Cause LOG(EXPORT)	1.48996	0.241	H_0 is not rejected meaning import has no granger cause to export
LOG(EXPORT) does not Granger Cause LOG(IMPORT)	10.1616	0.000	H_0 is rejected meaning export has no granger cause to import

*Significant at 1% level

Source: Table: 19.

4.4 Estimation of Export-Import Model by OLS

The OLS estimation of the Export-Import Model-1 is:

$$LM = 2.42 + 0.77 LX$$

Table 21: Regression Results of Export-Import Model-1

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	2.42	0.191	12.64	0.000
LOG(EXPORT)	0.77	0.025	31.36	0.000
Test Statistics				
S.E. of regression	0.184	Akaike info criterion		-0.494
Sum squared resid	1.222	Schwarz criterion		-0.407
R-squared	0.964	F-statistic		983.66
Adjusted R-squared	0.963	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000
Log likelihood	11.379	Durbin-Watson stat		1.65

Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

The R-squared (R²) of the model is very high i.e. 0.96 and adjusted-R² is also 0.96. It signifies that about 96 per cent variation in the dependent variable i.e. import is explained by the independent variable i.e. export. The F-statistics of the model is computed as 983.66. The DW statistics is 1.65, closer to 2, means that there are no presence of multicollinearity in the model (Table 21).

The estimated coefficient of independent variable export is 0.77 and the t-statistic is 31.36. The elasticity of import with respect to export is 0.77. That means that the dependent variable import is positively associated to the independent variable and the relationship is highly statistically significant.

The OLS estimation of the Export-Import Model-2 is:

$$LX = -2.79 + 1.25 LM$$

Table 22: Estimated Export-Import Model-2

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-2.79	0.333	-8.37	0.0000
LOG(IMPORT)	1.25	0.039	31.47	0.0000
Test Statistics				
S.E. of regression	0.232	Akaike info criterion		-0.028
Sum squared resid	1.946	Schwarz criterion		0.057
R-squared	0.964	F-statistic		990.67
Adjusted R-squared	0.963	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000
Log likelihood	2.543	Durbin-Watson stat		1.70

Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

The R-squared (R²) of the model is very high i.e. 0.96 and adjusted-R² is also 0.96. It signifies that about 96 per cent variation in the dependent variable i.e. import is explained by the independent variable i.e. export. The F-statistics of the model is computed as 990.67. The DW statistics is 1.70, closer to 2, means that there are no presence of multicollinearity in the model. The estimated coefficient of independent variable import is 1.25 and the t-statistic is 31.47. The elasticity of export with respect to import is 1.25. That means that the dependent variable export is positively associated with the independent variable and the relationship is highly statistically significant (Table 22).

4.5 Vector Error Correction Estimates for Export-Import Model

The estimated coefficients of VECM for export-import model is shown in Table 23. The short run elasticity of import is -1.49 with respect to its own value at one lag and it is not statistically significant. The short run

elasticity of import is -0.21 with respect to export at one lag and it is statistically significant at 1 per cent level.

Table 23: Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) Estimation

Dependent Variable: ΔLM

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-statistics
$\Delta LM(1)$	-0.149	0.171	-0.869
$\Delta LM(2)$	-0.291	0.147	-1.97**
$\Delta LX(1)$	-0.002	0.286	-0.006
$\Delta LX(2)$	0.252	0.272	0.928
Constant	0.097	0.048	2.04*
EC_{t-1}	-0.42	0.201	-2.07*
Test Statistic			
R-squared	0.439	Log likelihood	23.33
Adj. R-squared	0.342	Akaike AIC	-0.990
Sum sq. resids	0.540	Schwarz SC	-0.723
S.E. equation	0.136	Mean dependent	0.081
F-statistic	4.543	S.D. dependent	0.168

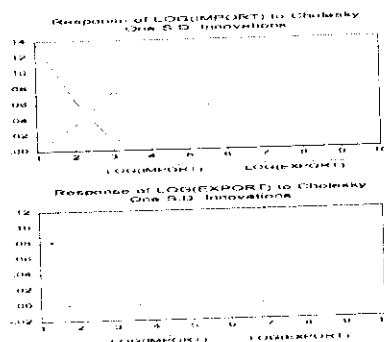
Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

The error correction term, EC_{t-1} , is negative(-0.42) and it is statistically significant at 5 per cent level that indicates the medium speed adjustment of short run disequilibrium to long run equilibrium.

4.6 Impulse Responses of VECM

The impulse responses of export-import model in VECM are shown in Figure 5. The impulse responses imply that the variables cannot move 'too far away' from each other independently but move together. Response of import to export shows that they move together but not closely. On the other hand response of export to import shows they move together but in a very divergent way.

Figure 5| Impulse Responses of VECM for Export-Import Model



4.7 Vector Error Correction Estimates for Export-Import Model

The estimated coefficients of VAR for export-import model is shown in Table 24. The elasticity coefficient of import is 0.36 with respect to its own value at one lag and it is statistically significant at 5 per cent level. The elasticity coefficient of import is 0.45 with respect to export at one lag and it is statistically significant at 5 per cent.

Table 24 : Vector Autoregression Estimates

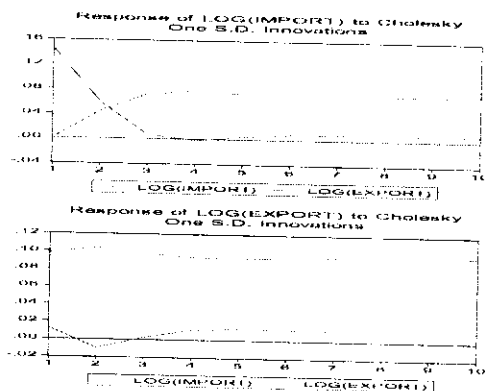
Variables	LOG(IMPORT)	Std. Error	t-statistics
C	1.884816	0.47860	3.93
LOG(IMPORT(-1))	0.363297	(0.17972)	2.02
LOG(IMPORT(-2))	-0.076416	0.14866	-0.51
LOG(EXPORT(-1))	0.453832	0.25479	1.78
LOG(EXPORT(-2))	0.091484	0.28785	0.31
Test Statistic			
R-squared	0.977273	Log likelihood	21.23964
Adj. R-squared	0.974341	Akaike AIC	-0.902202
Sum sq. resids	0.647693	Schwarz SC	-0.682269
S.E. equation	0.144545	Mean dependent	8.441917
F-statistic	333.2611	S.D. dependent	0.902369

Source: Researcher's Own Calculation.

4.8 Impulse Responses of VAR for Export-Import Model

The impulse responses of export-import model in VAR are shown in Figure 6. The impulse responses imply that the variables cannot move 'too far away' from each other independently but move together. Response of import to export shows that they move together but not closely. On the other hand response of export to import shows they move together but in a very divergent way.

Figure 6: Impulse Responses of VAR for Export-Import Model



5.0 Conclusion

This paper analyses the impacts of trade liberalization on trade balance in Bangladesh. There are some improvements in the current account of the balance of payment but deficits in the trade balances remain permanent. The growth rates of trade deficit are lower in the post-liberalization period as compared the pre-liberalization regime. Chow Test result shows there is a structural change in the trade balance of Bangladesh due to trade liberalization. The short run elasticity of trade balance is -0.24 with respect to real GDP at one lag but it is not statistically significant. The short run elasticity of trade balance is 0.09 with respect to real effective exchange rate and it is statistically significant at 5 per cent level of significance. The coefficient of liberalization is -0.015 and it is not statistically significant. The error correction term, EC at lag one, is negative (-0.18) means that any short run disequilibrium of the variables will be converged in the long run. The policy makers should pay due attention to address this issue through formulation a comprehensive trade policy for the country.

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Appendix-1

Trade Balance, Terms of Trade, Real Effective Exchange, CPI of Bangladesh.

Year	TD (Million Taka)	TOT (1995-96 = 100)	RGDP (million Taka)	REER 1995-96 = 100)	CPI 1995-96 = 100)	RTD (million Taka)
1972-73	4820	261.83	19081	90.00	96.20	50.10
1973-74	4280	232.64	28993	100.00	103.45	41.37
1974-75	7150	183.17	27808	114.00	104.60	68.36
1975-76	14290	167.19	29382	90.00	117.60	121.51
1976-77	5950	154.29	30167	101.00	120.30	49.46
1977-78	14090	155.21	32301	138.00	92.45	152.41
1978-79	16060	173.67	33852	156.00	103.24	155.56
1979-80	23950	207.41	34130	137.00	115.42	207.50
1980-81	29320	161.74	35288	146.00	116.54	251.59
1981-82	37660	124.72	35722	155.00	98.90	380.79
1982-83	36520	101.40	37470	170.00	95.35	383.01
1983-84	38180	119.04	39503	178.00	98.70	386.83
1984-85	43530	127.74	40693	172.00	87.65	496.63
1985-86	43480	82.49	42459	145.00	79.64	545.96
1986-87	49620	81.23	44234	170.00	88.96	557.78
1987-88	56240	88.52	45513	155.00	96.43	583.22
1988-89	66290	100.06	46661	163.00	100.45	659.93
1989-90	74760	98.26	49753	162.00	95.90	779.56
1990-91	63960	102.38	51444	151.00	97.45	656.34
1991-92	59300	86.41	53619	179.00	93.87	631.72
1992-93	71340	106.16	145568	140.00	84.09	848.38
1993-94	69670	97.64	151514	120.00	86.85	802.19
1994-95	103250	99.72	158976	88.00	94.55	1092.01
1995-96	144470	100.00	166324	75.00	100.00	1444.70
1996-97	139760	94.66	175285	90.00	103.39	1351.77
1997-98	137900	96.51	184448	88.00	110.61	1246.72
1998-99	176290	93.63	193429	76.00	120.94	1457.66
1999-00	172080	92.77	204928	78.00	124.31	1384.28
2000-01	179520	88.35	215735	65.00	126.72	1416.67
2001-02	181150	84.11	225261	55.00	130.26	1390.68
2002-03	226760	80.01	237101	62.00	135.97	1667.72
2003-04	236760	82.36	251968	67.00	143.90	1645.31
2004-05	300600	81.14	266975	70.00	153.23	1961.76
2005-06	193600	80.60	284673	72.00	164.21	1178.98
2006-07	382400	81.53	302971	76.00	176.06	2171.99
2007-08	380000	71.26	321726	90.00	193.54	1963.42
2008-09	323900	68.20	340197	85.00	206.64	1567.46

Source: IMF, International Financial Statistics (various issues); GOB, Bangladesh Economic Review (various issue); Bangladesh Bank, Economic Trends (various issues).

Prospects and Challenges of Online Education in Bangladesh

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Mohamed Emran Hossain**

Abstract: *The concept of online education as an advanced system for educating mass people by using information and communication technologies (ICTs) has been received a significant level of interest in recent years in most of the developed countries in the world. Especially in higher education, online education is increasingly becoming common and emerging as an opportunity for delivering entire education online. It ensures access to information about education, training and lifelong learning through the use of technologies. The rapid and intensive use of ICTs in education in the developed countries have facilitated to the establishment of 100% ICT-based universities called 'virtual universities'. In addition, many world-leading conventional universities are now also offering some of their academic courses through online for their distant learners and established themselves as the 'dual mode universities'. In Bangladesh, the conventional universities and educational institutions are not able to provide the opportunities for higher education for a large number of young students for different reasons. Online education can be considered as an important alternative to offer these young students an opportunity for higher education. In this paper, we have outlined the perceptions of faculties, students and guardians about online education. We have also discussed the present scenario of education and ICT of Bangladesh, prospects and challenges of online education of Bangladesh considering the current trend of ICTs expansion in the country.*

Introduction:

Today, technology has been extensively used in the field of education worldwide. It provides new opportunities for improving teaching and learning processes. It has brought changes in our thinking of the method of education. In recent years, the growth of online education programs in the developed countries has been fueled by the advancement of the internet and modern information technology that changed the face of education. Due to the advancement of the latest technology, online education has emerged as an alternative or considerable supplement to traditional mode of teaching and learning. It can be defined as an

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innovative approach for delivering well-designed, learner-centered, and interactive learning environments to anyone, anyplace, anytime by utilizing the internet and digital technologies. The developed countries have enjoyed the benefits of online education due to some predominant facilities like well-established infrastructure, latest technology etc. Online education can be regarded as a relatively new concept in any developing country like Bangladesh, where internet facility has mostly been limited to urban areas whereas most of the people live in rural areas. Despite technological limitations and poor infrastructure facility, a well-designed online education framework is expected to contribute significantly to the educational development and thereby having a long-term effect on poverty alleviation of Bangladesh.

2.0 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to study the prospects and challenges of online education in Bangladesh.

3.0 Literature Review

Scagnoli (2005) asserted that online education has significantly increased in popularity among students of all ages. This is mainly because taking courses at online schools and universities offers clear benefits over taking courses at conventional educational facilities. Students are given the opportunity to choose from various programs and courses which are not available in the area where they live in. This is especially beneficial for those who live in rural areas that only have one or two educational facilities, which most of the time, offer limited course and program options for students. It offers flexibility to students. Because they can attend classes and courses whenever and wherever there is a computer and access to the internet, they can easily plan out a schedule that would work for them. Because of the flexibility offered by online learning, not only undergraduate students, but also individuals who already have full-time jobs or other commitments are able to take supplementary courses and even earn their college degrees online.

Online education allows a more student-centered teaching approach. Because every student has his or her way of learning that works for them, getting an online education may help in ensuring that each lesson or material is completely understood before moving on to the next, which in turn, could result to better learning. Online course materials can be accessed 24 hours a day every day. This means that students can easily read and review lectures, discussions and other materials relevant to their

course. There are some students who find it a bit difficult to understand spoken material in a typical classroom setting because of a number of distractions, boredom or tiredness. Because they can simply access the material online once they are prepared to learn, students are able to take in and understand the material a lot better. Online education offers a lot of savings because there are no additional costs for transportation and accommodation. Online education programs and courses also cost a lot cheaper than courses that can be taken in a traditional school (Brainard, 2010).

Rosina, C., Poe, E., & Manhas, P. S. (2008) stated that students who are taking online classes can also socialize, interact and discuss things that are not related to the course through chat rooms which are usually offered by most online institutions. Because online instructors usually come from different locations across the globe, students are exposed to knowledge shared by the instructors which cannot be learned in books. The different personal backgrounds of online instructors also allow them to teach students different perspectives on how class concepts can be applied in actual business situations. Students of online courses are also given the chance to talk with their instructors whenever they want to. Through online chat, email and newsgroup discussions, students and teachers can discuss concerns related to the material without having to wait for office hours.

Bernard (2009) performed a meta-analysis on the online education and examined three types of interaction treatments: student-student (SS), student-teacher (ST), and student-content (SC). Student-student interaction may be built into distance education courses through the use of group projects. Student-teacher interactions are easy in hybrid courses where there are some face-to-face meetings and a bit more difficult in fully online courses. Even with fully online courses, student-teacher interactions can occur via the use of email, phone calls, discussion boards, chats, and videoconferencing. Student-content interactions can be affected by having students read online material, collect information, or watch a video. He concluded that all three types of interactions are important and should be an important part of fully online courses since they enhance student learning as well as satisfaction.

Battalio (2007) stated that not all students have the same learning styles. Some students may prefer learning in a traditional, face-to-face environment; others may thrive in fully online courses. Younger students,

who do not have family obligations and are comfortable with social networks, may benefit greatly from online learning communities. Older students that work and have family obligations may not be satisfied with courses that utilize online learning communities. The belief that the best way for students to learn is via traditional, face-to-face classes is rapidly becoming obsolete. The best one can claim is that the traditional class offers advantages for some students. Hybrid or blended courses that combine both online and face-to-face teaching are probably the ideal way of teaching most classes. Classroom learning with a standard curriculum taught to young people of a single age group, rather than segregated by interest or abilities, may not be the way to go in the internet Age. Courses that are offered fully or partially online can enhance creativity since they can use numerous teaching tools that include animations, videos, wikis, blogs, web links, webinars, and virtual labs.

Azzam (2012) asserted that young people today are always multiprocessing and conducting several tasks simultaneously. Many can be working on the computer, talking on their cell phones, and listening to music, all at the same time. The goal of education today, according to Brown, is to teach students information navigation, i.e., how to find useful information on the internet. Also, using online courses allows students to learn at their own pace.

Liaw, Huang & Chen (2007) focused on the use of information technology and the internet as a teaching and learning tool which is rapidly expanding into today's learning environments, where online learning delivers a broad array of solutions that enhances knowledge and performance using internet technologies. Online learning is essentially the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. It includes web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classroom opportunities and digital collaboration. Content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV etc.

Online education is a multi-tier pyramidal framework that is tailor-made for those galaxies of students who yearn for flexibility, leverage, self-paced learning. One gets incited to appreciate the student-focused benefits endowed by online education that is entirely elusive in the exceptional method of education. Simply put, student-oriented education turns out to be the norm in online learning with more emphasis on global interaction and latest expansion of knowledge (Milani, 2008).

Manhas (2010) stated that online education comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching. The web becomes a virtual learning space where knowledge is shared and collaboration happens, not only between those who are geographically dispersed, but also among those who work on similar ideas at different times and contribute to that knowledge creation. The online education option enables the stakeholders, especially students, to extract information from different types of sources anytime, anywhere.

The rapid and intensive use of ICTs in education in the developed countries facilitated to the establishment of 100% ICT-based universities called 'virtual universities'. In addition, many world-leading conventional universities are now also offering some of their academic courses through various ICTs for their distant learners and established themselves as the 'dual mode universities'. The historic launching of 700 courses from 33 academic disciplines as 'Open coursewares' by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) offers a tremendous resource for faculties, students and self-learners around the world (Pierre, 1998).

Computer literacy and access are set of challenges for promoting online education in Pakistan. While the government is trying to make ICT infrastructure more affordable. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has also facilitated the obtaining of the International Computer Driving License (ICDL), which will help pace up computer literacy in the country (HEC, 2006). English as a medium of imparting education is a serious hindrance in ensuring the promotion of online education within Pakistan. This is because most of the population accounted as literate is not familiar or fluent in English language. The content must thus be converted into Urdu language for ensuring greater access, acceptability and utility.

4.0 Research Scenario: The Open University of Catalonia (UOC)

The Open University of Catalonia or UOC is a fully online university with headquarters in Barcelona, Spain. It was founded in 1995 by the Catalan Government with the mission of providing people with lifelong learning and education through intensive use of information and communication technologies. The UOC is an internationally recognized online university with a community of over 60,000 students, distributed in several undergraduate and graduate programs. The distributions of students are in Undergraduate (43,524), Postgraduate (3,557), Doctorate (161), etc. as on December, 2012 (<http://www.uoc.edu/portal/english>).

UOC students belong to different parts of the world, but they are mainly located in Spain and South America. About 60% of UOC undergraduate students are adult students (over 30 years old) that typically combine their professional activity and/or family responsibilities with their academic duties. Educational services are delivered by a team composed of more than 4,000 teaching and management staff -including UOC faculty of 256, UOC online collaborators of 3,378, most of these professors from other Spanish universities and 491 management staff. Some of the most popular degrees (in number of registered students) offered at the UOC are as follows: Computer Engineering, Business Administration and Management, Psychology, Telecommunications, Information and Communication Sciences, Law, and Humanities etc. (<http://www.uoc.edu/portal/english>).

5.0 Scenarios of Education and ICT of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world with nearly 160 million people within an area of 1,47,570 square kilometers. Its' vast population would be the major resources of the country. Education has been emphasized as a fundamental right like food, shelter etc in Bangladesh. It has been estimated that after passing the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC, Grade XII) examination, only four percent students pursue higher education in Bangladesh because all the conventional universities combined do not have adequate seats to accommodate them (Anonymous, 2007). As a result, a large number of these young students have been forced to give up their dreams for higher education. Online education can be considered as an important alternative to offer these young students an opportunity for higher education.

Although tremendous success has been achieved in decreasing the rate of drop-outs at primary and secondary levels, access to higher education is seriously constrained in Bangladesh due to lack of enough seats in 34 public (including National University and Bangladesh Open University) and 52 private universities (UGC annual report, 2011). It is almost impossible for the government to establish enough number of new public universities to satisfy the growing demand of higher education in this highly populated developing country due to budgetary constraints. Online education can be an option for both regular young students, adult and in-service life-long learners. It can allow the learners to study from anywhere in the country at a minimum cost, by using open-source technology, open-course materials, e-learning methods etc.

Computer, the important tool for communication and online education, was first introduced in Bangladesh by the Atomic Energy Commission in 1964. To be followed later in the 70s by its use in the financial sector. Personal Computers gained popularity in the early 1990s when they became more user-friendly and affordable, but the real boost came in 1998 when the Government exempted computers and ICT accessories from taxes, a move that coincided with substantial price reductions in the global market. The consumption of ICT in Bangladesh is rapidly increasing both in public and private sectors. Almost all leading universities have departments of computer science and engineering, and thus at least 6000 new graduates are joining in ICT in the country (A and J consultants, 2004).

Bangladesh is initiating to integrate ICT into its education system. Government of Bangladesh initiated a pilot study of e-Learning of Math in Secondary Schools in Gazipur and Comilla from 2009 with the support of BRAC under TQI-SEP (Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project). Ministry of Education formally inaugurated Mobile ICT Lab of TQI-SEP on 23rd February, 2010 in order to provide e-Learning for the underprivileged secondary students of rural Bangladesh. A total number of 17 Mobile ICT Labs in 17 Cars (14 Microbuses & 3 Four Wheel Drive Pickups for hill tracks, haor areas and remote areas) moved all over the country to introduce e-Learning system with the teachers and students of one thousand schools by December, 2010. Each lab contained five laptops, five wireless internet modems, two digital cameras, multimedia projector, webcam, printer, pen drive, interactive board, e-Learning CD, speaker, generator etc. This initiative may ensure primary ICT knowledge as well as ICT based education for the students and also enhance the teaching capacity of the teachers (The Daily Samakal, 2010).

6.0 Methodology of the Study

For this study, sample consists of 250 students of different ages who have passed the HSC examination, waiting to enroll in undergraduate program; the students who are currently studying the undergraduate program; the students who have completed the undergraduate program, waiting to enroll in postgraduate program have been selected. Dhaka city has been taken as a sample area for this work. The questionnaire has been structured to investigate the students' perceptions about online education with 10 statements in which students have been asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each item on a five-point scale with

descriptive anchors ranging from (1) 'strongly agree' to (5) 'strongly disagree'. Another sample consists of 50 faculties who are teaching at different private and public universities of Dhaka city have been considered. The questionnaire has been structured to investigate the faculties' perceptions about online education with 10 statements in which they have been asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each item on a five-point scale with descriptive anchors ranging from (1) 'strongly agree' to (5) 'strongly disagree'. Another sample consisting of 50 guardians of Dhaka city have been considered. The questionnaire has been based on answers to yes/no with 5 statements to investigate the guardians' perceptions about online education. Also, for each of the perception statement, frequency distribution and relative frequency distribution have been calculated.

7.0 Results of the Survey

7.1 The Perceptions of Faculties about Online Education

Our experiences in surveying faculties about online education have shown that they have given diversified responses about it. Faculties have a more optimistic view of the implementation of a better educational system in Bangladesh through online education. About 70 percent of faculty members surveyed have agreed that it is possible to implement a better education system in Bangladesh through online education whereas only 14 percent have disagreed with it. About 54 percent of the faculty members have agreed that online education can help students eligible for the job market better than traditional class-room based education. Faculty members with knowledge of and exposure to online learning have a much more positive view of its prospect or potential. About 64 percent have agreed that online education can bring revolution in the education system of Bangladesh with respect to cost, time and labor. In successful implementation of online education, technological knowledge of faculty members are necessary. The survey has found that about 86 percent of the faculties have agreed with this statement. Faculties have a positive view of the learning outcomes for online education. Nearly 80 percent have agreed that online education can provide more variety of learning experiences compared to traditional education. Only 10 percent has opposed it. Faculties have been asked about their perception of the job orientation of online education. Interestingly, 40 percent have replied that online education is more job oriented than traditional education, whereas 30 percent have opposed it. About 84 percent of the faculty members

have agreed that responses to student questions may be delayed by hours or even days in an online learning situation whereas it may be instantaneous in the conventional classroom. Also, about 60 percent of the faculty members have strongly agreed that face-to-face conversation or contact with the instructor is necessary for proper learning. Almost 90 percent of the faculty members have agreed that it is possible to train young software developers and support them with the necessary technical instruments to develop usable online education system in Bangladesh. Also, faculties have viewed their concern about present infrastructure situation of Bangladesh. About 94 percent have strongly agreed that there is scarcity of high quality internet infrastructure and networking in Bangladesh which are pre-conditions for the development of online education system.

7.2 The Perceptions of Students about Online Education

We have surveyed students of different ages starting from 17 years in order to understand their perceptions about online education. Out of them, 56 percent are male students and the rest 44 percent are female students. We have experienced some positive responses from them about online education. Students have been asked whether it is possible to implement a better education system in Bangladesh through online education. Approximately, 68 percent of the students have agreed that online education can help to implement a better education system in Bangladesh. Almost 63 percent of the students surveyed have agreed that online education will help them eligible for the job market better than traditional education system. About 57 percent of the students have agreed that global knowledge sharing is possible through online education, whereas 15 percent have disagreed. Students have shown mixed responses about the costing of online education. About 43 percent of the students have replied that online education will be less expensive than traditional education, 27 percent have made no comment on it, and 30 percent have replied that online education will be expensive. Students have been asked about their perception of the job orientation of online education. Interestingly, 62 percent have replied that online education is more job oriented than traditional education, whereas 33 percent have opposed it. About 89 percent of the students have agreed that responses to their questions by the instructors may be delayed by hours or even days in an online learning situation whereas it may be instantaneous in the conventional classroom. Also, about 71 percent of the students have strongly agreed that face-to-face conversation or contact with the

instructor is necessary for proper learning. About 64 percent of the students have agreed that they are ready to learn anywhere, anytime. Social-physical interaction in education system is very important for the development of the future of students. About 78 percent of the students have agreed that students in online education courses may feel isolated or miss the social-physical interaction that comes with attending a traditional classroom.

7.3 The Perceptions of Guardians about Online Education

For our research work, we have also surveyed guardians of students to know their perceptions about online education. About 86 percents of the guardians surveyed have replied that they are concerned about the tuition fees of online education. About 54 percent of the guardians have replied that online education can be as effective as in-person instruction in helping students learning, whereas 46 percent have opposed it. About 56 percent of the guardians have replied that they are doubtful about the quality and acceptance of online education, whereas the rest 44 percent are hopeful of the quality and acceptance of online education. Interestingly, about 78 percent of the guardians have replied that online education can help their children eligible for the job market better than traditional education.

8.0 Prospects of Online Education in Bangladesh

The challenges facing developing countries like Bangladesh is how to expand the higher education system throughout the country. The expansion of higher education through public institutions has its limitations, given the fiscal capacity of the country. The option then is to expand higher education relying on non-state resources such as the promotion of online education. Technological advances and their availability may provide the opportunities for people to study at their own pace. Bangladesh as a country has opportunities to improve in the areas of online education.

8.1 General Educational Perspective

Recently, many traditional education systems have shifted towards new methods of teaching and learning through ICTs especially in the private education sectors of Bangladesh. Today, the recent developments of ICT have enabled us to carry out various educational functions efficiently and easily. By using internet we can get information of any course or program of study, know the college/University and its faculty and facilities, and

select a program. The faculties can deliver course materials, organize course discussions with students online through various means such as Learning Feedback System (LFS). In Bangladesh, the educational functions such as course information(prospectus), admission, registration, teaching and learning, formative and achievement evaluation have been started with the help of ICT. So, it can be said that there is a good opportunity to implement online education system in Bangladesh. Currently, it is possible to develop course curriculum by taking into consideration the recent global changes and ICT revolution.

8.2 Students' Expectations

Today, students are well-informed of global education systems. They expect a global education environment at home in Bangladesh. They expect a world class education system in Bangladesh without going abroad. Online education system has the potential to meet the Bangladeshi students' needs and expectations by addressing their educational problems. It may provide alternative ways of communicating with teachers and fellow students, provide a greater variety of learning resources and modalities, extended the flexibility and quality of group-work, and improved the opportunities for providing students with feedback on assessment tasks. Well trained teachers with positive outlook on ICT are likely to play a vital role in this task.

8.3 The Learners' Perspective

Online education provides the courses round the clock i.e. 7 days a week and 24 hours a day, which can attract working peoples, students and even individuals. Learners can access the materials in their own time and study at their own pace and place. The courses provided in this system may be of diversified topics, that can attract the large crowd from all the backgrounds. Once the content of the course has been uploaded on the server, it is relatively inexpensive to distribute domestically and worldwide. Also, the contents can be easily and regularly updated and instantly available to all learners.

Online education helps students save on the time required for traveling to and from the institutes.

In this regard, those people, who are on the jobs, or cannot go to regular college or university for certain issues, can easily opt for some online courses of their choice. A student can manage his day time activities, jobs and responsibilities with his online assignments and educational tasks

easily. The students have the flexibility of carrying out their course studies from the comfort of their homes. It can be beneficial for professionals as it allows them to learn without having to attend classes which may interfere with their work schedules. These courses can also help gain advanced knowledge on new procedures and developments which in turn improve performance. The curriculum can give practical solutions based on day-to-day situations encountered by others in the work environment. Since courses offered are often customized to specific industry and sometimes to specific companies they tend to be highly result-oriented. Career professionals are already operating in full time schedules and online courses allow them to balance their learning with their work and increase their skills.

8.4 The Institution Perspective

The internet revolution has drastically changed every aspect of our lives, and we can see it in the changing business practices, banking, retailing and now in education. In this process, the university or other educational institution can offer programs on the web, and students are provided with study materials electronically. These institutions have the potentiality or capacity to implement online education. Furthermore, the online education is cost effective as well. In the online education, universities may enjoy certain cost advantages. In the traditional classroom based education system, there requires class room arrangements, utility costing and other overhead costs. In online education system, the institutions can avoid these expenses. The study material, books and research papers can be downloaded from the portals, once a student is registered. So, the students save a lot of cost in terms of books and study material as well.

9.0 Challenges of Online Education in Bangladesh

Online education in the universities and educational institutes of the developed countries are getting popularity day by day. To implement effective online education system in Bangladesh in the same way as it has been implemented in numerous developed countries, there is a need to understand the challenges of online education. We have identified different challenges of online education which have been discussed below:

9.1 Course Development

One of the challenges of online education is related to the course development. The first issue is the curriculum which stipulates much of

the course actions and content. There is a necessity of developing new curricula specifically designed for an online education thereby showing awareness that it is different from traditional class-room based teaching. The subject content of the course also matters and refers to what will actually be taught or learned. The content should be interesting and relevant, accurate, up to date and in line with the needs of future employers. There is a need for interesting learning interactions, frequent follow-ups, teacher interventions and continuous assessments.

9.2 Student Concerns

An important factor is the priority of the students in their activities. Having enough time for education is an important predictor of a student's learning and it is proved that those who study more hours are generally more successful in their studies. Sometimes, they face big problems in arrangement of their time due to conflicting priorities with work and family commitments. Another concern is the students' economic conditions for studying. Financial difficulties and lack of student funding can be a predictor of student failure to study. The English proficiency of students, specially the students of rural areas of Bangladesh, are not up to the mark which may hinder the application of online education system in Bangladesh. The students also need some technological confidence, just having access to the technology is obviously not enough. The students also need to have the necessary computer skills and feel confident in using computers. For example, they must be able to use a variety of search engines and be comfortable navigating on the World Wide Web, as well as be familiar with Newsgroups, and email. In Bangladesh, students of urban areas specially in Dhaka city are technologically sound, whereas, students in rural areas have lack of technological knowledge. Lack of experience with computers can be a major hindrance for learning especially for students in rural areas of Bangladesh. A further challenge that is related to the students' personal characteristics which has an impact on the students' performance is the home environment. A stable and supportive study environment affects online education to a very large extent. Because of family conditions, a student has to support his family in Bangladesh.

It can be said that an online method of education can be a highly effective alternative medium of education for the mature, self-disciplined students which places a greater responsibility on the them. In order to successfully participate in an online program, student must be well organized, self-

motivated, and possess a high degree of time management skills in order to keep up with the pace of the course. For these reasons, online education may not be appropriate for the students who are dependent learners and have difficulty assuming the responsibilities.

9.3 Problems of Student feedback

Online education system does not offer immediate student feedback. In a traditional classroom setting, a student's performance can be immediately assessed through questions and informal testing. With online education, a student has to wait for feedback until the instructor has reviewed his or her work and responded to it. In our survey, both the students and faculties have shown their concerns over this matter. Also, online education does not give students the opportunity to work on oral communication skills. Students in online education courses do not get the experience of practicing verbal interaction with faculties and other students. In our survey, most of the students have replied that students in online education courses may feel isolated or miss the social-physical interaction or social engagement that comes with attending a traditional classroom.

9.4 Technological and Infrastructural Challenges

This category concerns the technological requirements, the costs of using the technologies, how they are accessed and in what language they are available. Online education system depends on hardware and software infrastructures or platforms that require constant attention. One commonly discussed factor is access to the information. In order to access the full range of the content, the reliability of the internet connection and the bandwidth are commonly required. However, due to bandwidth and connectivity limitations, downloading of engaging content to the learners may be slow. This creates frustration and boredom among learners and affects the ease of learning. Another factor is the cost of these technologies. In Bangladesh, there is a need for affordable and low-cost ICT and low user charges. Here, there is a large segment of the population that is computer illiterate. This is especially true in the rural areas. This may hinder the introduction and implementation of online education. In our survey, most of the respondents, particularly the faculties, have replied that there is scarcity of high quality internet infrastructure and networking which are pre-conditions for the development of online education. And, most of them have agreed that it is possible to train young software developers and support them with the necessary technical instruments in order to develop usable online education system.

Technological and institutional infrastructure lies at the heart of the challenges confronted by Bangladesh in promoting online education. The pace of developing reliable and speedy ICT infrastructure in the country needs to pick-up. Online education requires uninterrupted electricity power supply that the country like Bangladesh lacks for a long time. Load shedding is a macro level problem in Bangladesh that affects all sectors to a greater extent, which may hinder the prospect of online education in Bangladesh. Especially, in the rural areas of Bangladesh, there is huge problems of load shedding that may have serious impact on implementation of online education. Most of the village is not under rural electrification. So the running of technology specially computer, audio-video conferencing is very difficult to implement.

User friendly and reliable technology is critical to a successful online education program. However, breakdowns can occur at any point along the system, for example, the server which hosts the program could crash and cut all participants off from the class; a participant may access the class through a networked computer which could go down; individual PCs can have numerous problems which could limit students' access; finally, the internet connection could slow down or fail etc. In situations like these, the technology may limit the online learning process.

9.5 Awareness

Most of the illiterate people in rural areas of Bangladesh are not still familiarized with ICT. They are not friendly with technology. They are habituated in a way that providing of education should be done in conventional mode. Generally there is still a lack of awareness amongst the population, especially parents, of the effectiveness of online education. In our survey, the guardians of Dhaka city have replied that they are well informed about online education but, the parents, especially in the rural areas of Bangladesh who are familiar of the traditional learning mode, have very little knowledge about it.

10.0 Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations that should be considered in evaluating the results. This study is limited by the fact that the students who are residing and studying in Dhaka city have only been considered. Because of time constraint, we could not address and reach students from outside Dhaka city. Future research could address this limitation by considering this study with a national sample of students and producing results that would be generalizable to a national population. As sample size could

affect study results, future research should ensure that sample size is large and is selected from throughout the country. Another limitation is that faculties who are teaching at different private and public universities of Dhaka city have been considered. Faculties outside Dhaka could not be addressed for time limitation. Future research could address this limitation for better survey. As the study considers only the guardians of Dhaka city, the sample of guardians from outside Dhaka city may help to reach better result.

11.0 Conclusion

Education is considered as one of the pre-requisites for the development of a country. In Bangladesh, it is a matter of great concern about to accommodate growing number of students for quality higher education. The recent developments and awareness of the Government of Bangladesh on ICT have opened an opportunity to adopt online education for educating mass of its rural and urban people. Considering the availability and access to ICTs, the conventional public and private universities may introduce education through online side by side with face-to-face instructions in the classroom. This revolutionary approach will help to reach the dream for the development of a knowledge-based 'digital Bangladesh' by the year 2021. Online education can offer techno-based environments that expand learning opportunities and can provide top quality education through a variety of courses. In introducing online education system, a university should be well-organized and fully prepared. Before starting the program, it may give training for 1 or 2 month(s) to the students about its usage as the system is new to them. After that, students will be habituated with the system and cope with the system. Institutions of higher education should have internet connections in the offices, laboratories and classrooms. Government should intensify effort to provide uninterrupted power supply. Multiple workshops and seminars should be organized for teachers to enable them upgrade themselves in ICT. For building better Bangladesh, online education system can help to a greater extent.

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The Role of NGO Communication in Promoting Health *A Study on a Village in Bangladesh*

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Abstract: The study explores the role of NGO communication¹ in promoting rural health in Bangladesh. The role of NGO communication was measured in terms of its effects² on its target people particularly by measuring their knowledge, attitude and practice levels towards five health issues--i) water, sanitation and cleanliness, ii) food and nutrition, iii) women health iv) child health and v) epidemic health. One study group (NGOs' target people) and one control group (non-target group) were selected in the same village with similar socio-economic conditions for comparison to know the NGO communication's effects. The t-test results show that the NGO's health communication had no significant impact on the practice level of its target people towards the five health issues. It had no effect on their knowledge level towards child health though it had significant effects on the same level towards water, sanitation and cleanliness, food and nutrition, women health as well as epidemic health. The NGO communication also failed to change their attitudes towards women, child and epidemic health issues. The study finds that the NGOs did not use all of their approaches, methods and materials of health communication in the study village. The study suggests that NGOs should consider development and health holistically while formulating communication strategy for promotion of the people's health in Bangladesh.

Introduction:

Health, a holistic phenomenon is interrelated with socio-economic, politico-cultural condition and environmental spheres of man's life. Health is not only an area of medical science, but it is a subject of study under various disciplines, including sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, communicology and even, linguistics for a long. The new paradigm of health management endorses health information, people's health knowledge and awareness building as well as health

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¹ NGO communication simply comes to mean communication initiated and carried out by the NGOs. It refers to the vary process of development communication initiated by NGOs (Haque, 1999). In this process of communication both as source and receiver, NGOs play the determined role.

² Effects are concerned with the change in awareness, knowledge, attitude, skill and practice (AKASP) which are micro-socio-psychological (Mercado, 1992).

education as a vital force in the process of preventive health care. That means health is not considered mere an issue of medical science nor is measured from curative point of view. Inclusion of preventive measures in overall health promotion makes communication a vital component since preventive measures incorporate psycho-behavioural aspects, which largely fall into the domain of communication (Haque, 1999). A complex interrelationship exists among communication, health and development. In fact, communication assists development of societies (Tuazon, nd). Communication alone can increase the intended audience's knowledge and awareness of a health issue, problem, or solution; influence perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that may change social norms; prompt action; demonstrate or illustrate healthy skills; reinforce knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour; show the benefit of behaviour change; advocate a position on a health issue or policy; increase demand or support for health services; refute myths and misconceptions and strengthen organisational relationships (NCI, nd). When communication used for the peoples' health promotion is called health communication, which is part of study of almost every human discipline. Schiavo (2007) says:

"Health communication is a multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach to reach different audiences and share health-related information with the goal of influencing, engaging and supporting individuals, communities, health professionals, special groups, policy makers and the public to champion, introduce, adopt, or sustain a behavior, practice or policy that will ultimately improve health outcomes."

Health communication is an extremely broad research area, examining many different levels and channels of communication in a wide range of social contexts. The primary levels for health communication analysis include intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organisational, and societal communication (Kreps et. al., 1998). Health communication inquiry involves examination of a broad range of communication channels. Face-to-face communication between providers and consumers, members of health care teams, and support group members are the focus of many health communication studies. A broad range of personal (telephone, mail, fax, e-mail) and mass (radio, television, film, billboards) communication media are also the focus of health communication inquiry (Kreps et. al., 1998).

In Bangladesh, extreme density of population, massive poverty and low rate of literacy makes people highly affected to various diseases. Despite of public health care services, Bangladesh is still lagging in health care services for the poor as well as the affluent. Because, all infrastructures of the state-run hospitals remain unused due to lack of physicians, medicines, referral system, maintenance and equipment (National Health Policy 2011). Even, according to the "Medical Equipment Survey 2012 of World Bank, more than half of the medical equipment in public hospitals of Bangladesh remains dysfunctional, unused or underused. The government's existing health facilities do not fulfill the people's demand also due to misappropriation of fund, low quality service, lack of cordiality and many other reasons. With scores of key health programmes stymied by corruption, mismanagement and political interference, the Bangladesh government was to outsource projects involving \$200 million to NGOs (IANS, 2006). These circumstances paved the way for the NGOs to intervene into the health sector taking health as one of their prioritised development agenda. Considering the existing realities, the NGOs do not confine their responses only to curative measures, rather, they have framed policies to generate preventive actions among the people by bringing them under their extensive health education or health communication programmes. With nourishing this view, they have been using all the available means of communication ranging from mass media to folk ones (Haque, 2009).

In Bangladesh, hundreds of NGOs engaged in health communication particularly for the grassroots. NGOs claim themselves as the people-centered organisations. Most of the NGOs have health programmes, in which building of health awareness or health education or health communication is an integral part. NGOs' successes in the health promotion have been widely acclaimed through vast body of NGO literatures (Haque, 2009). But there exists an undeniable gap between the rhetoric and reality. To identify the reasons of this inconsistency along with other factors, communication and its functioning process should be critically researched. Though NGOs' awareness in promoting health at various levels has been investigated by researchers, only a few of these studies focused on the NGO's health communication process which is considered the catalyst in promoting people's health. Specially, earlier studies have failed to address NGO's health communication process rather NGOs' own researchers investigated only their project impact on the certain health issues (Haque, 1999). This visibly creates a knowledge

gap to understand a major part of the NGO's efforts. This creates the logical ground to conduct this study.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

- to know the NGO's health communication approaches, methods and materials³ to explore its role in the study village;
- to find out the effects of NGO communication on health related knowledge, attitude and practices of its target people in the study village;

3.0 Methods and Materials

Bera Bonkul village⁴ in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj, a northern district of Bangladesh, was selected purposively for the study. Three NGOs BRAC, PROSHIKA and Rajshahi based Association for Community Development (ACD) were taken under the study as these three NGOs had health communication activities in the study village. Thirty-five women members of the NGOs were selected as the respondents as they were the target groups (TG) of their health communication activities.

A non-target group (non-TG) comprising thirty-five women was selected from the same village randomly for comparison to the TG. The women under non-TG did not involve with any NGO's activities in the village and the outside. The women who were not covered under the NGOs' health communication activities had socio-economic background and access to mass media similar to the study group (TG) which were later cross-checked and showed through house-to-house survey data and analysis.

The role of NGO communication was measured in terms of its effects on the target people particularly by measuring knowledge, attitude and practices towards the three NGOs selected health messages under five health issues. The five health issues were:

³ Communication has a number of components that influence its effect on learning. Learning (at theoretical level) and awareness, knowledge, attitude, participation, practice and skill (at the conceptual level) should be considered as potentials effects of communication (Mercado, 1992). The communication components include process (one-way, two-way and three-way), elements (source, message, channel, receiver), materials (lecture, discussion, visit etc), approaches (individual, group, mass) and strategies.

Health communication activities of the three NGOs in the village were taken as the unit of analysis of the study.

1. Water, sanitation and cleanliness 2. Food and nutrition 3. Women health 4. Child health 5. Epidemic health.

The health messages were collected from the NGOs' field offices and headquarters. Then more common health messages, which had been disseminated among their women members, were selected and categorised into the five health issues for testing.

These health messages were tested on the respondents to know the role of NGO's health communication specially for measuring knowledge, attitude and practices of the NGOs' women beneficiaries. The role of NGO communication was also measured by exploring health communication approaches, methods and materials of the NGOs used in the study village.

Two interview schedules were used for collecting the basic socio-economic-demographic data and health communication activities from the village and the NGOs' offices. Another interview schedule was used for measuring knowledge, attitudes, and practice of the both groups. The interview schedule was pre-tested on ten respondents (five in study group and five in control group).

3.1 Measuring Knowledge⁵: Different types of questions are used for measuring knowledge. These types are similar to those used by teachers in measuring knowledge gained by students (Mercado, 1992). Among the types described by Mercado, multiple-choice questions were used in this study for measuring knowledge level of the respondents. The respondents were asked to choose the right and best answer among three or more. For example: What types of latrine are used to prevent disease? a. Sanitary (pacca) b. Pit (open) c. Other open latrines.

When all the choices of the question were equally right, any one of them was counted the right answer. Example: Please say at least one way of water purification a. Boiling b. Filtering c. Mixing alum d. Mixing bleaching powder e. Don't know.

If the respondent was unable to name at least one way of water purification, the answer was not counted.

Knowledge was measured in terms of the number of exact answers to a series of questions on a health issue presented to the respondents. The

Knowledge is one of the most important human variable that is affected by information. Knowledge refers to the amount of facts or information about an idea object or person, which a person knows or possesses (Mercado, 1992).

number of correct answers was counted. And a numerical weight was assigned for each question. If the respondent could give appropriate answer of any question 1 was assigned for the question.

3.2 Measuring Attitude⁶ : Attitude can be measured by a questionnaire or interview schedules with a series of opinionated statements towards a person, an object or an idea (Mercado, 1992). For measuring attitude towards a health issue under this study, the respondent was asked to indicate her feeling towards the statement in such terms or dichotomies as agree or disagree, believe or disbelieve and like or dislike etc. Using the Likert scale, the respondent was asked to respond to each of the statements in terms of five degrees of agreement/believe/like or disagreement/disbelieve/dislike. Each statement was worded positively about health. For example:

Do you agree that one may be affected by diarrhoea or dysentery after drinking polluted water? The respondent could respond in any one of the following categories.

a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. No comment d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree.

The above categories of responses were assigned weights that were, strongly agree =5, agree =4, no comment =3, disagree =2, strongly disagree =1.

3.3 Measuring Practice: Mainly two types of questions were used for measuring practice level of the respondents towards the health messages. Such as: 'Yes' or 'No' type and multiple choice questions. For example:

Do you eat extra and nutritious food during pregnancy? a. Yes b. No.

When the above question was not applicable for a respondent, she was asked an alternative question as Had you said anybody to take extra and nutritious food in pregnancy period? a. Yes b. No. If a respondent said yes, practice score of the question was counted too. Because, the respondent advocated the health practice to others.

Another type of measurement of practice questions was the multiple type, which was similar to those of knowledge question. In measuring the practice level, a numerical weight 1 has been assigned for each question.

⁶ Attitude is another variable that is usually affected by information. Attitude is learned predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular person, object or idea (Roberts, 1995). That means attitudes represent primarily a positive or negative evaluation of an individual, behaviour, belief or thing.

3.4 Hypothesis

It could be argued that if the socio-demographic characteristics of two groups of people are similar and their exposure to communication media is different, the ultimate impact on the people's attitude, knowledge and practice would be different. This difference could be attributed to the functioning of the different medium or media to which people of a group, have been exposed in addition to the media common to the two. If this difference is significant, the role of that or those particular medium or media can be described as significant and the vice-versa.

In Bangladesh, the NGOs engaged in health communication try to influence the people's knowledge, attitude and practices related to health simultaneously. Their health communication messages are purposively disseminated among their target people. So, the role of the NGO communication in health promotion can be measured in terms of differences between health related knowledge, attitude and practice of their target group (TG) and non-target group (non- TG) having the similar access to mass media and socio-demographic characteristics. On the basis of this conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were made.

H1: In general, knowledge level of TG would be higher than the knowledge level of non-TG on each health issue.

H2: In general attitude level of TG would be higher than the attitude level of non-TG on each health issue.

H3: In general practice level of TG would be higher than the practice level of non-TG on each health issue.

For testing of the above hypotheses, the t-test was used by applying SPSS programme of the computer. Data were collected both from primary and secondary sources using questionnaire, interview and observation method. Different statistical tools were used for analysing the data.

4.0 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of TG and non-TG

It is important to find out whether the socio-demographic characteristics between the study group (TG) and control group (non-TG) were the same or having significant differences.

4.1 Age, sex and religion: All the respondents interviewed from TG and non-TG were married women and Muslims. The age of the respondents both from TG and non-TG ranged from 20 to 53 years. The age ranges indicated that the respondents were young and middle aged women. The mean age of women in the TG was 31.14 years while that of women in non-TG was 32.29 years.

4.2 Respondents' education: Table-1 presents the respondents level of education in the two groups classified into seven categories.

Table-1: Percentage distribution of the respondents by level of education.

Level of education	TG (%)	non-TG(%)
Can't read and write	5.71	28.57
Can sign only	62.86	34.29
Primary	20	17.14
Lower Secondary	5.71	11.43
Secondary	2.85	5.71
Higher Secondary	2.85	2.85
Higher education	0	0

Source: Field survey

Table-1 shows that the two groups of women were similar levels of education approximately. Only a notable difference found as more women (62.86%) in TG were able to put signature than in non-TG (34.29%).

4.3 Respondents' employment status: Apart from their household activities, 5.71 percent of the respondents in TG worked outside home while only 2.85 percent worked outside home in non-TG (Table-2).

Table-2: Percentage distribution of the respondents by their employment status

Work status	TG(%)	non-TG(%)
Work outside home	5.71	2.85
Household work	94.29	97.14

Source: Field survey

4.4 Husband's occupation: Table-3 shows that among the husbands of the respondents in TG, the business profession was the highest (45.71%), followed by agriculture (34.29%), day labourer (11.43%), other professions (5.71%) and service (2.86%). The corresponding percentages in non-TG were 42.86 percent, 37.14 percent, 8.57 percent, 2.86 percent and 8.57 percent respectively.

Table-3: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their husbands' occupation

Husband's occupation	TG(%)	Non-TG(%)
Business	45.71	42.86
Agriculture	34.29	37.14
Day labourer	11.43	8.57
Service	2.86	8.57
Others	5.71	2.86
Total %	100	100
N	35	35

Source: Field survey

Data presented in the Table-3 reveals that no significant differences were found in terms of husbands' occupation between the two groups.

4.5 Land ownership:

Table-4: Percentage distribution of the respondents by their land ownership

Land owned (in Bigha)	TG (%)	Non-TG (%)
Only Homestead	60	25.71
1-5	25.71	48.57
6-10	11.43	5.71
11-15	2.86	20
Mean	2.05	4.51

Source: Field survey

Data presented in the Table-4 shows that 60 percent woman in TG and about 25 percent in non-TG had only homestead. It was found that in TG about 25 percent families had one to five bighas of land while 11 percent six to ten and two percent had 11 to 15 bighas of land. The corresponding percentages in non-TG were about 25 percent, 48 percent, five percent and 20 percent respectively. On an average, families in TG were 2.05 bighas of land while families in non-TG had 4.51 bighas of land.

4.6 Income: The ranges of monthly income of the respondents' family were found Tk 450 to 8,000. On the basis of their income, the respondents from both the groups were classified into three categories given in Table-5.

Table-5: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to their income

Income level	TG (%)	Non-TG (%)
Below Tk 1,000	22.86	20
Tk 1,000-Tk 4,000	71.43	65.71
Tk 5,000-Tk 8,000	5.71	14.29
Total percentage	100.0	100.0
N	35	35

Source: Field survey

Data shows that monthly income of about 23 percent respondents from TG and 20 percent from non-TG was below Tk 1,000. The monthly income of the 71.43 percent respondents from TG ranged between Tk 1,000 to 4,000 while 65.71 percent earned between the amount in non-TG, 5.71 percent respondents from TG earned ranges between Tk. 5,000 to 8,000 while 14.29 percent respondents from non-TG earned the amount. Data proved that no significant difference in monthly income between the TG and non-TG was found.

4.7 Access to mass media: Researches proved that the mass media plays vital roles in changing knowledge, attitudes and practice. So, it is important to compare mass media accessibility between the two groups. Table-6 shows the accessibility of the respondents to mass media.

Table-6: Percentage distribution of the respondents by their mass media accessibility

Access to mass media	TG		Non-TG	
	N	%	N	%
Radio set	13	37.14	12	34.29
Television set	3	8.57	5	14.29
Newspaper subscription	0	0	0	0
Total	16	45.71	17	48.58
N	35	100	35	100

Source: Field survey

Table-8: Communication approaches and methods used by the NGOs in the village for health promotion

Approaches	Communication Methods as per Mercado (1992)	Used by the NGOs	Used by the NGOs in the village
1. Individual approach	Home visit, Office visit, Chance conversation, Telephone call and Personal letter	<u>BRAC</u> : Home visit, Office visit, Chance conversation <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Home visit, Office visit, Chance conversation <u>ACD</u> : Home visit, Office visit, Chance conversation	<u>BRAC</u> : Home visit <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Home visit <u>ACD</u> : Home visit
2. Group approach	Lecture, discussion, Lecture-discussion, Small group meeting, workshop, Study tour, Role playing, Method demonstration, Result demonstration.	<u>BRAC</u> : Discussion, Orientation, Rally, Health forum, Small group meeting, Seminar and Workshop. <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Discussion, Small group meeting, Seminar, Workshop. <u>ACD</u> : Discussion, Small group meeting, Seminar, Workshop.	<u>BRAC</u> : Small group meeting, Training. <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Small group meeting, Training. <u>ACD</u> : Small group meeting, Training.
3. Mass media approach	Newspaper, Magazine, Radio, TV, Film, Bill board, Books	<u>BRAC</u> : Radio, TV, Books and magazine, <u>PROSHIKA</u> : TV, Books <u>ACD</u> : Books	<u>BRAC</u> : not used <u>PROSHIKA</u> : not used <u>ACD</u> : not used
4. Folk media approach	Traditional drama, Debates, Poems, Riddles, Folk dances, Folk songs	<u>BRAC</u> : Folk tales <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Folk songs, Folk tales <u>ACD</u> : Traditional drama	<u>BRAC</u> : not used <u>PROSHIKA</u> : not used <u>ACD</u> : not used

Source: Field and head office level officials of the three NGOs

Table-8 reveals that only a small number of communication methods were being used by the NGOs ---BRAC, PROSHIKA and ACD --in the village. For applying the individual approach, doctors, health assistance and field staff had contacted their health-seeking people at homes (home visit). Weekly and monthly group meetings were also arranged for communicating health messages.

NGOs were reluctant to use all the communication approaches and methods in each programme area as part of health their communication activities. So, they used only limited number of methods and approaches in the village.

5.2 Communication materials for health promotion: Communication materials are teaching aids that are used by trainers in improving the effectiveness of their communication efforts (Mercado, 1992). Communication materials are the vital force in changing peoples' behaviour.

Table-9: Communication materials used by the NGOs in the village for health promotion

Communication Materials as per Mercado, 1992)	Used by the NGOs	Used by the NGOs in the village
1. Print materials are- Charts - Black boards flash card - Ludu Maps - Flip chart Graphs - Models Posters - Objects Bulletin boards -Diagrams Leaflet	<u>BRAC</u> : Flash card, Posters Leaflet, Flip chart, Module, Brochure and Book. <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Flash card, Posters, Leaflet, Flip chart <u>ACD</u> : Flash card, Posters Leaflet, Ludu, Flip chart	<u>BRAC</u> : Posters and Flip chart <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Posters, <u>ACD</u> : Posters, Flash card, Ludu and Flip chart
Electronic materials are- Videos - Slides Cassette tapes - Film	<u>BRAC</u> : Videos and Slides <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Videos <u>ACD</u> : not used.	<u>BRAC</u> : not used. <u>PROSHIKA</u> : not used. <u>ACD</u> : not used.
Other materials are- Festoon Cap Banner	<u>BRAC</u> : Festoon, Cap, Banner and T-shirt <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Festoon, Cap, Banner <u>ACD</u> : Festoon, Cap Banner	<u>BRAC</u> : Festoon, Cap, Banner . <u>PROSHIKA</u> : Festoon, Banner <u>ACD</u> : Festoon, Cap, Banner

Source: Field and head office level officials of the three NGOs

Table-9 reveals that BRAC, PROSHIKA and ACD used various types of communication materials for promoting health. Among them, only posters, flash cards, flip charts, ludus, banners, festoons and caps were used by the NGOs as communication materials in the village for health awareness.

5.3 Hypothesis testing

Table-10: Difference in mean value of knowledge level between TG and non-TG on water-sanitation and cleanliness issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	4.60	0.85	68	2.77*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	3.97	1.04				

* P Significant at .01 level

Table-10 shows that at 1 percent significant level, the table value is 2.64 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 2.77. This value is higher than the table value 2.64. Therefore, the difference in mean value of TG and non-TG is significant at 0.01 level. So, the knowledge level of TG is higher than the knowledge level of non-TG on water-sanitation and cleanliness issue (H1). We may conclude that there was a significant effect of NGO communication in increasing knowledge of the target group towards water-sanitation and cleanliness issue.

Table-11: Difference in mean value of attitude level between TG and non-TG on water-sanitation and cleanliness issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	25.89	1.89	68	2.86*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	24.43	2.34				

*P Significant at 0.01 level

Table-11 shows that the computed value of t is 2.86. Here, computed value of is higher than that of the table value (2.84) with a df of 68. The difference in mean value of TG and non-TG is significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, the attitude level of TG is higher than the attitude level of non-TG on water-sanitation and cleanliness issue (H2). So, we may conclude that there was an effect of NGO communication on their target group to make favourable attitudes towards water-sanitation and cleanliness issue.

Table-12: Difference in mean value of practice level between TG and non-TG on water-sanitation and cleanliness issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Df	T value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	3.34	1.03	68	0.22*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	3.29	1.18				

* P Not significant

A t to be significant at 0.05 level with a df of 68 requires a table value of 2.00. Here the computed value of t is 0.22. This value is less than the tabulated value. That means, there is no significant difference in mean scores of the TG and non-TG at the attitude level. Therefore, the hypothesis (H3) is rejected. So, we may conclude that NGO communication had no effect on their target people to change practices towards water-sanitation and cleanliness issue.

Table-13: Difference in mean value of knowledge level between TG and non-TG on food and nutrition issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Df	T value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	4.80	1.26	68	2.33*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	4.11	1.21				

*P Significant at .05 level

Table-13 shows that the computed value of t is 2.33. This value is higher than the table value 2.00 to be significant at 0.05 level with a df of 68. Therefore, the difference here, is significant at 0.05 level. So, the knowledge level of TG is higher than the knowledge level of non-TG on food and nutrition issue (H1). We may conclude that there was an effect of NGO communication in increasing knowledge on food and nutrition issue.

Table-14: Difference in mean values of attitude level between TG and non-TG on food and nutrition issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	T value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	25.06	3.09	68	2.23*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	23.54	2.58				

*P significant at .05 level.

Table-14 shows that the t to be significant at .05 level with a df of 68 its value should be 2.00. Here the computed value of t is 2.33. This computed value of t (2.33) is bigger than the table value (2.00) of t . Therefore, the difference in mean value of TG and non-TG is significant at 0.05 level. So, the attitude level of TG is higher than the attitude level of non-TG on food and nutrition issue (H2). We may conclude that there was a positive effect of NGO communication on their target people to make favourable attitudes towards food and nutrition issue.

Table-15: Difference in mean value of practice level between TG and non-TG on food and nutrition issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
G	35	4.37	1.17	68	1.11*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	4.09	0.98				

* P not significant

Table-15 shows that a t to be significant at .05 level with a df of 68 its value should be 2.00. Here the computed value of t is 1.11, which is smaller than the table value 2.00. Therefore, difference in mean scores of TG and non-TG is not significant at the practice level. So, the hypothesis (H3) is rejected. We may conclude that NGO communication had no effect on their target people to change behaviour towards food and nutrition issue.

Table-16: Difference in mean value of knowledge level between TG and non-TG on women health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	5.26	0.85	68	2.70*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	4.54	1.31				

*P significant at 0.01 level

Table-16 shows that a t to be significant at .05 level with a df of 68 its value should be 2.00. Here the computed value of t is 2.70, which is higher than the table value (2.00). Therefore, the difference in mean value of TG and non-TG is significant at 0.01 level. So, the knowledge level of TG is higher than the knowledge level of non-TG on women health issue (H1). We may conclude that there was a significant effect of NGO communication in increasing knowledge on women health issue.

Table-17: Difference in mean values of attitude level between TG and non-TG on women health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	24.23	2.61	68	1.06*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	23.37	3.99				

* P not significant

Table-17 shows that at 5 percent significant level, the tabulated value of t is 2.00 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 1.06. This value is less than the tabulated value of t. Therefore, the difference in mean scores of TG and non-TG is not significant at the attitude level. So, the hypothesis (H2) is rejected. We may conclude that there was no effect of NGO communication on their target people to make favourable attitude towards women health issue.

Table-18: Difference in mean value of practice level between TG and non-TG on women health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	4.29	1.49	68	1.42*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	3.80	1.37				

*P not significant

Table-18 shows that at 5 percent significant level the table value is 2.00 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 1.42, which is smaller than the table value 2.00. Therefore, the difference in mean score between the TG and non-TG is not significant. So, the hypothesis (H3) is rejected. We may conclude that NGO communication had no effect in increasing practices towards women health issue.

Table-19: Difference in mean value of knowledge level between TG and non-TG on child health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	4.69	0.93	68	1.09	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	4.40	1.24				

*Not significant

Table-19 demonstrates that at 5 percent significant level, the tabulated value of t is 2.00 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 1.09. This value is less than the tabulated value of t . Therefore, the difference in mean value between TG and non-TG is not significant. So, the hypothesis (H1) is rejected. We may conclude that there was no positive effect of NGO communication on knowledge level towards child health issue.

Table-20: Difference in mean value of attitude level between TG and non-TG on child health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	24.97	2.84	68	1.91*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	23.60	3.16				

*Not significant

Table-20 shows that at 5 percent significant level, the tabulated value of t is 2.00 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 1.91, which is smaller than the tabulated value 2.00. Therefore, the difference in mean score of TG and non-TG is not significant at the attitude level. So, the hypothesis (H2) is rejected. We may conclude that the NGO communication could not make favourable attitudes towards child health.

Table-21: Difference in mean value of practice level between TG and non-TG on child health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	5.34	0.68	68	0.80	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	5.17	1.07				

*Not significant

Table-21 shows that at 5 percent significant level, the tabulated value of t is 2.00 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 0.80, which is smaller than the tabulated value 2.00. Therefore, the difference in mean score of TG and non-TG is not significant at the attitude level. So, the hypothesis (H3) is rejected. We may conclude that there was no effect of NGO communication on practice level towards child health issue.

Table-22: Difference in mean value of knowledge level between TG and non-TG on epidemic health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	3.89	1.16	68	2.07*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	3.31	1.16				

*P significant at 0.05 level

Table-22 shows that at 5 percent significant level the tabulated value is 2.00 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 2.07, which is higher than the tabulated value 2.00. Therefore, the difference in mean score of TG and non-TG is significant at 0.05 level. So the knowledge level of TG is higher than that of the non-TG on epidemic health issue (H1). We may conclude that NGO communication had some effects on knowledge level of their target people towards epidemic health issue.

Table-23: Difference in mean value of attitude level between TG and non-TG on epidemic health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	23.83	3.54	68	1.99*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	22.17	3.41				

*Not significant

Table-23 reveals that at 5 percent significant level, the tabulated value of t is 2.00 with a df of 68. Here the computed value of t is 1.99, which is higher than the tabulated value 2.00. Therefore, the difference in mean value of both groups is not significant at the attitude level. So, the hypothesis (H2) is rejected. We may conclude that NGO communication could not make favorable attitude on epidemic health issue.

Table-24: Difference in mean value of practice level between TG and non-TG on epidemic health issue

Groups	N	Mean	SD	df	t value	t (05%)	t (01%)
TG	35	5.31	0.76	68	1.42*	2.00	2.64
Non-TG	35	5.03	0.92				

*Not significant

Table-24 shows that at 5 percent level of significance with a df of 68 the tabulated value of t is 2.00. Here the computed value of t is 1.42, which is less than the tabulated value of t. Therefore, the difference in mean value of both groups is not significant in the practice level. So, the hypothesis (H3) is rejected. We may conclude that there was no effect of NGO communication to change behaviour of their target people towards epidemic health issue.

6.0 Major Findings

Table-25: t-test results on the effects of NGO communication at a glance

Health issues	Knowledge level	Attitude level	Practice level
Water, sanitation and cleanliness	significant	significant	not significant
Food and nutrition	significant	significant	not significant
Women health	significant	not significant	not significant
Child health	not significant	not significant	not significant
Epidemic health	significant	not significant	not significant

Source: t-test results after measuring NGOs' target people's knowledge, attitude and practice towards the five health issues in the study village.

The t-test results shows that NGO's health communication in the study village had influenced the people's health related knowledge towards water-sanitation and cleanliness, food and nutrition, women health and epidemic health issues but it failed to increase knowledge towards child health issue. The NGO communication had increased attitude level of its target people towards water-sanitation and cleanliness as well as food and nutrition issues but it failed to change attitude towards women, child and epidemic health issues. Many causes can be blamed for it. The most vital one was the content of the many women and child health related messages were addressed to the taboos. So, in some cases, NGO communication created impediments instead of bringing positive change. Because, Rogers (1973) mentioned that "taboo communication that may be functional for society is often very dysfunctional for certain individuals in that society." The t-test results show that the NGO's health communication totally failed to change the target people's behaviour (practice) towards all the six health issues taken under the study.

Secondly, if the messages are not adequately comprehensible it cannot change people's health attitude. Eagly & Chaiken (1975) said, "... the message must be understandable. If people do not comprehend a message, then little attitude change can occur." The NGO workers mainly disseminated health messages among the target women at meetings. But they could not help adequately clarify the meaning of these messages. It was observed that some of the NGO workers who supervised such programmes in the village lack of health education and training. These limitations adversely affected the health programmes.

Thirdly, the NGO communication failed to change the target people's practice level towards some health issues also due lack of education and literacy as well as for existing traditional ethos. Besides, the NGOs had mainly concentrated on credit activities and giving less emphasis on health communication activities. The health messages were not well articulated and in some cases inadequate and had lack motivational inputs.

Fourthly, due to lack of economic resources many of the target people could not afford sanitary latrines, nutritious food and safe drinking water from tube-wells that hindered to bring change in behaviour of the target people.

Fifthly, women's inability to influence the decision of purchasing everyday essentials was another reason that affected the practice level.

Sixthly, traditional communication in the village remained strong enough to negate many of the ideas of the NGOs. So, the NGO communication failed to motivate the people to come out from the older beliefs and practices.

Finally, the communication approaches and methods used by the NGOs in the village were found feeble and inadequate. Lack of planning and maintaining continuity in delivering health messages and other services also were quite visible.

7.0 Recommendations

- The NGOs should bring the whole of the village under their health communication coverage. Villages in Bangladesh exist like an integrated cultural unit and if a simultaneous change of knowledge and attitude does not occur to every segment of the people, intended behaviour can not be achieved.

- The NGOs should establish a well-developed communication unit with trained and skilled communication staff to formulate effective communication policy, plan and strategy for health promotion.
- The NGOs should disseminate health messages in more acceptable and efficient way as well as respecting the people's existing cultural norms and ethos as well as indigenous health care practices. Health messages should be developed following a participatory process emphasising local dialects and cultural discourses. To make the health messages more appealing towards behavioural change, more motivational inputs should be instigated into the messages.
- NGOs' field-level staff who are assigned for communicating messages with the target people should be imparted training in health communication to ensure proper dissemination of the messages.
- To ensure positive health practices, the people's economic solvency should be ensured through more income-generating activities or they should be brought under any health insurance scheme.
- Women are the most marginalised section and they have less access to the health related decision-making process. NGOs should bring every decision maker of a family under their health communication activities.

8.0 Conclusion

Communication is the vital component of the massive efforts the NGOs have taken to bring a positive change in health sector of Bangladesh. This study proved that only communication can not produce desired results. Enhancement of the target people's economic capability must be ensured along with implementing effective health communication strategy to bring change in their knowledge, attitude and practice levels. A failure in this case will lead to generate a KAP gap. To avoid it and to really contribute to the people's health promotion, NGOs should think development and health holistically while formulating health communication strategy.

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গণতন্ত্রায়ণ : একটি তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণ (Democratization: A Theoretical Analysis)

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Abstract: The terms democracy and democratization are increasingly being used in form of government. Democracy described as a system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representative periodically elected by them. On the other hand, democratization is implemented phenomena of democratic political system. It is the transition to a more democratic political regime. Democratization may be the transition from an authoritarian regime to a full democracy, a transition from an authoritarian political system to a semi-democracy or transition from a semi-authoritarian political system to a democratic political system. So, it is said that, democratization development has often been slow, violent and marked by frequent reversals. It is influenced by various factors, including economic development, history, culture, homogeneous population, education, social equality, civil society, previous experience with democracy, election, political parties, foreign intervention etc. However, democratization ensures sustainable human development, empowerment and emancipative values. The main objective of this article is to discuss about the theoretical aspects of democracy as well as democratization.

ভূমিকা:

অসংগঠিত, বিক্ষিপ্ত ও শৃঙ্খলাহীন আদিম সমাজ ব্যবস্থাকে সুসংগঠিত, উন্নত এবং আধুনিক করার প্রয়াসে যে পদক্ষেপগুলো (যেমন-উৎপাদন ব্যবস্থার পরিবর্তন, রাষ্ট্রীয় কাঠামোর আবির্ভাব ও এর পরিবর্তন তথা সংস্কৃতির পরিবর্তন, সামগ্রিক সমাজ ব্যবস্থার পরিবর্তন) গ্রহণ করা হয়েছিল সেগুলোর মধ্যে সর্বাধিক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ছিল রাষ্ট্রীয় ব্যবস্থার আবির্ভাব এবং এর বিবর্তন ও পরিবর্তন। রাজনৈতিক ব্যবস্থার মূল উদ্দেশ্যই হলো রাষ্ট্র ব্যবস্থার সামগ্রিক উন্নয়নের মাধ্যমে জনকল্যাণ সাধন করা। জনকল্যাণ সাধনের মূল হাতিয়ার হলো সুশাসন। আর সুশাসনের প্রধান ভিত্তি হলো সরকার পরিচালনায় জনগণের অংশগ্রহণ, জনগণের নিকট সরকারের জবাবদিহি এবং স্বচ্ছতা নিশ্চিত করা। সুশাসনের ভিত্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার একমাত্র পন্থা হলো 'গণতন্ত্র'। প্রকৃত গণতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠার মাধ্যমেই জনগণের সার্বভৌমত্ব, সকল ক্ষেত্রে জনগণের অংশগ্রহণ এবং সরকারের সকল কাজে স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহি নিশ্চিত করা সম্ভব।

* প্রভাষক, রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞান বিভাগ, সাতার কলেজ, সাতার, ঢাকা

সে কারণে আধুনিক কালে বিদ্যমান বিভিন্ন শাসন ব্যবস্থার মধ্যে গণতন্ত্র তুলনামূলকভাবে বেশি জনপ্রিয় এবং জনপ্রতিনিধিত্বশীল। দার্শনিক জর্জ পাপান্দ্র বলেছেন, “সহিংসতা অথবা সন্ত্রাস গণতন্ত্রের ভিত্তি নয়। যুক্তি, ন্যায়পরায়ণতা, স্বাধীনতা, অপরের অধিকার ও উচ্চাশার প্রতি সম্মানই গণতন্ত্রের ভিত্তি।”^১ যুগে যুগে গণতন্ত্রের পদধ্বনি বিশ্বব্যাপী বিস্তার লাভ করেছে। মানুষ ধীরে ধীরে হলেও এর স্বাদ অনুভব করতে পেরেছে। হার্ভার্ড বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বিশিষ্ট রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞানী অধ্যাপক স্যামুয়েল পি হান্টিংটন (Samuel P. Huntington) বলেছেন, “বিশ্বে এখন গণতন্ত্রের Third Wave বা তৃতীয় ঢেউ চলেছে যার শুরু আশির দশকের প্রথম দিকে। এ ঢেউ শীর্ষে উঠলো ১৯৮৯ সালে যখন মধ্য এবং পূর্ব ইউরোপে কমিউনিজমের এবং তারই ধারাবাহিকতায় সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়নের পতন ঘটলো।”^২ পরবর্তী সময়ে স্নায়ুযুদ্ধের অবসান, সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়নের অসংহতি, পূর্ব ইউরোপের রাজনীতিতে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ, বহু-জাতিক কোম্পানীগুলোর কর্মকাণ্ডের প্রসার, বিশ্বব্যাপী বাজার অর্থনীতির সূচনা ও আন্তর্জাতিক সহযোগিতা বৃদ্ধি গণতন্ত্রকে যে কোন সময়ের চেয়ে অধিক বৈশ্বিক রূপ দিয়েছে। সেকারণে গণতান্ত্রিক শাসন ব্যবস্থা কেবলমাত্র শাসন ব্যবস্থার ধারণার মধ্যে আবদ্ধ না হয়ে নির্দিষ্ট সীমা অতিক্রম করে মহৎ এক আদর্শে পরিণত হয়েছে। Dr. Carlton Clymer Rodee, Dr. Totton James Anderson এবং Dr. Carl Quemby Christal প্রমুখ তাত্ত্বিকগণ গণতন্ত্রের আলোচনাকে দু’ভাবে বিভক্ত করেছেন, প্রথমত, গণতন্ত্র বলতে এক ধরনের সরকার পদ্ধতি বা ব্যবস্থাকে (One kind of governmental system) বোঝায়, যেখানে জনগণ বা অধিক সংখ্যক জনগণ রাজনৈতিক ক্ষমতার তত্ত্বাবধায়ক। দ্বিতীয়ত, গণতন্ত্র বলতে একটি জীবন ব্যবস্থা বা পদ্ধতিকে (A way of life) বোঝায়।^৩ কাজেই সাম্প্রতিক সময়ে যে কোন সমাজ ও রাজনীতিতে গণতান্ত্রিক উন্নতি রাষ্ট্রচিন্তাবিদদের ব্যাখ্যা-বিশ্লেষণের কেন্দ্রবিন্দুতে পরিণত হয়েছে।

অপর দিকে, গণতন্ত্রায়ণ হলো এমন এক প্রক্রিয়া যার মাধ্যমে একটি রাজনৈতিক ব্যবস্থা গণতন্ত্রের দিকে ধাবিত হয় অথবা কোন অগণতান্ত্রিক পরিবেশ থেকে গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের প্রক্রিয়ায় (যেমন: আন্দোলন, যুদ্ধ, বিপ্লব) অবতীর্ণ হয়ে গণতন্ত্রকে প্রতিষ্ঠা ও বাস্তবায়ন করার ক্ষেত্রে সাফল্য অর্জন করেছে। অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়ন, ইতিহাস, নির্বাচন, রাজনৈতিক দল, সামাজিক সমতা, সাংস্কৃতিক, সমজাতীয় জনসাধারণ; মধ্যবিত্ত শ্রেণী, শিক্ষা ও সুশীল সমাজ গণতন্ত্রায়ণের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উপাদান। মূলত: গণতান্ত্রিক শাসন ব্যবস্থা কার্যকর বা বাস্তবায়ন প্রক্রিয়াই হলো গণতন্ত্রায়ণ। গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া দেশের গণতন্ত্রের ধারাকে অব্যাহত রাখার জন্য, টেকসই মানব

^১ Maniruzzaman, Talukder, Politics & Security of Bangladesh, UPL, Dhaka. p.149-153.

^২ প্রান্তজ, পৃ. ১৪৯-১৫৩.

^৩ Rodee C.C ed., Introduction to Political Science, New York, Mc Grow-Hill Book company, 1973, p-93.

উন্নয়ন (sustainable human development), ক্ষমতায়ন এবং নৈতিক মূল্যবোধ বিকাশে সহায়তা করে। তাই দেশের গণতান্ত্রিক রাজনৈতিক সংস্কৃতির উন্নয়নে, রাজনৈতিক দলগুলোর গণতান্ত্রিক কর্ম উদ্যোগে উৎসাহ দানে, গণতান্ত্রিক প্রতিষ্ঠান বিনির্মাণে তথা গণতন্ত্রের প্রাতিষ্ঠানিকীকরণের প্রতি অন্তরায়সমূহ চিহ্নিতকরণ ও সমাধানের লক্ষ্যে বর্তমান প্রবন্ধে প্রথমে গণতন্ত্র সম্বন্ধে ব্যাখ্যা বিশ্লেষণ করে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়ার নানাদিক নিয়ে আলোচনা করা হয়েছে।

গণতন্ত্র: তাত্ত্বিক ধারণা

গণতন্ত্র একটি বহুমুখী ধারণা। দেশ, কাল ও তাত্ত্বিকভেদে এর ধরন ও ধারণা একেক রকম হয়ে থাকে। এক্ষেত্রে Krishna Kumar-র বক্তব্য প্রণিধানযোগ্য। তিনি বলেন-“Democracy is a concept which is not amenable to a single precise definition. With each author its meaning, contour and contents differ. One emphasizes one aspect the other another. To borrow an old expression, democracy is like a hat which has lost its shape & form because everybody wants to wear it.”^৪ Krishna Kumar এর উল্লিখিত বক্তব্যের যথার্থতা থাকা সত্ত্বেও গণতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে বিভিন্ন তাত্ত্বিকদের সংজ্ঞার আলোকে গণতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে সাধারণভাবে বলা যায় যে, গণতন্ত্র বলতে এমন একটি সরকার কাঠামোকে বুঝায় যেখানে ‘সার্বভৌম ক্ষমতা’ থাকে জনগণের হাতে, যা জনগণ প্রত্যক্ষভাবে বা পরোক্ষভাবে তাদের প্রতিনিধিদের মাধ্যমে চর্চা করে। অর্থাৎ, গণতন্ত্র হলো এমন একটি সরকার কাঠামো যা জনগণ কর্তৃক পরিচালিত ও নিয়ন্ত্রিত। গণতন্ত্রের আধুনিক রূপ হলো ‘জনপ্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক গণতন্ত্র’।

গণতন্ত্র (democracy) ধারণাটির উৎপত্তি ঘটেছে গ্রিক শব্দ demokratia থেকে যার মূল অর্থ হলো demos (জনগণ) ও kratos (শাসন)। গ্রিক ইতিহাসবিদদের মধ্যে হেরোডোটাস (Herodotus) পঞ্চম খ্রিষ্ট পূর্বাব্দে সর্বপ্রথম জনগণের শাসন বুঝাতে গণতন্ত্র শব্দটি ব্যবহার করেন। ইংরেজি ভাষায় গণতন্ত্র প্রবেশ করে ষোড়শ শতকে ফরাসি শব্দ democratic থেকে যা প্রকৃতপক্ষে গ্রিক ভাষায় উৎপত্তি লাভ করেছিল।^৫ খ্রিস্টীয় গণতন্ত্র ছিল প্রত্যক্ষ বা অংশগ্রহণমূলক, যাতে সকল নাগরিক প্রত্যক্ষভাবে সরকারি নীতি-নির্ধারণী প্রক্রিয়ায় অংশগ্রহণ করত। কিন্তু, বাস্তবে প্রাচীন খ্রিস্টীয় নিয়ম অনুসারে জনগণ বলতে স্বাধীন পুরুষ নাগরিককে বুঝাত—নারী, দাস ও অনাগরিকগণ জনগণ পদবাচ্য হত না। কাজেই প্রাচীন খ্রিস্টীয় গণতন্ত্র আধুনিক গণতন্ত্রের মতো

^৪ Kumar, Krishna (Editor), Democracy & Non-violence: A study of their Relationship, Delhi: Citizen's Peace Committee, p-216.

^৫ Mannan, Md. Abdul, Elections and Democracy in Bangladesh, Academic Press & Publishers, Dhaka, 2005, p-4

সর্বজনীন রাজনৈতিক সমতার (Universal political equality) নীতির উপর প্রতিষ্ঠিত ছিল না^৭।

আধুনিক গণতন্ত্র প্রাচীন গ্রিসীয় গণতন্ত্রের মতো প্রত্যক্ষ নয় বরং প্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক গণতন্ত্র। আধুনিক রাষ্ট্রের ব্যাপক জনসংখ্যা ও বিস্তৃত ভৌগোলিক সীমারেখার কারণে প্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক গণতন্ত্রই সবচেয়ে বেশি কার্যকর। আধুনিক অর্থে গণতন্ত্রের প্রথম প্রকাশ ঘটে সপ্তদশ শতকে ইংল্যান্ডে, আমেরিকার বিপ্লব ও ফরাসি বিপ্লবের মধ্য দিয়ে। উপরন্তু, Agreement of the people, Declaration of Independence and Declaration of the Rights of Man আধুনিক গণতন্ত্রের বিকাশে তিনটি মাইলফলক—যেগুলো জনগণের রাজনৈতিক অধিকারকে সাংবিধানিকভাবে স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছিল। তাছাড়া শিল্প বিপ্লব, রেনেসাঁ ও সংস্কার আন্দোলন আধুনিক গণতন্ত্রের গতিকে ত্বরান্বিত করেছিল।

গণতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে আমেরিকার প্রাক্তন প্রেসিডেন্ট আব্রাহাম লিংকনের (Abraham Lincoln) বিখ্যাত সংজ্ঞা 'জনগণের সরকার, জনগণের দ্বারা গঠিত সরকার, জনগণের জন্য সরকার' (Democracy is a government of the people, by the people & for the people)^৮ গণতন্ত্রের বর্তমান ধারণার উপর তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ প্রভাব বিস্তার করেছে। আব্রাহাম লিংকন তার সংজ্ঞায় যদিও সরকার ও জনগণের মধ্যকার জটিল সম্পর্কে সরলীকরণ করেছেন তথাপি জনগণই যে গণতন্ত্রের মূল বিষয় তা এ সংজ্ঞায় শুরুত্বের সাথে ব্যক্ত হয়েছে। আধুনিক অর্থে গণতন্ত্রকে মনে করা হয় শাসনের একটা প্রক্রিয়া (A process of ruling) যার মধ্যদিয়ে জনগণ নিজেদেরকে শাসন করে।

গেটেল (Gettle) বলেছেন, 'গণতন্ত্র এমন এক ধরনের সরকার যাতে সংখ্যাধিক্য জনগণ সার্বভৌম ক্ষমতা প্রয়োগের অধিকার পায়' (Democracy is that form of government in which the mass of the population possesses the right to share in the exercise of sovereign power)^৯ আবার, অধ্যাপক আর. এম. ম্যাকাইভার (R. M. MacIver) লিখেছেন—“Democracy is not a form of government, democracy is a way of life... democracy grows into its beings.”^{১০} অর্থাৎ, গণতন্ত্র শুধুমাত্র সরকার পদ্ধতি নয় বরং এটা একটি জীবন পদ্ধতিও; গণতন্ত্র এর অস্তিত্বের মধ্যেই ক্রমশঃ বিকশিত হতে থাকে। যুগ যুগ ধরে বিকশিত হবার পর গণতন্ত্র সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়।

^৭ Mannan, Md. Abdul, Elections and Democracy in Bangladesh, Academic Press & Publishers, Dhaka, 2005, p.4-5

^৮ Ranney, Austin, Governing An Introduction to Political Science, 7th ed., London, Prentic Hall International Ltd., 1996, p-94.

^৯ Mohajan, V.D., Recent Political Thought, S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 1990, p-65.

^{১০} জাহাঙ্গীর, মুহাম্মদ (সম্পাদিত), গণতন্ত্র, প্রকাশনায় মাওলা ব্রাদার্স, ঢাকা, ১৯৯৫, পৃ. ৫।

অধ্যাপক সেলীর (Seeley) মতে, “গণতন্ত্র হচ্ছে এমন এক ধরনের সরকার যেখানে সকলেরই অংশ গ্রহণের সুযোগ রয়েছে”^{১০} (Democracy is a government in which every one has a share)। কিন্তু, বাস্তবে দেখা যায় কোন শাসন ব্যবস্থাতেই সকলে অংশ গ্রহণ করতে পারে না। প্রত্যেক দেশেই অপ্রাপ্ত বয়স্ক, বিকৃত মস্তিষ্ক, সমাজদ্রোহী এবং উন্মাদ ব্যক্তিগণ শাসন কার্যে অংশ গ্রহণ হতে বঞ্চিত হয়। তবে গণতন্ত্রে জনগণের এক বিরাট অংশ শাসন কার্যে অংশ গ্রহণ করে থাকে।

আবার, লর্ড ব্রাইস (Lord Bryce) তার “Modern Democracies” নামক গ্রন্থে গণতন্ত্রকে ব্যাখ্যা করতে গিয়ে বলেন, “Democracy is that or of government in which the ruling of a state is legally vested, not in any particular class or classes, but in the members of the community as a whole.”^{১১} অর্থাৎ গণতন্ত্র এমন এক ধরনের সরকার যাতে রাষ্ট্রের শাসন ক্ষমতা আইনগত ভাবে কোন নির্দিষ্ট শ্রেণী বা শ্রেণীসমূহের হাতে নিয়োজিত না থেকে বরং সমাজের সকল সদস্যের হাতে নিয়োজিত থাকে। গণতন্ত্রের মূল কথা হলো ব্যক্তির প্রতি সম্মান প্রদর্শন। গণতান্ত্রিক শাসন ব্যবস্থায় প্রত্যেক ব্যক্তিরই গুরুত্ব ও প্রয়োজনীয়তা রয়েছে। এতে জনগণ বা বংশগত কারণে কাউকে উচ্চাসনে অধিষ্ঠিত করা হয় না। কাজেই আমরা দেখি যে, গণতন্ত্রে জনগণের প্রাধান্য বিদ্যমান এবং জনগণই সকল ক্ষমতার উৎস; জনগণই সার্বভৌম।

রাজনৈতিক সমতার দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে গণতন্ত্রকে সংজ্ঞায়িত করা হয়। এতে মনে করা হয় যে, সকল ব্যক্তিই রাজনৈতিক দিক দিয়ে সমান। ধর্ম, বর্ণ, গোত্র, লিঙ্গ, আয় নির্বিশেষে সকল ব্যক্তির নির্বাচিত করার ও নির্বাচিত হওয়ার সমান অধিকার থাকবে। এজন্য গণতন্ত্রে এক ব্যক্তি, এক ভোট (One man, one vote) নীতি অনুসরণ করা হয় এবং সকলের ভোটই সমমূল্যের। এ দিক বিবেচনা করে রবার্ট ডাল (Robert Dahl) গণতন্ত্রকে সংজ্ঞায়িত করেছেন এভাবে-“প্রত্যেক নাগরিককে তার পছন্দ প্রকাশের সমান সুযোগ দিতে হবে যা অন্য নাগরিকদের পছন্দের সমমূল্যের বলে বিবেচিত হবে।” (Each citizen must be ensured an equal opportunity to express a choice that will be counted as equal in weight to the choice expressed by any other citizen).^{১২} এটা এমন একটি ব্যবস্থা যেখানে জনগণ তাদের প্রণীত আইনের আশ্রয়ে বসবাস করতে পারে এবং জনগণই এ ব্যবস্থায় আঘাত ও স্বেচ্ছাচারী ক্ষমতাকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে।

আধুনিক জনপ্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক গণতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞানী W. F. Willoughby এর বক্তব্য উল্লেখযোগ্য; তিনি বলেন-“Representation in government is regarded today

^{১০} আহমদ, এমাজ উদ্দিন, রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞান, ঢাকা, বুক সোসাইটি, ১৯৯৮, পৃ. ১৩২।

^{১১} Bryce, Lord, Modern Democracies. Vol-I, p-20.

^{১২} Dahl, Robert. A., Democracy & Its Critics, Yale University Press, 1989, p-109.

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রাজনৈতিক সমতার দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে গণতন্ত্রকে সংজ্ঞায়িত করা হয়। এতে মনে করা হয় যে, সকল ব্যক্তিই রাজনৈতিক দিক দিয়ে সমান। ধর্ম, বর্ণ, গোত্র, লিঙ্গ, আয় নির্বিশেষে সকল ব্যক্তির নির্বাচিত করার ও নির্বাচিত হওয়ার সমান অধিকার থাকবে। এজন্য গণতন্ত্রে এক ব্যক্তি, এক ভোট (One man, one vote) নীতি অনুসরণ করা হয় এবং সকলের ভোটই সমমূল্যের। এ দিক বিবেচনা করে রবার্ট ডাল (Robert Dahl) গণতন্ত্রকে সংজ্ঞায়িত করেছেন এভাবে-“প্রত্যেক নাগরিককে তার পছন্দ প্রকাশের সমান সুযোগ দিতে হবে যা অন্য নাগরিকদের পছন্দের সমমূল্যের বলে বিবেচিত হবে।” (Each citizen must be ensured an equal opportunity to express a choice that will be counted as equal in weight to the choice expressed by any other citizen).^{১২} এটা এমন একটি ব্যবস্থা যেখানে জনগণ তাদের প্রণীত আইনের আশ্রয়ে বসবাস করতে পারে এবং জনগণই এ ব্যবস্থায় আঘাত ও স্বৈরাচারী ক্ষমতাকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে।

আধুনিক জনপ্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক গণতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞানী W. F. Willoughby এর বক্তব্য উল্লেখযোগ্য; তিনি বলেন-“Representation in government is regarded today

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^{১১}. Bryce, Lord, Modern Democracies. Vol-I. p-20.

^{১২}. Dahl, Robert. A., Democracy & Its Critics, Yale University Press. 1989. p-109.

as a process whereby individuals within the state have the capacity to express freely their desires on government policy through formed elections, upon discussed and position to those in office. Instead of government officials being virtual representatives, they are considered responsible representatives.”^{১০}

উপর্যুক্ত আলোচনার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে একথা বলা মোটেই অযৌক্তিক হবে না যে, গণতন্ত্র হচ্ছে মূলত সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠের স্বার্থে গঠিত ও পরিচালিত সরকার। কিন্তু তাই বলে সংখ্যালঘিষ্ঠের মতামত এবং স্বার্থকে উপেক্ষা করতে পারে না। গণতন্ত্রে আইনের দৃষ্টিতে সকলেই সমান। বস্তুত, জনগণ এবং তাদের মতামতই গণতন্ত্রের প্রাণ। সে কারণে গণতন্ত্রের মর্মবাণী হচ্ছে স্বাধীনতা, সাম্য ও সৌভ্রাতৃত্ব ও মানব উন্নয়ন।^{১১} সুতরাং বলা যায় যে গণতন্ত্রের আবেদন অপরিহার্য ও সর্বজনীন।

গণতন্ত্রের মূলনীতি:

গণতন্ত্র বর্তমান বিশ্বে সবচেয়ে জনপ্রিয় সরকার ব্যবস্থা। এটি এমন একটি শাসন ব্যবস্থা যেখানে সরকার জনগণের ইচ্ছা ও আকাঙ্ক্ষা অনুযায়ী রাষ্ট্র পরিচালনা করেন। মূলত, গণতন্ত্র হলো-“A political device to fulfill interest and objectives of people.” সে কারণে গণতন্ত্রের তাত্ত্বিক কাঠামো আলোচনা প্রসঙ্গে এর মূলনীতি সম্পর্কে ও আলোচনা করা প্রয়োজন। এক্ষেত্রে Lyman Tower Sargent -এর বক্তব্য প্রণিধানযোগ্য। Lyman Tower Sargent তার Contemporary Political Ideologies : Comparative Analysis (1981) গ্রন্থে গণতন্ত্রের মূলনীতির কয়েকটি উপাদানের কথা উল্লেখ করেছেন। উপাদানগুলো হলো :^{১২}

- Citizen involvement in political decision making; (রাজনৈতিক সিদ্ধান্তে জনগণের অংশগ্রহণ)
- Some degree of equality among citizens; (জনগণের মধ্যে সমতার মাত্রা)
- Some degree of liberty or freedom granted to or retained by citizens; (জনগণের মধ্যে স্বাধীনতার মাত্রা)
- A system of representation; (প্রতিনিধিত্বের ব্যবস্থা)
- An electoral system -majority rule. (নির্বাচন পদ্ধতি হবে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতার ভিত্তিতে)

^{১০} W. F. Willoughby, The Government of Modern States. West View Press, New York. p-114.

^{১১} United States Information Agency, What is Democracy, 1991. Elizabeth Hanson, “Democratic Principles for the Twentieth Century” Dhaka, USIS. 1992.

^{১২} Sargent, Lyman Tower, Contemporary political Ideologies: Comparative Analysis. 1981. p-131.

গণতন্ত্রায়ণ: অর্থ ও প্রকৃতি

বর্তমান সময়ে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের দাবী সর্বজনীন রূপ লাভ করেছে। গণতন্ত্রায়ণ হলো এমন এক প্রক্রিয়া যার মাধ্যমে একটি রাজনৈতিক ব্যবস্থা ও এর কার্যপ্রক্রিয়া গণতন্ত্রের দিকে ধাবিত হয় অথবা গণতন্ত্রে উত্তোরণ ঘটে। এরূপ উত্তোরণ কর্তৃত্ববাদী ব্যবস্থা থেকে আংশিক গণতন্ত্রে এবং পূর্ণ গণতন্ত্রে ঘটতে পারে। অর্থাৎ, অগণতান্ত্রিক যে কোন অবস্থা থেকে গণতান্ত্রিক অবস্থায় উত্তোরণ অথবা উত্তোরণের প্রচেষ্টা (যেমন: আন্দোলন, যুদ্ধ, বিপ্লব)-কেই গণতন্ত্রায়ণ বলে। গণতন্ত্রায়ণের প্রক্রিয়া কেমন হবে, কখন হবে এবং কিভাবে হবে তা অনেকাংশেই নির্ভর করে সংশ্লিষ্ট জনগোষ্ঠীর ইতিহাস, সংস্কৃতি, অর্থনীতির প্রকৃতি (শিল্প বা কৃষি নির্ভরতা) এবং সুশীল সমাজের ওপর।^{১৬}

যদিও সর্বপ্রথম গণতন্ত্র প্রচলিত হয় প্রাচীন গ্রীসে। তবে খ্রীষ্টপূর্ব পঞ্চম শতকে নগররাষ্ট্রে যে গণতন্ত্রের প্রকাশ ঘটে তা বর্তমান বিশ্বে অনুপস্থিত। পরবর্তীকালে মধ্যযুগীয় ইউরোপে গীর্জার স্তরতান্ত্রিক শাসনব্যবস্থায় ও সামন্ততন্ত্রের প্রসারের দরুন গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রের অস্তিত্ব একেবারে বিলুপ্ত হয়ে গেল বটে তবে গণতন্ত্রের ভাবধারা অনুপস্থিত ছিলনা। বরং একথা সত্য যে, মধ্যযুগীয় বিভিন্ন ধর্মীয় আন্দোলনের মধ্য দিয়ে যে সকল মহৎ আদর্শ প্রচারিত হয়েছিল অষ্টাদশ শতকের গণতান্ত্রিক ভাবধারার ক্ষেত্রে তা গভীর প্রভাব বিস্তার করে। গণতন্ত্রের সর্বাপেক্ষা ব্যাপক প্রসার পরিলক্ষিত হয় আধুনিক কালে এবং এ সময়েই প্রকৃত গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়। মূলত, ফরাসী বিপ্লবের মধ্য দিয়ে সমগ্র ইউরোপ অর্থাৎ গ্রেট ব্রিটেন, অস্ট্রিয়া, নেদারল্যান্ডস ও মার্কিন উপনিবেশগুলিতে গণতন্ত্র ক্রমশ শিকড় বিস্তার করে। তখন থেকেই গণতন্ত্রের চরম সাফল্য সূচিত হতে থাকে। তবে প্রতিষ্ঠালগ্ন হতে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের ধারা একইভাবে প্রভাবিত হয়নি। এই প্রক্রিয়া কোথাও ধীরগতি সম্পন্ন, কোথাও সহিংস কোথাও বার বার বাধাগ্রস্ত হচ্ছে।^{১৭}

গ্রেট ব্রিটেনে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া ধীরগতিতে সম্পন্ন হতে দেখা যায়। এখানে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ দীর্ঘকালব্যাপী একটি প্রক্রিয়ায় ছিল। রাজার স্বৈচ্ছাচারিতার বিরুদ্ধে যারা সেখানে পার্লামেন্টের সার্বভৌমত্ব কায়েমের জন্য আন্দোলন করেছিল, এক হিসাবে তারাই ছিলেন গণতন্ত্রের অগ্রদূত। ১৬৮৮ খ্রিস্টাব্দে সংঘটিত গৌরবময় বিপ্লবের মাধ্যমে একটি শক্তিশালী পার্লামেন্ট গঠিত হয়। এরপর ১৮৮৪ খ্রিস্টাব্দের গণপ্রতিনিধি আইন (Representation of the People Act)- এর মাধ্যমে নির্বাচনের বিষয়টি চূড়ান্ত হয়। এভাবে গ্রেট ব্রিটেনে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ ঘটেছে দীর্ঘ সময় ধরে। একারণেই ব্রিটেনের সংবিধান অলিখিত, লিখিত নয়। আবার গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া

^{১৬} 16. Chowdhury, Mahfuzul Haq, Democratization in South Asia, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, 2003, p-2.

^{১৭} Christian Welzel & Ronald Inglehart, "The Role of Ordinary people in Democratization", The Journal of Democracy, 2008, 19: 126-40.

কখনো সহিংস রূপ ধারণ করতে পারে। অর্থাৎ, গণতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য সংগ্রাম, যুদ্ধ, রক্তপাত ও প্রাণহানি ঘটতে পারে। আমেরিকার বিপ্লবী যুদ্ধ (১৭৭৫-১৭৮৩) মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের প্রতিষ্ঠা ঘটলেও সেখানে দাস প্রথার বিলুপ্তি ঘটে ১৮৬১ থেকে ১৮৬৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ সময়ব্যাপী গৃহযুদ্ধের মাধ্যমে।

গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া বার বার বাধাগ্রস্ত হতে পারে। ১৭৮৯ খ্রিস্টাব্দের ফরাসী বিপ্লবের মাধ্যমে সীমিত ভোটাধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠিত হলেও নেপোলিয়ন বিপ্লব পরবর্তী সময়ে একনায়কতন্ত্র কায়েম করেন। নেপোলিয়নের পতনের পর দ্বিতীয় ফরাসী প্রজাতন্ত্রে পুরুষদের জন্য সর্বজনীন ভোটাধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠিত হলেও পুনরায় দ্বিতীয় ফরাসী সাম্রাজ্যের প্রতিষ্ঠা ঘটে। অন্যদিকে, ১৮৭১ খ্রিস্টাব্দে জার্মান সাম্রাজ্য প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। প্রথম বিশ্বযুদ্ধের পর তা প্রজাতন্ত্রে রূপান্তরিত হয়। পরবর্তী সময়ে হিটলারের নেতৃত্বে দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধে পরাজয়ের পূর্ব পর্যন্ত একনায়কতান্ত্রিক শাসন চলে। এরপর পুনরায় গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থায় ফিরে আসে। বাংলাদেশের স্বাধীনতার পর গণতন্ত্রায়ণের প্রক্রিয়া বার বার বাধাগ্রস্ত হয়েছে। এই সকল বাধা অতিক্রম করতে সহিংসতা ও রক্তপাত ঘটেছে। এখনও অনেক উন্নয়নশীল দেশে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের জন্য অবিরাম সংগ্রাম চলছে। বার্মা বা মায়ানমার এর প্রকৃষ্ট উদাহরণ।

আবার গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া স্থান-কাল-পাত্র ভেদে বিভিন্ন রকম হতে পারে। পশ্চিম ইউরোপে ও উত্তর আমেরিকায় যে প্রক্রিয়ায় গণতন্ত্রায়ণ হয়েছে, পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য অংশে সেই একই প্রক্রিয়ায় গণতন্ত্রায়ণ ঘটেনি। উদাহরণ হিসেবে এশিয়ায় গণতন্ত্রায়ণের প্রেক্ষাপট ও প্রক্রিয়া উল্লেখ করা যায়। অধিকাংশ এলাকা সাম্রাজ্যবাদী শাসনাধীন থাকায় এশিয় দেশগুলো স্বাধীনতা অর্জন ও গণতন্ত্রায়ণের পথে অগ্রসর হয়েছে ব্যাপকভাবে সাম্রাজ্যবাদী শাসনের ইতিবাচক প্রভাবসমূহ দ্বারা প্রভাবিত হয়ে সাম্রাজ্যবাদী শক্তির বিরোধিতাকে কেন্দ্র করে।

ফ্রান্সিস ফুকুয়ামা (Francis Fukuyama) তার “The End of History and the Last Man” শীর্ষক গ্রন্থে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের সংজ্ঞায় বলেন, এ হচ্ছে মানবিক সরকারের চূড়ান্ত হিসেবে উদারনীতিক গণতন্ত্রের উত্থান (... rise of liberal democracy as the final form of human government)।^{১৮}

অপরদিকে, বিশিষ্ট রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞানী অধ্যাপক স্যামুয়েল পি. হান্টিংটন (Samuel P. Huntington) গণতন্ত্রায়ণের ব্যাখ্যা উপস্থাপন করেছেন ভূবনব্যাপী প্রেক্ষাপটে। তার মতে, ঐতিহাসিকভাবে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের তিনটি প্রবাহ বিদ্যমান।^{১৯} তিনি গণতন্ত্রায়ণের প্রক্রিয়াকে নিম্নোক্ত সময়ে চিহ্নিত করেছেন।

^{১৮} Fukuyama, Francis, “The End of History and the Last Man” the Journal of international affairs, 1992.

^{১৯} Huntinton, S.P., The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century. University of Oklahoma Press, 1991, p.55-60.

Wave	Period
First, long wave of democratization	1828-1926
First reverse wave	1922-1942
Second short wave democratization	1943-1962
Second reverse wave	1958-1975
Third wave of democratization	1974

প্রথমটি ঘটে ঊনবিংশ শতকে পশ্চিম ইউরোপে ও উত্তর আমেরিকায় (মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে)। এ সময় যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ব্যাপক সংখ্যক পুরুষ নাগরিকের ভোটাধিকার অর্জন পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত এবং বর্তমান শতাব্দীর দ্বিতীয় দশক পর্যন্ত স্থায়ী ছিল। এ সময়ে বিশ্বে ঊনত্রিশটি রাষ্ট্রে গণতন্ত্রের বিকাশ ঘটে। কিন্তু ১৯২২ সালে ইটালীতে মুসোলিনীর ক্ষমতারোহণের মধ্য দিয়ে প্রথম প্রবাহের মন্দা শুরু হয় এবং এ ধারা ১৯৪২ সন পর্যন্ত চলতে থাকে। এ সময়ে বিশ্বে গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রের সংখ্যা বারটিতে নেমে আসে।

দ্বিতীয় পর্যায় সৃষ্টি হয় দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ-পরবর্তী প্রত্যক্ষ সাম্রাজ্যবাদের অবসানের মাধ্যমে। ১৯৬২ সনে বিশ্বে গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রের সংখ্যা ছত্রিশটিতে উন্নীত হয়। কিন্তু ১৯৬২ সন থেকে সত্তর দশকের মাঝামাঝি সময় পর্যন্ত গণতন্ত্রের দ্বিতীয় প্রবাহের মন্দা পরিলক্ষিত হয়। হান্টিংটনের মতে, গণতন্ত্রায়ণের এই দ্বিতীয় প্রবাহ একটি পর্যায়ে তার গতি হারিয়ে ফেলে বিশেষ করে ঘন ঘন সামরিক অভ্যুত্থান ও অন্যান্য রাজনৈতিক সংকটের কারণে। এ সময়ে বিশ্বে গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রের সংখ্যা ত্রিশটিতে নেমে আসে। ১৯৭৪ সন থেকে গণতন্ত্রের তৃতীয় প্রবাহ শুরু হয় ল্যাটিন আমেরিকায় ও সোভিয়েত কমিউনিস্ট শাসন-উত্তর পূর্ব ইউরোপীয় দেশসমূহে, যেমন- পূর্ব জার্মানী, পোলাভ, হাঙ্গেরী প্রভৃতি রাষ্ট্রসমূহে। এ সময় বিশ্বে গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রের সংখ্যা দ্বিগুণে এসে দাঁড়ায়। হান্টিংটনের মতে, গণতন্ত্রায়ণ কেবলমাত্র উদারনীতিক গণতন্ত্রের সাথেই সম্পৃক্ত, অন্য কোন আদর্শের সাথে সম্পৃক্ত নয়।^{৩০}

গণতন্ত্রায়ণের উপর্যুক্ত আলোচনা বিশ্লেষণ করলে কতকগুলো সুস্পষ্ট বৈশিষ্ট্য পরিলক্ষিত হয় :

- গণতন্ত্রায়ণ কেবল পাশ্চাত্যের উদারনীতিক গণতান্ত্রিক আদর্শের সাথে জড়িত। কেননা, উদারনীতিক গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের পরে একটি রাজনৈতিক ব্যবস্থা অন্যকোন উচ্চতর ব্যবস্থায় উত্তীর্ণ হতে পারে না। যদি হয় তাকে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ বলা যাবে না, তা গণতন্ত্রের ক্ষয়প্রাপ্তি বা বিলুপ্তি বলে চিহ্নিত হবে।

^{৩০} Huntington, op. cit., p-67.

- গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া কখনো ধীরগতি, কখনো সহিংস রূপ ধারণ করতে পারে। এমনকি তা বার বার বাধাগ্রস্তও হতে পারে।
- স্থান-কাল-পাত্র ভেদে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া বিভিন্ন হতে পারে। পশ্চিম ইউরোপ ও উত্তর আমেরিকায় যে প্রক্রিয়ায় গণতন্ত্রায়ণ হয়েছে, পৃথিবীর অন্যান্য অংশে বিশেষ করে এশিয়ার সাম্রাজ্যবাদী শাসনাধীন দেশগুলোতে একই প্রক্রিয়ায় গণতন্ত্রায়ণ ঘটেনি।

গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়ার শর্তাবলী :

গণতন্ত্রায়ণের পথ সুগম করা সহজ-সরল কোন বিষয় নয় কিংবা একক কোন বিষয়ের ওপরও নির্ভরশীল নয়। সাফল্যজনকভাবে গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের বিষয়টি অনেকগুলো উপাদানের ওপর নির্ভরশীল। পাশ্চাত্যের উন্নত রাষ্ট্রসমূহে গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণ প্রক্রিয়া সম্পন্ন হওয়ার পর তা স্থায়ীত্ব লাভ করলেও প্রাচ্যের দেশগুলোর অনেকগুলোতেই গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণ প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হলেও নানা কারণে তা বাধাগ্রস্ত হয়েছে এবং সে কারণে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া এখনও অব্যাহত রয়েছে। আবার উন্নয়নশীল অনেক দেশেই আপত দৃষ্টে গণতন্ত্রের প্রচলন ঘটেছে বলে মনে হলেও চূড়ান্ত বিশ্লেষণে এ বিষয়ে সন্দেহ থেকেই গেছে। এই প্রেক্ষাপটে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়ার নিম্নলিখিত শর্তাবলী আলোচনা করা যেতে পারে।

সর্বজনীন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক ভোটাধিকার

একটি দেশে রাজনীতি ও সরকারি কর্মপ্রক্রিয়া গণতান্ত্রিক হয়েছে কিনা তার প্রথম ও প্রধান কার্যকর পদক্ষেপ হচ্ছে সর্বজনীন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক ভোটাধিকার এবং ভোটাধিকার প্রয়োগে ভোটারের নিজস্ব মত ও পছন্দের স্বাধীনতা। কারণ সর্বজনীন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক ভোটাধিকার প্রয়োগের মাধ্যমে জনগণ তাদের মনোনীত প্রার্থী নির্বাচিত করে 'জনগণের শাসন' প্রত্যয়টিকে সফল করার সুযোগ পায়। আর সেকারণে অগণতান্ত্রিক স্বৈরশাসন ব্যবস্থা থেকে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের লক্ষ্যে সর্বজনীন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক ভোটাধিকারের উপর সর্বাধিক গুরুত্ব আরোপ করা হয়। তবে এক্ষেত্রে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ একটি বিবেচ্য বিষয় হচ্ছে, সকল নাগরিকের ভোটাধিকারের বিষয়টিই কেবল গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের যথেষ্ট কার্যকর পদক্ষেপ নয়। বরং ভোটাধিকার প্রাপ্ত সকল নাগরিক স্বাধীনভাবে, নিজস্ব মতামত অনুযায়ী, ভীতিমুক্ত পরিবেশে ভোটাধিকার প্রয়োগ করতে পারছে কিনা এ বিষয়টিও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। তবে স্বাধীনভাবে ভোটাধিকার প্রয়োগের বিষয়টি যদি ব্যক্তি, গোষ্ঠী বা রাজনৈতিক দল কর্তৃক বাধাগ্রস্ত হয় তাহলে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ বা গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের প্রাথমিক বা মৌলিক নিশ্চয়তা বিধান করা যায়নি বলে ধরে নিতে হবে।

বহুদলীয় ব্যবস্থার উপস্থিতি

স্বৈরতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রগুলিতে সবসময়ই একদলীয় শাসনের অস্তিত্ব বিদ্যমান থাকে। রাজনৈতিক দল ও সরকারকে এসব রাষ্ট্রে আলাদা করে দেখা হয় না। একটি মাত্র রাষ্ট্র ক্ষমতার চরমে অবস্থান করে সরকারের সকল কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করে। এক দল, এক সরকার এবং এক রাষ্ট্রের ধারণা চরম অগণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়া সৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে জনগণের অধিকার হরণের স্বৈরতান্ত্রিক প্রতিষ্ঠান হিসাবে রাষ্ট্রকে প্রতিষ্ঠা করে। এই সকল রাষ্ট্রে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া অত্যন্ত দুঃসাধ্য হওয়ায় আধুনিক রাষ্ট্রগুলিতে একাধিক রাজনৈতিক দলের সক্রিয় কার্যক্রমকে অনুমোদন করে। তাই একাধিক রাজনৈতিক দলের অস্তিত্ব ও তাদের সক্রিয় কার্যক্রম আধুনিক রাষ্ট্রে গণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়া বিকাশের অন্যতম প্রধান উপায়। বহুদলীয় ব্যবস্থায় রাজনৈতিক দলগুলো দলীয় আদর্শ অনুযায়ী কর্মসূচি তৈরি করে, নির্বাচনে প্রার্থী দাঁড় করায়। এর মাধ্যমে ভোটারদের সামনে বিকল্প কর্মসূচি ও প্রার্থী হাজির করে। এই বিকল্প কর্মসূচি ও প্রার্থীর মধ্য থেকে ভোটার তার পছন্দ অনুযায়ী ভোট প্রদান করে; চূড়ান্ত বিশ্লেষণে যা জনগণের মতামত প্রকাশের স্বাধীনতাকে স্বীকার করে। গণতন্ত্রায়ণের জন্য জনগণের মতামত প্রকাশের স্বাধীনতার বিষয়টি অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। তবে বহু দলের নামে মাত্রাতিরিক্ত দলের উপস্থিতি, কথায় কথায় দল ত্যাগের প্রবণতা এবং নতুন দল গঠন গণতন্ত্রায়ণের চেয়ে দেশের জন্য হুমকি হয়ে দাঁড়ায়।

সংবিধান

গণতন্ত্রায়ণের আর একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কার্যকরী পদক্ষেপ হলো জনমতের উপর ভিত্তি করে নির্বাচিত জগপ্রতিনিধি অর্থাৎ আইনসভার সদস্যদের দ্বারা সংবিধান প্রণয়ন করা। কারণ গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার ভিত্তিই হচ্ছে সংবিধান। সে কারণে দেশের সার্বভৌম আইন এবং রাষ্ট্র বা সরকার প্রধান থেকে শুরু করে সকল নাগরিকের জন্য সংবিধান সমভাবে প্রযোজ্য। কার্যত; সংবিধানই হচ্ছে সরকার প্রতিষ্ঠা ও পরিচালনার এবং নাগরিক অধিকারের নিশ্চয়তার চাবিকাঠি। তাই সরকারের কর্তৃত্ব প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কল্যাণমুখী বিধিনিষেধ আরোপ, সরকারের তিনটি বিভাগের মধ্যে পৃথকীকরণ ও সমন্বয় সাধন করার লক্ষ্যে লিখিত ও প্রকাশ্য সংবিধানের উপস্থিতি এবং ওই সংবিধানকে মান্য করে চলার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি গণতন্ত্রায়ণের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ একটি পদক্ষেপ। তবে সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতার বলে অথবা রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্ষমতা দখলে থাকার কারণে সংখ্যালঘিষ্ঠের মতামতকে আংশিক বা সম্পূর্ণরূপে উপেক্ষা করা, দলীয় স্বার্থকে প্রাধান্য দেয়া এবং সংবিধানকে অবজ্ঞা করা হলে ধরে নিতে হবে এর মাধ্যমে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ হয়নি।

কার্যকর আইনসভা

নির্বাচিত আইনসভার কার্যকারিতা গণতন্ত্রায়ণের জন্য বিশেষভাবে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। গণতন্ত্রের একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দিক হলো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সকল জাতীয় সমস্যাসহ সকল

রাজনৈতিক সমস্যা সমাধানের একমাত্র স্থান হবে আইনসভা। গণতান্ত্রিক রীতিনীতির প্রতি সম্মান দেখিয়ে আইনসভায় আসন গ্রহণকারী সকল দলকে আলাপ-আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সকল সমস্যার সমাধান করতে হবে। আইনসভা তার এই ভূমিকা পালন করতে না পারলে সমস্যা সমাধানের স্থান হয়ে ওঠে রাজপথ, আন্দোলন, সহিংসতা ইত্যাদি। ফলে রাজনীতি হয়ে ওঠে বিরোধপূর্ণ, দফাওয়ারী ও অস্থিতিশীল। এরূপ পরিস্থিতি গণতন্ত্রকে বিনাশ করে, সামরিক বাহিনীকে ক্ষমতা দখলে প্রলুদ্ধ করে এবং রাজনৈতিক উন্নয়নকে বাধাগ্রস্ত করে। তাই কার্যকর আইনসভা রাজনৈতিক উন্নয়ন ও গণতন্ত্রায়ণের জন্য অত্যন্ত প্রয়োজনীয় পদক্ষেপ।

আইনের শাসন

যে কোন গণতান্ত্রিক সমাজেরই মৌলিক অঙ্গিকার হলো আইন কর্তৃক সকলকে সমভাবে সংরক্ষণ করা। তাই গণতন্ত্রায়ণের ক্ষেত্রে আর একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদক্ষেপ হচ্ছে আইনের শাসন। অর্থাৎ, আইন তার নিজস্ব গতিতে চলবে, আইনের দৃষ্টিতে দেশের সকল নাগরিক সমান হবে এবং আইনের মূল ও একমাত্র লক্ষ্য হবে মানুষের অধিকার রক্ষা করা; অধিকার সৃষ্টি করা নয়। অথচ আইন তার নিজস্ব গতি হারালে, সকল নাগরিককে বার বার সমান চোখে দেখতে ব্যর্থ হলে এবং কোন কোন আইনের মাধ্যমে মানুষের অধিকার সংরক্ষণের বদলে হরণ হলে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ বা গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের নিশ্চয়তা বিধান করা যায়নি বলে ধরে নিতে হবে।

প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রাধান্য

একটি রাজনৈতিক ব্যবস্থায় মৌলিক রাজনৈতিক প্রতিষ্ঠানসহ অন্যান্য প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রাধান্য ও কার্যকারিতা গণতন্ত্রায়ণের আর একটি পদক্ষেপ। গণতন্ত্রের একটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সূচক হচ্ছে- ব্যক্তি রাজনৈতিক, অর্থনৈতিক কিংবা সামাজিক ক্ষেত্রে বৈধভাবে তার চাহিদা পূরণের জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রতিষ্ঠানের মুখাপেক্ষী হবে, ব্যক্তির নয়। উদাহরণস্বরূপ বলা যায় যে, বৈধ অধিকার থেকে বঞ্চিত সংক্ষুদ্ধ ব্যক্তি যদি তার অধিকার ফেরত পেতে চায় তাহলে সে বিচার বিভাগ নামক প্রতিষ্ঠানের দ্বারস্থ হবে, কোন ব্যক্তি বিচারকের কাছে নয়। নিরাপত্তা বিঘ্নিত হলে তার প্রতিবিধানের জন্য ব্যক্তি পুলিশ বাহিনীর দ্বারস্থ হবে, ব্যক্তি-পুলিশ বা অন্যকোন প্রভাবশালী ব্যক্তির কাছে নয়। ঠিক তেমনি, চিকিৎসার জন্য ব্যক্তি হাসপাতালের দ্বারস্থ হবে, ব্যক্তি চিকিৎসকের নিকট নয়। যখন এর ব্যত্যয় ঘটে অর্থাৎ, বিচার বিভাগের তুলনায় ব্যক্তি-বিচারক যখন মুখ্য হয়ে ওঠেন, কিংবা ব্যক্তি-পুলিশ অথবা ব্যক্তি চিকিৎসক যখন মুখ্য হয়ে ওঠেন তখন প্রতিষ্ঠান ব্যক্তির অধীনস্থ হয়, এতে প্রতিষ্ঠানের লক্ষ্য ও উদ্দেশ্য ব্যাহত হয় এবং গণতন্ত্রের গালে চপেটাঘাত করা হয়। এর মাধ্যমে কোন ক্রমেই গণতন্ত্রায়ণের সফল বাস্তবায়ন সম্ভব নয়।

সামাজিক সমতা

গণতন্ত্রায়ণের আর একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদক্ষেপ হলো সামাজিক সমতা। সামাজিক সুযোগ-সুবিধা, অর্থনৈতিক অধিকার, রাজনৈতিক অধিকার ভোগের ক্ষেত্রে সমাজে অসমতা বিরাজমান থাকলে বঞ্চিত জনগণ বেঁচে থাকার লড়াইয়ে এমনভাবে ব্যস্ত থাকে যে, গণতন্ত্র অথবা গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের প্রয়োজনীয়তা সম্পর্কে তারা উদাসীন থাকে। এছাড়াও, চরম অসম সমাজে গণতান্ত্রিক আদর্শ অনুযায়ী সম্পদের সমতাভিত্তিক বন্টনের বিষয়টি এলিটবৃন্দের কাছে চরম বিপজ্জনক মনে হওয়ায় তারা গণতন্ত্রে উত্তরণের সকল প্রচেষ্টার একরকম বিরোধিতাই করে। এরকম অবস্থায় গণতন্ত্রের দিকে অগ্রসর হবার পথ সহজ হয়ে ওঠে তখনই যখন সিদ্ধান্তগ্রহণকারী এলিটগণ অনুধাবন করতে পারে যে, বঞ্চিত জনগণ যে কোন সময় তাদের বিরুদ্ধে ফুঁসে উঠতে পারে অথবা মনে করে যে, গণতন্ত্রায়ণের পথ উন্মুক্ত করলে তাদের কায়েমী স্বার্থ খুব বেশি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হবে না। সুতরাং, সমতাবাদী সমাজে সহজেই গণতন্ত্রায়ণ সফল করা যায়।

রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্ষমতা আরোহণ ও ক্ষমতা ত্যাগের সুস্পষ্ট পদ্ধতি

রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্ষমতা আরোহণ ও ক্ষমতা ত্যাগের জন্য সংবিধানসম্মত পদ্ধতির উপস্থিতি ও তার কার্যকারিতা গণতন্ত্রায়ণের আর একটি অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদক্ষেপ। এক্ষেত্রে কোন রকম অস্পষ্টতা থাকলে এবং স্বীকৃত পদ্ধতিকে অমান্য করার মানসিকতা সমস্ত গণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়াকে নস্যাত করে দিতে পারে।

গণতন্ত্রায়ণের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদক্ষেপ গুলো আলোচনার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে একথা স্পষ্ট হয়ে ওঠে যে, কোন অগণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রব্যবস্থাকে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের পথ পরিত্যক্ত করতে হলে তাকে অবশ্যই এসকল বিষয়কে গুরুত্বসহকারে গ্রহণ করে পূর্ণ মর্যাদায় বাস্তবায়ন করতে হবে। তবেই অগণতান্ত্রিক স্বৈরশাসন থেকে মুক্তি পেয়ে সেসকল রাষ্ট্রের জনগণ গণতন্ত্রের সুবাতাসে প্রাণভরে নিঃশ্বাস গ্রহণ করে মানব জন্ম স্বার্থক করে তুলতে পারবে।

গণতন্ত্রায়ণ: বাংলাদেশ প্রেক্ষাপট

গণতন্ত্রায়ণ একটি চলমান প্রক্রিয়া। এই প্রক্রিয়া কোথাও ধীরগতি সম্পন্ন, কোথাও সহিংস, কোথাও আবার বার বার বাধাগ্রস্ত হয়। মূলত, স্থান-কাল-পাত্র ভেদে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া বিভিন্ন রাষ্ট্রে বিভিন্ন রকম হয়ে থাকে। উন্নত রাষ্ট্রসমূহে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া স্থায়ীত্ব লাভ করলেও উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলিতে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়া বার বার বাধাগ্রস্ত হচ্ছে। আর একটি দেশে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের মাত্রা কি-রূপ তা পরিমাপ করা যায় গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়ার কার্যকর শর্তাবলীর আলোকে।

১৯৭১ সালের ১৬ ডিসেম্বর রক্তক্ষয়ী মুক্তিযুদ্ধের মধ্যদিয়ে বাংলাদেশ বিশ্বের মানচিত্রে স্বাধীন সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্র হিসেবে আত্মপ্রকাশ করে এবং জনগণের দীর্ঘদিনের প্রত্যাশিত দাবি সংসদীয় গণতন্ত্রের মধ্যদিয়ে দেশের শাসনব্যবস্থার যাত্রা শুরু হয়। কিন্তু তা বেশি দূর অগ্রসর হতে পারেনি। ১৯৭৫ পরবর্তী সময়ে গণতন্ত্রের যাত্রা থেমে যায়। এরপর বিভিন্ন চড়াই-উৎরাই অতিক্রম করে ১৯৯১ সালে সংসদীয় গণতন্ত্রের আবার পুনঃপ্রবর্তন করা হয় যা আজ অবধি অব্যাহত রয়েছে। তথাপি এখানে প্রকৃত গণতন্ত্রায়ণ হয়েছে কি-না নিম্নের আলোচনার মাধ্যমে তা বিশ্লেষণ করা হলো।

সর্বজনীন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক ভোটাধিকারের ক্ষেত্রে

বাংলাদেশে স্বাধীনতার পর থেকে সর্বজনীন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক ভোটাধিকারের বিষয়টি সাংবিধানিকভাবে নিশ্চিত করা হয়। কিন্তু তা সত্ত্বেও নানা কারণে ভোটারদের ভোট প্রদানের বিষয়টি স্বাধীন ইচ্ছানুযায়ী প্রয়োগের বিষয়টি নিশ্চিত করা যায়নি। সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ ভোটারদের বেহাল আর্থ-সামাজিক অবস্থা, অশিক্ষা, কুসংস্কার এবং রাজনৈতিক দলগুলোর অগণতান্ত্রিক মূল্যবোধের কারণে নির্বাচনে নানারকম ত্রুটির বিষয় আলোচিত ও সমালোচিত হয়েছে। তথাপি, বর্তমানে বাংলাদেশের জনগণের মধ্যে ধীরে ধীরে ভোটাধিকার প্রয়োগের মানসিকতা প্রবল হয়ে উঠেছে। তারা ভয়-ভীতি মুক্ত পরিবেশে স্বাধীনভাবে নিজেদের পছন্দমত ভোটাধিকার প্রয়োগের প্রত্যাশা করে। তাদের এই আকাঙ্ক্ষার ফলশ্রুতিতে ২০০৮ সালে ছবিসহ ভোটার আইডি কার্ড, স্বচ্ছ ব্যালট বক্স এবং কিছু কিছু ক্ষেত্রে ইভিএম পদ্ধতি ব্যবহার করা হচ্ছে।

বহুদলীয় ব্যবস্থার উপস্থিতি

বাংলাদেশে বহুদলীয় ব্যবস্থা বিদ্যমান। নেতৃত্বের দুর্বলতা, দলের অভ্যন্তরে সীমিত গণতন্ত্রের চর্চা, অভ্যন্তরীণ দলীয় মতানৈক্য ও কোন্দল, দল ত্যাগের প্রবণতা, আদর্শগত বিরোধ, প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক বিকাশের অভাবের কারণে এখানে অসংখ্য রাজনৈতিক দলের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। এই প্রেক্ষাপটে প্রশ্ন দেখা দিয়েছে, রাজনৈতিক দল কি জনকল্যাণের জন্য না ব্যক্তি বা গোষ্ঠী স্বার্থ রক্ষার জন্য। যে গণতন্ত্রের জন্য দল ব্যবস্থা প্রয়োজন সেই গণতন্ত্রের চর্চা অধিকাংশ রাজনৈতিক দলই করে না। ফলে ওই সব দল ক্ষমতায় এসে জাতীয় পর্যায়ে গণতন্ত্রের চর্চা না করায় গণতন্ত্রকে টেকসই করতে পারছে না। তথাপি, বর্তমানে বাংলাদেশে '৯০ এর পর হতে দ্বি-দলীয় ব্যবস্থার সম্ভাবনার সৃষ্টি হয়েছে যা গণতন্ত্রায়ণের শুভ সূচনার বার্তা বহন করেছে। এর ফলশ্রুতিতে সাধারণ জনগণ নামসর্বশ্ব দলগুলোর প্রতি আস্থাহীন হয়ে পড়েছে। এছাড়া প্রতিষ্ঠিত দলগুলোর মধ্যে বিভেদ সৃষ্টিকারী নেতৃত্বদ্বন্দ্বকে সাধারণ জনগণ ইতিবাচকভাবে গ্রহণ করছে না। জনগণের এই দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীকে গণতন্ত্রের উত্তরণের পথে প্রাথমিক ইতিবাচক একটি পদক্ষেপ হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা যেতে পারে।

সংবিধানের প্রতি শ্রদ্ধাশীল হওয়া

বাংলাদেশে একটি উত্তম সংবিধান রয়েছে। যদিও সে সংবিধানকে সর্বোচ্চ দলিল হিসেবে মান্য করে- রাষ্ট্রীয় কাজকর্ম পরিচালনা করার মৌলিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী এখনও বাংলাদেশে যথাযথভাবে গড়ে ওঠেনি। অনেক সময়ই ক্ষুদ্র দলীয় স্বার্থে সংবিধানকে ব্যবহার করার প্রবণতা লক্ষ করা যায়- যা বাংলাদেশে গণতন্ত্রায়ণ প্রক্রিয়াকে দীর্ঘায়িত করেছে।

আইনসভার কার্যকারিতা

১৯৯১ সালে বাংলাদেশে সংসদীয় গণতন্ত্রের পুনঃপ্রবর্তন করা হলে সকলের প্রত্যাশা ছিল জাতীয় সংসদ তার কাজক্ষিত ভূমিকা পালন করতে পারবে। অথচ সরকারি দলের অনমনীয় ও অগণতান্ত্রিক মনোভাবের কারণে বিরোধী দল কর্তৃক সংসদ বর্জন অথবা বিভিন্ন অজুহাত দেখিয়ে কারণে অকারণে বিরোধী দল কর্তৃক সংসদ বর্জনের ঘটনা বাংলাদেশের রাজনীতিতে সাধারণ বিষয়ে পরিণত হয়েছে। বাংলাদেশের জাতীয় সংসদ খুব কমই জাতীয় সকল সমস্যা ও বিতর্ক নিরসনের কেন্দ্রবিন্দুতে পরিণত হতে পেরেছে। ফলে যে কোন রাজনৈতিক সমাধান সংসদ কেন্দ্রিক না হয়ে তা হয়ে ওঠে রাজপথ কেন্দ্রিক। রাজনীতিতে সহিংসতা, বিশৃঙ্খলা ও অস্থিতিশীলতা এক সাধারণ চিত্রে পরিণত হয়েছে। রাজনীতিতে পেশী শক্তির প্রভাব, হরতাল, অবরোধ সাধারণ জনগণের নিকট বিরক্তির বিষয়ে পরিণত হয়েছে। তাই বাংলাদেশের জনগণ জাতীয় সংসদের নিলিগু ভূমিকার বিষয়টিকে নেতিবাচক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীতেই অবলোকন করে।

উপসংহার :

গণতন্ত্র হলো জনগণের শাসন। এর মূল কথাই হলো জনগণ এবং জনগণের সাধারণ ইচ্ছার বাস্তবায়ন। আর গণতান্ত্রিক শাসন ব্যবস্থার বাস্তবায়ন প্রক্রিয়ার নামই গণতন্ত্রায়ণ। এটা এমন এক প্রক্রিয়া যার মাধ্যমে একটি রাজনৈতিক ব্যবস্থা ও এর কার্যপ্রক্রিয়া গণতন্ত্রের দিকে ধাবিত হয় অথবা গণতন্ত্রে উত্তোরণ ঘটে। বর্তমান সময়ে গণতন্ত্রায়ণের দাবী ও প্রচেষ্টা সর্বজনীন রূপ লাভ করেছে। রাজনৈতিক দল গঠন, নির্বাচন অনুষ্ঠান, সর্বজনীন প্রাপ্তবয়স্কদের ভোটাধিকারের ভিত্তিতে প্রতিনিধি নির্বাচন, সংবিধান প্রণয়ন, সংবিধানে মৌলিক অধিকার সংযোজন, মৌলিক অধিকার ভোগের নিশ্চয়তা প্রদান, ক্ষমতার স্বতন্ত্রীকরণ এবং বিকেন্দ্রীকরণ প্রভৃতি পদক্ষেপসমূহ গণতন্ত্রায়ণকে ফলপ্রসূ করে তোলে। তাইতো পণ্ডিতগণ গণতন্ত্রায়ণকে টেকসই মানব উন্নয়নের (sustainable human development) অপরিহার্য শর্ত হিসেবেও চিহ্নিত করেছে। তাই বলা যায় যে, গণতন্ত্রের ধারাকে অব্যাহত রাখার জন্য গণতন্ত্রায়ণ অপরিহার্য।

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Cultivation of Environment-Unfriendly Crop Tobacco An Inquiry into the Causes and Consequences

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Abstract: *The article aims to find the extent, causes and consequences of tobacco cultivation in Kushtia district. Tobacco is an environment-unfriendly crop. Tobacco cultivation entails a number of detrimental effects on health and environment. Recently, tobacco cultivation has concentrated in Kushtia district. For the last several years, the amount of land used for tobacco cultivation has shown an increasing trend. During the period 1998/99 - 2005/06, the area under tobacco cultivation in the district has increased by 41 percent. A number of factors are responsible for this rising trend of tobacco cultivation. These include demonstration effect, guaranteed market and ready cash, profitability, patronization of tobacco companies and ancestral occupation. The consequences of tobacco cultivation include both positive and negative impacts. The positive impacts are that the extensive tobacco cultivation in the district has created employment for the people and scope for the farmers to earn ready cash. The negative impacts are health related problems, water and air pollution, hampering of children's education, fuel crisis and loss of normal family life. The study reveals that although tobacco is a profitable crop, the majority of the farmers want to give up this environment-unfriendly crop.*

Introduction:

Tobacco as a plant (*Nicotiana tabacum* or less widely used *Nicotiana glauca*) belongs to the Nightshade family indigenous to North and South America. The word 'Shade' descends from the German word 'schade' which means destruction or damage (Akhter 2011). Tobacco is grown in the winter season because the plant prefers sandy, well aerated, well-drained soils and cooler climate.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) tobacco is the second major cause of death and the fourth most common risk factor for diseases in the world. It is currently responsible for five million deaths each year. An estimated 1.3 billion people smoke worldwide and 84% of all smokers live in developing countries and the countries of transitional economy (WHO, 2002). If current smoking patterns continue, it will cause some 10 million deaths each year and 70 percent of such deaths will be from developing countries (Abdullah and Husten, 2004). In Bangladesh

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tobacco related illness accounts for 16 percent of total deaths among people aged 30 years and above (WHO, 2007).

Tobacco production entails a number of detrimental effects. The principal loss resulting from tobacco production is the amount of food and other crops that are sacrificed. The amount of land used for tobacco production worldwide could be used for the production of essential food crops like rice, wheat, potato, maize etc. Tobacco cultivation causes biodiversity losses, land pollution due to pesticides, soil degradation and deforestation well as water pollution. Forests are cleared to provide more land for tobacco production and wood for tobacco curing. The global share of agricultural land used for tobacco growing is less than 1 percent. However, its impact on global deforestation is 2-4 percent making a visible footprint for climate change. Research suggests that tobacco growing may be up to 10 times more aggressive than the sum of all other factors in deforestation. Tobacco depletes soil nutrients at a faster rate than most crops (WHO, 2008). Tobacco curing also produces a huge amount of fume which causes air pollution.

Tobacco cultivation entails a number of occupational risks including green tobacco sickness (GTS), pesticide intoxication, respiratory and dermatological disorders and cancers at certain sites. As a result, tobacco cultivation causes irreversible costs to the farmers which seriously damage their living standards and erode long term prospects. Health risks, working conditions, contractual arrangements, the use of children in tobacco cultivation and the environment practices of the tobacco cultivation have negative impacts on human capital and land, the two crucial aspects in rural livelihood (WHO, 2008).

Despite all these detrimental effects of tobacco, the reality is that a large number of farmers are engaged in tobacco cultivation worldwide. Bangladesh is also not exception to this world culture. According to Sarkar and Haque (2001), tobacco has been introduced in Bangladesh since mid sixties of the last century into the crop fields and more widely after liberation in 1971 by the British American Tobacco Company in Teesta silt in Rangpur area (as cited in Akhter, 2011, p.1).

Mainly three varieties of tobacco -- Jati, Motihari and Virginia -- are grown in different districts of Bangladesh. The production of Virginia variety of tobacco during 2008-9 was 22,277 metric tons, while the other variety, such as Jati was 8,437 metric tons and Motihari was 9,270 metric tons. The latter two varieties are used for producing bidi - the local and cheaper version of cigarette.

Virginia is mostly grown in Kushtia, Rangpur, Jessore and Dhaka while Jati and Motihari are mostly grown in Rangpur and Bandarban. Other varieties such as Burley are also grown in limited quantities. In terms of land area covered by all three kinds of tobacco, Rangpur still remains biggest region with 40345 acres during 2008-09 followed by Kushtia with 22241 acres and Bandarban with 4678 acres of land (BBS, 2010). Besides tobacco is extending to Jessore, Jhenaidah, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and even in Manikganj and Tangail. In 1991-92, tobacco was cultivated in 9940 acres of land in Kushtia district but the figure rose to 17000 acres in 2001-02, 20595 acres in 2005-06 and further to 22241 acres in 2008-09 (BBS, 2008 & 2010). The rising trend of tobacco cultivation in the district is posing serious threat to the environment and health.

2.0 Review of Literature

Very few studies have still been conducted on the issue. Nahar and Chowdhury (2002) have shown that farmers are engaged in tobacco cultivation being lured by the high price of tobacco and the cooperation given by the tobacco companies. The farmers considers tobacco as a profitable crop since they get loan and technical facilities from the tobacco companies and receive hard cash at a time from the sale of their produce. But much of their profit is attributed to the household labor of the tobacco farmers. In cost-benefit studies, they often do not consider the imputed value of free household labor.

In another study Naher and Effroymsen (2007) have shown that tobacco farmers suffer from Green Tobacco Sickness (GTS) for handling pesticides and raw tobacco leaves. They have also shown that tobacco farmers are being kept into debt bondage of tobacco companies from which they cannot be freed.

Ratan and Sujana (2002) have shown that tobacco cultivation is a major cause of deforestation in Bangladesh. They have also shown that the farmers cultivate tobacco being trapped by profitability mirage of tobacco but tobacco cultivation is not as profitable as it seems to be.

The previous studies do not provide enough information about the causes and consequences (health, environmental and others) of tobacco cultivation. Further studies are needed to elaborately investigate the causes and consequences of rising tobacco cultivation.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the causes and consequences of tobacco cultivation in Kushtia district. The specific objectives are:

- i) to investigate the extent of tobacco cultivation in the district.
- ii) to investigate the causes of rising tobacco cultivation in the district.
- iii) to investigate the socio-economic, environmental, health and other impacts of tobacco cultivation.
- iv) to investigate farmers awareness about the environmental and health impacts of tobacco cultivation and
- v) to investigate farmers' attitude toward giving up tobacco cultivation and suggest recommendations to emancipate the farmers from tobacco cultivation.

4.0 Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The study area was Mirpur thana of Kushtia district where tobacco is cultivated extensively. Three villages namely Nayanpur, Paharpur and Chuniapara of Mirpur thana, were selected for the study. A total of 300 farmers- 100 from each of the mentioned villages- were selected randomly for data collection. The primary data were collected by two ways: through a random household survey and Focus Group Discussions (FDG). For the household survey a well structured questionnaire was administered to the sample of 300 farmers. Six FDGs- two from each village- were conducted with local tobacco farmers to collect the relevant information. The data collection period was 3rd quarter of 2012.

Secondary data were collected from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, World Health Organization, Journal articles, reports and tobacco related websites. Simple statistics were used to analyze the data.

5.0 Findings

Table-1 summarizes the distribution of farmers according to farm size and contract growing. We observe that the majority (more than 50%) of the tobacco farmers are small followed by medium (20.33%) and marginal (18.67%). Only 10.33 % are large farmers. As mentioned earlier, tobacco cultivation has concentrated in the area by the patronization of certain tobacco companies has been proved by the fact that 74 % of the sample tobacco farmers have registered with the tobacco companies i.e they are contract growers.

Table-1: Distribution of the sample farmers according to farm size and contract growing

Category	Marginal (<0.5 acre)	Small (0.5-2.5 acre)	Medium (2.5-5 acre)	Large (> 5 acre)	Contract grower	Non- contract grower	Total
No. of farmers	56(18.67)	152(50.67)	61(20.33)	31(10.33)	222(74)	78(26)	300

N.B: The figures in the parentheses indicate percentage to the total.

Extent of Tobacco Cultivation in Kushtia District: Table-2 shows the extent of tobacco cultivation in Kushtia district and Bangladesh for the period 1998/99-2005/06. We see that there is an increasing trend of tobacco cultivation in the district. In 1998-99, area of land under tobacco cultivation was 14550 acres while in 2005-06, the figure rose to 20595 acres. Production of tobacco also increased significantly from 6720 metric tons in 1998-99 to 17505 metric tons in 2005-06. On the other hand, the area of land under tobacco cultivation in the whole country remained within 73535 to 79910 thousand acres (BBS, 2008). Table-3 shows the share of Kushtia district in total tobacco production and total area of land under tobacco cultivation during 1998/99-2005/06. Table-4 shows the percentage increase in the tobacco production and the area under tobacco cultivation both in Bangladesh and Kushtia district during the period 1998/99-2005/06.

We observe that the share of Kushtia district in country's total area of land under tobacco cultivation was 18.59 % in 1998/99 which rose to 26.27 % in 2005/06. The share of Kushtia district in the country's total tobacco production also increased drastically from 23.33 % in 1998/99 to 40.98% in 2005/06. During the period 1998/99-2005/06, the area under tobacco cultivation increased by 41.54 % in Kushtia district and only by 0.18 % in whole Bangladesh. Similarly, the increase in tobacco production for the same period was 160.49 % in Kushtia district and 48.32 % in Bangladesh. Therefore, the percentage increase of both tobacco production and the area under tobacco cultivation is higher in Kushtia district than in Bangladesh. These statistics indicate that farmers of this district prefer tobacco cultivation for some reasons.

Table-2: Extent of Tobacco Production in Kushtia District and Bangladesh.

Region	Year	1998/ 99	1999/ 00	2000/ 01	2001/ 02	2002/ 03	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06
Kushtia	Area(acres)	14550	16650	17000	19315	20425	21180	19290	20595
	Production (m.ton)	6720	7990	10270	11625	10375	12960	13985	17505
Bangladesh	Area(acres)	78240	79910	73870	75600	76110	75175	73535	78385
	Production (m.ton)	28795	35480	36755	38080	36840	38690	37955	42710

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2008.

Table-3: Share of Kushtia district in country's total tobacco production and total area under tobacco cultivation, 1998/99-2005/06

Year	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006
Share in Area	18.59	20.83	23.01	25.54	26.83	28.17	26.23	26.27
Share in Production	23.33	22.51	27.94	30.52	28.16	33.49	36.84	40.98

Source: Calculated from Table-2.

Table-4: Percentage increase in tobacco production and area under tobacco cultivation in Kushtia district and Bangladesh, 1998/99-2005/06

Region	Percentage increase in area under tobacco Cultivation	Percentage increase in tobacco production
Kushtia	41.54	160.49
Bangladesh	0.18	48.32

Source: Calculated from Table- 2.

Reasons for Tobacco Cultivation: An inquiry was conducted to know why farmers of this district are extensively engaged in tobacco cultivation. The various reasons cited by the farmers are summarized in table-5 and figure-1. We observe that the majority farmers (36%) were engaged in tobacco cultivation seeing other farmers cultivating it. They were inspired by demonstration effect. The second highest number of farmers (30%) was engaged in tobacco cultivation because it has a guaranteed market and they can earn ready cash. In case of other competing crops, the farmers suffer from the uncertainty of not getting the proper price due to the lack of guaranteed market. However, in case of tobacco, the tobacco companies directly purchase the product from the registered farmers with a reasonable price. The non-registered farmers also can sell their product more or less at a handsome price.

The third highest number (29%) of farmers cited profitability as the reason for cultivating this crop. There is a mirage in the locality that tobacco is a profitable crop and many farmers are caught in this trap. Ancestral occupation was also an important reason for tobacco cultivation and 10.33 percent farmers cited this reason. 8.66% farmers told that they were inspired by the loan facilities of the tobacco companies. As mentioned earlier, out of 300 farmers the majority (208) were small and marginal. The poor farmers have no easy access to institutional credit. By contrast, Tobacco Company's loan is easy to get and the companies provide the farmers with other facilities including the technical help to grow better tobacco. 7.33 % farmers informed that they had little option for cultivating other crops and only 5.0% farmers cited other reasons for cultivating tobacco.

Table-5: Distribution of the farmers according to the reasons for tobacco cultivation.

Reasons	No. of Farmers ¹	Percentage
Demonstration effect	108	36
Guaranteed market/Ready Cash	90	30
Profitable crop	87	29
Ancestral occupation	31	10.33
Company loan	26	8.66
Little option for other crops	22	7.33
Others	15	5.0

¹ the sum of the farmers may not be equal to total number of farmers due to multiple responses.

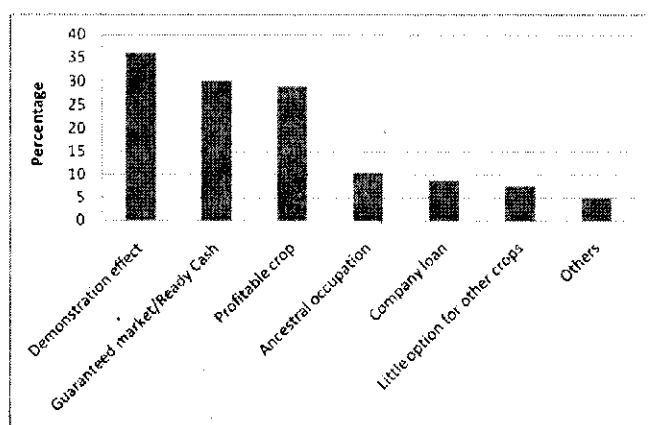


Figure 1: Distribution of farmers according to reasons for tobacco cultivation.

5.1 Consequences of Tobacco Cultivation

5.1.1 Positive Impacts

Earnings of Hard Cash: The farmers of the study area informed that tobacco is a profitable crop and it has a guaranteed market. They get hard cash at a time from the sale of their produce. In case of other crops they frequently suffer from the uncertainty about getting the real price due to market fluctuations. The tobacco companies purchase tobacco at a reasonable price which relieves them from incurring loss. Moreover, they do not have to face the problems associated with marketing their produce. They can sell the entire produce to the tobacco companies at a time and receive a handsome amount of hard cash.

Employment Creation: Poverty and unemployment are two common features of rural economy. The rural people have limited opportunities to be engaged in productive activities. Therefore, disguised unemployment, seasonal unemployment and under-employment are very common to the rural people. Extensive tobacco cultivation in the region has created enormous employment opportunities for the poor people especially for the women and children. Many people have bent their livelihood with tobacco. From the plantation to the curing, a large number of men and women are engaged as laborer. A large number of women and children work in the cigarette and bidi factor. They would otherwise have been unemployed or underemployed. In addition, many people are engaged in tobacco trading as middlemen. In a word, tobacco cultivation in this district has created a scope for the poor and marginal people including women and children to gain employment for several months.

5.1.2 Negative impacts

Impact on Environment: Tobacco cultivation damages environment in a number of ways. Tobacco is a major cause of deforestation because forests are cleared to provide more land for tobacco production and wood for tobacco curing. Deforestation caused by tobacco contributes to soil erosion, flood, and green house effect and global warming.

In the study area, the extensive tobacco cultivation has destroyed the homestead forests. The old tobacco farmers of the area informed that previously there were many old trees in the region. After tobacco cultivation has concentrated in the region, homestead forests were cleared mainly to provide wood for tobacco curing. Deforestation has taken place to such extent that now farmers use straw and hay for tobacco curing. The farmers also informed that tobacco cultivation requires intensive use of

pesticides which, being washed away by rain water has contaminated water of neighboring ponds and canals. They can not use water of ponds and canals for bathing, washing cloths and other necessary purposes.

Impact on Health: The health hazards of tobacco cultivation in the study area beggar description. Every stage of tobacco production imposes a heavy toll on the health of the persons engaged in its production. Tobacco farmers and their family members including children and women and the laborers are exposed to chemical fertilizers and pesticides during plantation and growing, nicotine from green leafs during harvest and fume from kilns during curing. As a result, several diseases are very common to the tobacco farmers and their family members. All the farm families experienced one or more tobacco related diseases which is summarized in table-6 and figure-2.

The Majority of farm families suffer from cough, fatigue, headache, insomnia, breathing problem, chest pain, loss of appetite, leg pain and vomiting. Since all the farm families are attacked with one or more diseases they have to undergo treatment that curtails their income from tobacco.

Table-6: Distribution of farm families according to tobacco related diseases.

Problems reported	No. of families ²	Percentage of families
Cough	260	86.66
Fatigue	225	75.00
Headache	225	75.00
Insomnia	217	72.33
Difficulties of breathing	165	55.00
Chest pain	150	50.00
Vomiting	144	48.00
Loss of appetite	122	46.66
Leg pain	112	37.33
Jaundice	90	30.00
Anemia	83	27.66
Ulcer	72	24.00

² Multiple responses considered.

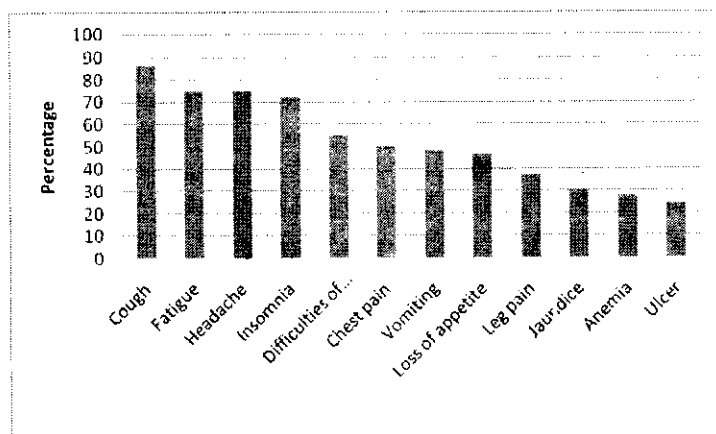


Figure 2: Distribution of farm families according to tobacco related diseases.

Impact on Children's Education: Since tobacco cultivation requires intensive labor use, the children of the majority farm families have to be involved in tobacco related works. The majority of the farmers informed that they involve their children in tobacco related work during tobacco season. Especially, after harvesting; the children have to render labor for tobacco up to next 60 days. Consequently, they have to drop from school and their study at home is also hampered. Table-7 shows that children of 90.66. % families were involved in tobacco related works. Children of more than 50% families dropped from school to help their parents in tobacco related works and in 68 % families children's study at home was hampered. This education costs can not be evaluated in terms of money but it can be realized what a great damage tobacco is causing to these children every year.

Table-7: Distribution of farm families according to children's involvement in tobacco related works and its impact on their education.

Category	No. of families ³	Percentage
Children involve in tobacco related works	272	90.66
Children drop from school to help their families	153	51.00
Children's study at home is hampered	204	68.00

³ Multiple responses considered

Impact on Cow Rearing, Poultry and Milk Production: Previously woods were used for tobacco curing. But tobacco cultivation in the district for many years has damaged homestead forest. Now tobacco is cured using huge amount of straw and hey which is the feed for cow. Due to extensive tobacco cultivation the price of cow feed (straw and hey) has increased enormously leading to the sharp fall in the number of cows in the region. Consequently, the meat and milk production have also decreased sharply causing a threat to the nutritional status of the people especially of the babies. The farmers of the study area informed that the total number of cows in the region had reduced to about fifty percent. Since women remain occupied with tobacco, domestic poultry production has also reduced to a great extent.

Impact on Domestic Fuel: Tobacco cultivation has also caused fuel crisis in the area by absorbing huge amount of fire wood and straw which was previously used for cooking. The rural people previously used cow dung as cooking fuel after drying them in sun. Since cow rearing in the region has reduced, cow dung has also become scarce. The scarcity of cow dung has intensified fuel crisis. Consequently, the farm families use tobacco waste as cooking fuel which is hazardous for health and women mainly pay the price in this case.

Cow dung was also a source of income for the rural poorer households. They used to collect the cow dung from the open field and after processing sold it to the other households. Therefore, scarcity of cow dung has caused loss of income for the poorer people.

Other Impacts: During tobacco season the farmers and their wives have to remain so busy with tobacco that they have little time to take care of their children properly. Moreover, in the farm families the husband and wife get little time for each other. Consequently, they have lost their normal family life. The majority of the farmers informed that tobacco had destroyed their family happiness.

5.2 Farmers' Awareness about Environmental and Health Hazards of Tobacco

Since the majority of the farmers of this area are engaged in tobacco cultivation, it is very important to know whether they are aware of the environmental and health impacts of tobacco. With this end in view an investigation was made the result of which is given in table-8. It is interesting to note that the majority of the farmers are aware of the environmental and health hazards of tobacco. Out of 300 farmers, 192

(64%) know that tobacco is hazardous for environment and 160 (about 54%) know that tobacco is hazardous for health.

Table-8: Farmers awareness about environmental and health hazards of tobacco cultivation

Aware	No. of farmers ⁴	percentage
Environmental hazards	192	64.00
Health hazards	160	53.33

⁴ Multiple responses considered.

5.3 Attitude of the Farmers toward Giving up Tobacco Cultivation

An investigation was made to know whether the farmers want to continue tobacco production or quit it. It is a good sign that the majority of the farmers are willing to give up tobacco cultivation. Out of 300 farmers, 194 (about 65%) farmers are willing to give up tobacco cultivation and 106 (above 35 %) farmers are willing to continue its cultivation (see table-9). An inquiry was also made to know why they want or do not want to give up tobacco cultivation. The result is contained in table-10, table-11 and figure-3 and figure -4.

Table-9: Farmers' attitude toward giving up tobacco cultivation.

Total No. of farmers	No. of farmers want to quit tobacco cultivation	No. of farmers do not want to quit tobacco cultivation
300	194 (64.67 %)	106 (35.33%)

Table-10: Reasons for wanting to give up tobacco cultivation

Reasons	No. of farmers ⁵	Percentage
Excessive labor use	92	47.42
Hazardous for health	77	39.69
High production cost	35	18.04
Hampers children's education	32	10.66
Comparatively Low Profit	25	12.88
Others	18	09.27

⁵Multiple responses considered

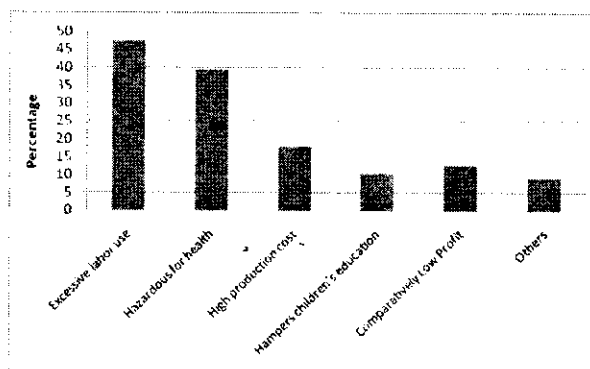


Figure 3: Reasons for wanting to give up tobacco cultivation

We observe that the majority farmers (47.42 %) want to quit tobacco cultivation because it needs intensive labor employment. Tobacco leaves very limited time for them to rest and take meal timely. The next highest number of farmers (39.69%) wants to quit tobacco cultivation because it is hazardous for health. This opinion has conformity with their awareness about health hazards of tobacco cultivation. Above 18 percent farmers want to quit tobacco cultivation because it entails high costs, about 13 percent want to quit because they have realized that tobacco is not as profitable as it seems to be, more than 10 percent farmers want to quit because it hampers children's education, and above 9 percent farmers cited other reasons for wanting to give up tobacco cultivation (see table 10 and figure 3).

Table-11: Reasons for not wanting to give up tobacco cultivation

Table-11 and Figure-4 show that out of 106 farmers, the majority (about

Reasons	No. of farmers ⁶	Percentage
Ready Cash	62	58.49
Profitability	54	50.94
Cooperation of Tobacco Company (TC)	30	28.30
Ancestral occupation	22	20.75

⁶ Multiple responses considered

58.50 %) do not want to give up tobacco cultivation because it earns ready cash followed by about 51 % who do not want to quit because it is a profitable crop. Tobacco Company's cooperation accounts for 28.30 percent farmers' and ancestral occupation accounts for 20.75 percent farmers' attitude towards not giving up tobacco cultivation.

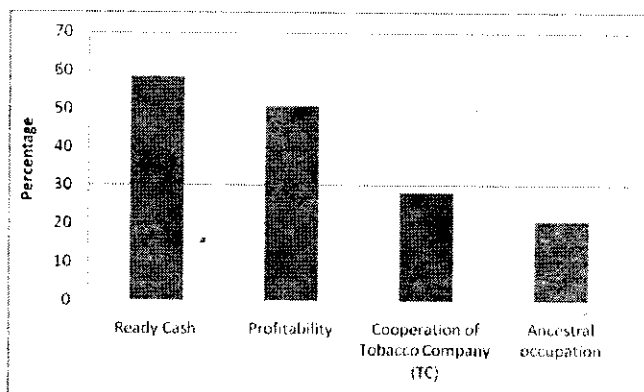


Figure 4: Reasons for not wanting to give up tobacco cultivation

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Although tobacco is a profitable crop, its negative impacts far outweigh the positive impacts. Extensive tobacco cultivation in the district has given rise to socio-economic, environmental and health related problems which include deforestation, water and air pollution, diseases, fuel crisis, reduction of cow rearing, meat and milk crisis, hampering of children's education and loss of normal family life.

Bangladesh is an over-populated country. On the other hand, more land is being used for tobacco cultivation every year. If this trend continues, there may be an acute food shortage in the district and it may also affect the food security of the whole country. The rising trend of tobacco cultivation in the district is an alarming message for us. Therefore, cultivation of this environment- unfriendly crop should be reined in as soon as possible. It is hopeful that the majority of the farmers are aware of the environmental and health hazards of tobacco and they want to quit it. Appropriate measures should be undertaken by the government and NGOs to divert the farmers to the cultivation of other beneficial crops. In this context, the following recommendations have been suggested:

- i) The government should, first of all, undertake a strong motivational program for tobacco farmers to divert them to the cultivation of other crops. The government has to make the farmers realize that tobacco is no longer a profitable crop if free household labor and the negative impacts (health costs, environmental cost and other costs) are properly taken into consideration.
- ii) The government has to ensure proper market for other crops by various measures so that the farmers get real price for their

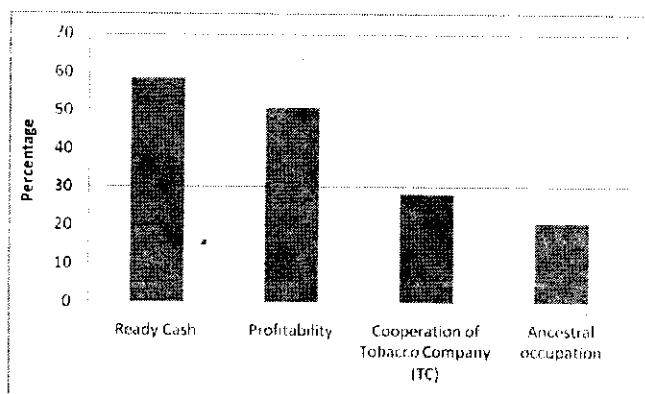


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- ii) The government has to ensure proper market for other crops by various measures so that the farmers get real price for their

produce. The government should ensure minimum price for the output, adopt effective procurement system and other necessary measures as the situation demands.

- iii) In order to divert the framers to the cultivation of other crops, the government has to ensure necessary loan facilities for the poor farmers through the government commercial banks and provide all kinds of technical cooperation through agricultural extension department. The government has to ensure that the farmers have easy access to quality inputs such as seeds, fertilizer and pesticides.
- iv) The demand side measures must also be integrated with the supply side measures to get long lasting result. The government has to reduce the demand for tobacco by imposing higher tax. The government should not hesitate to impose higher tax on this harmful product.
- v) At present, the NGOs are playing significant role in the development of Bangladesh. Several NGOs are engaged in anti-tobacco movement and augmenting sustainable development. Their action has to be broadened and intensified. It would be very difficult for the government alone to extricate the farmers from tobacco trap. The government should lend full cooperation to the NGOs to perform their activities properly.

We expect that the proper and sound application of these recommendations would divert the farmers from tobacco cultivation to the cultivation of alternative crops. But any isolated and piecemeal action will not bring significant result.

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Decentralized LG Policy for Bangladesh A Proposed Framework

Mohammad Rafiqul Islam Talukdar*

Abstract: *It is widely recognized that unless we do have an aggregated or national decentralized local governance policy, we will not have a vision and road map for local governance development in the country. Thus, this social input -proposed national decentralized local governance policy for Bangladesh - is crafted for consideration of the Local Government Division (LGD), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MLGRD&C), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The proposed decentralized local governance policy envisions placing democratic decentralization along with the fiscal autonomy and local administrative reforms in an attempt to develop political capacity of local citizens for demanding accountability and engaging local authorities towards Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and economic advancement of the rural areas.*

Even the proposed policy is trendy of its kind with crafting vision, mission, goal, objectives and principles, designing structural, functional and legal frameworks, and addressing key issues and concerns, it would just be a paper work if it does not go with a strong advocacy strategy to finalize as well as to implement the policy. Given this reality, the full study report would focus on policy advocacy as well as implementation strategy.

Introduction

The Context and Purpose

The absence of a local governance policy is supposed to be a prioritized governance problem in Bangladesh, which affects effective implementation of current round decentralization theory i.e. democratic decentralization in line with the fiscal autonomy and local administrative reforms. The absence of the avowed policy also affects inherent and institutional linkages of the local government bodies. In some cases

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overlapping of functions are evidenced in different LG institutions, while in other cases lack of coordination and inter-cooperation are missing. More importantly, unless we do have an aggregated or national decentralized local governance policy, we will not have a vision and road map for the local governance development in the country.

Despite the fact that we have a local government friendly constitution¹ and separate Act or law for every local government unit, the nonexistence of the stated policy allows the Acts to run the local government institutions with separate identity without unique vision, mission, goal, objectives and road map for sustainable development of the local governance in Bangladesh.

Thus, as part of Management Research Report (MRR) of MDM program at Asian Institute of Management (AIM), Manila, a proposed national decentralized local governance policy framework for Bangladesh is developed, which is, indeed, a proposed policy for consideration of the Local Government Division (LGD), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MLGRD&C), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Importantly, the AIM study would widen to fit an advocacy strategy for the final policy to be initiated, adopted and/or adapted by the LGD followed by the approval of the Cabinet. The study also recognizes that the implementation of the policy would require a sound implementation strategy, and thus it would incorporate a tailor-made draft implementation strategy for the proposed policy to be implemented by the LGD, concerned line ministries, departments and agencies under the guidance of the proposed National Local Government Commission in this policy framework. The policy advocacy as well implementation strategy, however, is not the part of this working paper. The full study report would focus on policy advocacy as well as implementation strategy.

Theoretical Perspective

In general sense, decentralization is the process of transferring power from national government to its agency, private institution, regional and local government. Though traditionally there are four forms of decentralization (i.e. deconcentration, delegation, devolution and

¹ Please see Article 11, 59 and 60 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

privatization),² most of the thinkers, for example, Mawhood, Uphoff, Rondinelli and Cheema pertinently emphasize on devolutionary decentralization which resulted in democratic decentralization.³

A full-fledged democratic decentralization not only creates environment for wider participation, social inclusiveness and for citizens to demand accountability of local authority, but also generates a sense of transparency and accountability of the country's political system and government.

The current decentralization literature recognizes the importance of the central state in bringing about this higher standard of decentralization and so demands from central governments sophisticated coordination and oversight as well as the willingness to allow autonomy (especially fiscal autonomy) and democratic participation at the local level (Crook, 2003; Olowu, 2003; Dauda, 2006). In turn, local Government institutions must show a certain worthiness of autonomy by providing an innovative, transparent and accountable administration along with a participatory political process geared in alleviating marginalization and poverty (Dauda, 2006).

In fact, the emphasis on decentralization began with the broadening of the concept of development beyond economic growth to include growth-with-equity and fulfillment of basic needs of the poorer sections of the community. This entails wider participation in the economic, social and political processes and structures that enables the poor to help themselves in increasing their productivity and incomes. It is also believed that decentralization is a more efficient way of meeting local needs (Alam et al., 1994 cited in Hussain, 2010). And Rondinelli (1981) puts forward two

² The use of the term 'decentralization' varies depending on its different modes, but the most commonly used are, deconcentration that means redistribution of administrative responsibilities within the central government, that is to be decentralized units of central government; delegation indicating delegation of decision-making and management authority for specific functions to semi-autonomous or parastatal organizations outside the normal bureaucratic structure of central government; devolution meaning transfer of authority to autonomous and independent units of local governments with corporate status (often with supervisory power and financial role retained by the central government); and privatization that encompasses transfer of functions from government to non-government organizations (Rondinelli and Cheema, 1983 cited in Hussain, 2010).

For details please see Begum et al., 1998; Mawhood P., 1985; Rahman M.H., 1989; Rondinelli D.A., Cheema G.S. (eds.), 1985.

major arguments for encouraging decentralization. Firstly, decentralization is necessary to accelerate the pace and the spread of the benefits of growth, integrate diverse regions and use the scarce resources more efficiently to promote development in poverty stricken or economically backward areas. Secondly, poorest groups are to obtain a larger share of government services and means must be found to decentralize public service delivery and involve the beneficiaries in planning and decision making at local level.

Furthermore, in a world of rampant ethnic conflicts and separatist movements, decentralization is also regarded as a way of diffusing social and political tensions and ensuring local cultural and political economy (Bardhan, 2002). Moreover, decentralization is considered a means to achieve good governance in terms of a high level of public participation, accountability of public officials and low corruption, which is a crucial condition for poverty alleviation (Steiner, 2007).

It is gratifying to see that researchers are recognizing that decentralization takes place within a particular political context and, therefore evolves differently in each country (Smoke, 2003); yet, the requirements still set uniformly high standards (Dauda, 2006). Importantly, Bangladesh is stepping ahead to the latest form of decentralization - democratic decentralization - but the basic challenge here is formulation of a decentralized local governance policy. Anecdotal evidence, participant observation and past experience as well as studies (for example, Talukdar, 2009) support that the absence of the policy results in the unstable local government structure as well as the frequent changing pattern of the local governance power dynamics, weakens the inherent institutional linkages between and/or among the local government units. The policy absence also allows the local government bodies to govern these institutions without a definite vision as well as road map for the development of local governance in the country.

Nevertheless, a more balanced and nuanced view of democratic decentralization, and integrated perspective on how to approach it in Bangladesh is probable to emerge with the support of this study and policy framework. Specifically, the study is likely to discover success factors and barriers for positive outcomes of democratic decentralization as well as its considerable ways for overcoming limitations to the

Bangladesh context⁴ to get the development encountered through local governance.

Specific Objectives

There are four specific objectives of the study:

- i. An analysis on strengths and weaknesses of the Local Government Division⁵ for the policy design and implementation overseeing, and opportunities and threats of external environment⁶ for identifying expected outcomes and challenges of the policy implementation.
- ii. Stakeholder as well as Force field analysis for understanding the set of connections of the forces for and against the proposed policy so as to craft the policy advocacy strategy in a right way.
- iii. Development of a national decentralized local governance policy framework for Bangladesh.
- iv. Tailoring a proposed policy implementation strategy (which is, however, not the part of this article)

Study Methodology

This is a qualitative as well as explorative⁶ study by nature. It allows in-depth interview of key stakeholders including chiefs of local government institutions, local government officials and senior officials of the Local Government Division, and Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, discussion with experts, practitioners and a legislator. The study also follows review of published materials, project documents, staff memoranda, and judicious using of participant observation and past

⁴ Here in its local government, the Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad are facing a transition period although there is a probability that the stalemate of their evolution would somewhat be over by amending some controversial aspects of laws, and by absolutely functioning new local government Acts with swiftly issuing subsequent rules and regulations, and by conducting Zila Parishad election soon. These prescriptions, however, are unlikely to work sustainably unless the focus shifts to the holistic approach with the system perspective that calls for a decentralized local governance policy.

⁵ Here external environment denotes the society as a whole in general and local government institutions in particular.

⁶ See Booth, Colomb and Williams, 2003; Rugg and Petre, 2006; Dawson, 2002.

professional as well as consultancy experience. As such, the study anchors Focused Synthesis Method⁷ and Participant Observation Method⁸. It also involves other supportive study techniques like SWOT Analysis⁹ and Force-field Analysis.

SWOT Analysis

The Environmental or SWOT Analysis has two aspects. The First one deals with the Internal Analysis that includes analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the proponent agent - Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The Second one is External Analysis that focuses on the opportunities and threats analysis of external environment.

Figure 1: SWOT Diagram

Internal and External Analysis	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieving the objective
Internal Origin attributes of the organization <i>Local Government Division</i>	S Strengths	W Weaknesses
External Origin attributes of the environment <i>Country context and social, political as well as local government institutional perspective</i>	O Opportunities	T Threats

Source: Adapted from PCARRD, 2010

⁷ Focused Synthesis allows collecting and documenting information as well as data from a range of sources as diverse literature review, researchers' personal experience, web and media evidence, legislative hearing, court verdict, staff memorandum, unpublished project or study document, anecdotal evidence and story, citation or discussion with experts, practitioners and stakeholders (Talukdar 2012 and 2013a).

⁸ Such research involves a range of well-defined, though variable techniques: informal interviews, direct observation, participation in the life of the group, collective discussions, analyses of personal documents produced within the group, self-analysis, results from activities undertaken off or online, and life-histories (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland, 1998).

⁹ Strengths and weaknesses analysis of internal environment and opportunities and threats analysis of external environment.

Internal Analysis

Given the analysis of mission and functions of LGD and in-depth interview of a number of its senior officials as well as elected chiefs of local government institutions and discussion with experts, the following strengths and weaknesses of LGD, particularly regarding its aptitude towards decentralized local governance policy initiation, adoption and adaptation and/or policy implementation are noted hereunder:

Strengths

- LGD has a strong organogram with a number of qualified senior officials and it is one of the oldest divisions under one of the oldest ministries. It is under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, which is a strong ministry under the stewardship of a Minister and a State Minister. Importantly, its Minister is the Secretary of the ruling party.
- Plenty of Evidence, for instance, from management of Local Governance Support Project-Learning and Innovation Component, and Upazila Governance Support Project, support that LGD has outstanding project management and overseeing ability. It has adequate amount of resource allocation and sufficient number of development projects, and apparently seems that it has relatively less corruption practices.
- This Division drafted all of the exiting local government Acts/laws¹⁰ that are trendy of these kinds except some substantive constraints. It has also proven records of initiating and developing concerned rules, regulations and circulars."
- More importantly, experts believe that it has enough policy initiation and adoption ability. The reason why it is yet to initiate a decentralized local governance policy is that this is subject to a substantive political decision of the national government. Unless

¹⁰ The Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009; The Local Government (City Corporation) (Amendment) Act, 2011; The Local Government (Pourashava) Act, 2009; The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009; The Upazila Parishad Act, 1998; The Upazila Parishad (Reintroduction of the Repealed Act and Amendment) Act, 2009; The Upazila Parishad (Amendment) Act, 2011; The Local Government (Union Parishad) (Amendment) Act, 2010; Village Court Act, 2006; The Zila Parishad Act, 2000; Chittagong Hill Regionnal Council Act, 1998; Rangamati Hill District Council Act, 1989; Khagrachori Hill District Council Act, 1989; Bandarban Hill District Council Act, (1989).

¹¹ Most of the old local government rules and regulations were drafted and/or issued by this Division. And it is currently on progress of drafting all rules and regulations under the Acts/laws passed on or after 2009.

the government provides LGD with green signal to do so, it cannot do anything regarding this policy, and that is why this proposed policy requires a strong advocacy strategy.

Weaknesses

- This Study supports that it has inability to manage and disburse ADP and other project grants in time. Participant observation supports that LGSP and LGSP-LIC grants, for instance, would have not been disbursed in time. And in some years' last fiscal quarterly installment was used to being disbursed almost nearly the national budget initiation time, which would get serious concern of the local government institutions as the expenditures were subject to adjustment before the end of the fiscal year. Therefore, the stated quarter fund might be misused and/or utilized in improper schemes.
- Participant observation supports that its MIS is yet to be full-fledged and website is not being updated in time.¹²
- Participant observation also supports that its out-reach and communication system is yet to be ICT based in satisfactory level in practice, in spite of the fact that the lowest unit of the rural local government institutions (i.e. the Union Parishad) holds the Union Information and Service Centre with well equipped ICTs and services.
- This Study also supports that many of its senior officials have some political bias in favor of the ruling party. Thus, despite the fact that it has ability to discharge its obliged duty of initiating and designing the relevant policies, it is inactive here with the issue of national decentralized local governance policy since it is a politically sensitive decision. Once again, unless the political wing of the government is willing to put forward the issue to the agenda of LGD, it will not be doable.
- After the policy approval, the major concern would be how to implement the policy. And regarding the likely policy implantation, research notices that LGD does not have enough capability at this moment. As such, the proposed policy implementation strategy may focus on its competency building as well.

¹² See the website www.lgd.gov.bd

External Analysis

Country Context

The constitution, formulated immediately after the independence, equally lauded for democracy and decentralized local government system in Bangladesh. None of these aspects of the constitution has, however, reached into sustainable standard over the span of the periods. Even though strengthening local government institutions is imperative here, it has been straining for years just at academic works, political debates, election manifestos, and at reform objectives and talk shows.

Study¹³ identifies that in spite of a long heritage of the Local Government in Bangladesh, until recent development, decentralization herein was hardly considered a pragmatic means to achieve good governance. Moreover, changing pattern as well as power dynamics of the local government structure is a severe challenge for the development of a pro-poor local governance system in Bangladesh.

Local Government Institutional Analysis

The underneath structure of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is tailored concerning to the precedence based on the spirit of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh:

Table 1: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Executive Body	Legislative Body	Judicial Body
President	National Parliament ¹⁵	Supreme Court ¹⁶
Prime Minister and Cabinet ¹⁴	-	Lower Court
Department of Defense Services	-	Administrative Tribunal
Attorney General	-	
Local Government ¹⁷	-	

Source: Talukdar, 2009

¹³ Through in-depth interview of elected representatives and public officials of local government institutions, senior officials of the Local Government Division and Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tract Affairs, and discussion with experts, practitioners and a legislator, and participant observation as well as past professional and consultancy experience.

¹⁴ As we hold a unitary as well as the parliamentary form of government, herein reality is that the Prime Minister is the kingpin of the Government, and the President holds just an ornamental position.

¹⁵ There are 300 elected members and 50 nominated women members.

¹⁶ Consist of Appellate and High Court Divisions.

¹⁷ Three-type rural local government institutions (i.e. Zila Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad), two-type special local government institutions (i.e. Chittagong Hill Regional Council and Chittagong Hill District Council), and two-type urban local government institutions (i.e. City Corporation and Municipality) excluding the cantonment board.

Importantly, two ministries coordinate with the local government institutions: One is for rural and urban local government institutions, and another is for special local government institutions at Chittagong hill area. Table 2 shows which one is responsible for what.

Table 2: Ministries Responsible for the Coordination of LG Institutions

Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives <i>Local Government Division</i>	
<i>Special Local Government</i>	<i>Rural Local Government</i>	<i>Urban Local Government</i>
Chittagong Hill Regional Council(1)		
Chittagong Hill District Councils (3)	Zilla Parishad (64-3) = 61	City Corporation (10)
Traditional Raja (3) and Mouza Based Headman -karbari (472) System		
Upazila Parishad (25)	Upazila Parishad (482-25)+ 9 New = 466	Municipality (398-3) = 395
Municipality (3)		
Union Parishad (118)	Union Parishad (4498-118) = 4380	Cantonment Board (One in Every Cantonment Area)
Notes: There is legal debate whether Chittagong Hill Regional Council is to be considered as local government unit/institution or not. Upazila Parishads, Municipalities and Union Parishads at Hill areas functionally do not have link with Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, and have direct linked with Local Government Division. And literarily, Cantonment Boards are not considered as a Local Government institutions.		

Source: Talukdar, 2013

In fact, local government in Bangladesh, especially its rural local government institutions, is passing a transition period. There are understanding gaps between the elected local government bodies and the legislators, and political elites and civil society proponents. There is also a shadow stress between the local bureaucracy and elected representatives.

However, to surmount this transition and to bridge the gaps both from the viewpoints of structural decentralization and institutional democratization, meticulous intellectual contributions, particularly forming a robust decentralized local governance policy¹⁸ and strategy for consideration of the Local Government Division, are sturdily essential, while the SWOT Analysis would help here understand policy perspective (as summarized at Table 3).

¹⁸ A number of recent studies suggest that the outcome of decentralization policies crucially depends on the extent to which central management is replaced by democratic institutions ensuring that the community can exercise control over government affairs at the local level (Eckardt, 2008).

Table 3: SWOT Perspective to the Policy Design

Local Government Division Country context as well as local government institutional	Internal Environment	Strengths	Weakness
	External Environment	Opportunities	Threats
		✦✦✦✦✦	✦✦✦✦✦✦✦
			✦✦

The Table 3 shows the opportunities of external environment prevail over the threats, whereas weaknesses of internal environment outweigh the strengths. Thus, the proposed policy and its advocacy as well as implantation strategy would be design based on the perspective of opportunities of the external environment and weaknesses of internal environment.

Force-Field Analysis

Force-field Analysis follows the SWOT Analysis and discussion with stakeholders, experts, practitioners and policy makers. It is a useful technique for looking at all the forces for and against a plan. It helps one weigh the importance up these factors and decide whether a plan is worth implementing. In effect, Force-field Analysis helps frame a policy strategically and design its advocacy as well as implementation strategy carefully.

Table 4: Force-field Matrix

Forces for Change or Development (1-5)		Plan of Action	Forces against Change or Development (1-5)	
4	Local Government Institutions	Development of a proposed decentralized local governance policy for Bangladesh, and then tailoring a policy advocacy strategy and a policy implementation strategy	Legislators	3.5
4	Donors as well as Development Partners		Government	3.5
3.5	Civil Society Organizations		Local Government Division	3
3	Peoples/Citizens		Main Opposition Political Party and its Alliance	1.5
3	Media	So forces for outweigh the forces against, and as such aforementioned plan of Action is justified	Local Bureaucrats	1
2	Experts and/or Academics			
1.5	Legislators			
1.5	Small Political Parties			
1	Development Practitioners	Prime Minister (Neutral Force) (+/-) 5		
23.5	Total		Total	12.5

Figure 2: Force-field Column Chart

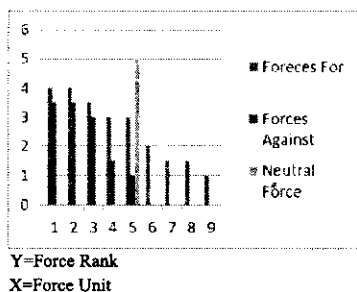
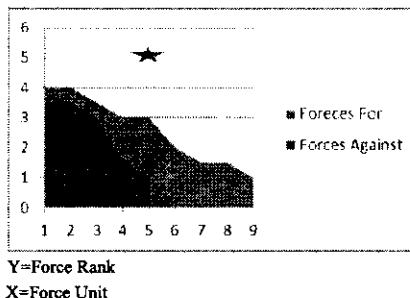


Figure 3: Force-field Area Chart



The main forces for are local government institutions, development partners, civil society organizations, citizens, media, local governance experts and some small political parties, while key forces against are legislators, government, Local Government Division and even main opposition political party.¹⁹ The research also observes that there are a few number of legislators who are in favor of strengthening local government system, and thus they acknowledge the importance and essence of decentralized local governance policy here for Bangladesh. It is true for the Local Government Division officials as well, but at the force field figure, study does not document it, as these officials are not officially extending their support, given the context that they are loyal to the government intention.

Notwithstanding neither the Local Government Division nor the government holds strong negative influence, but the resources at their disposal are very high. Importantly, the media observation and past participant experience, particularly with UNDP, allow the study to document the Prime Minister's, and Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister's attitude towards local governance.

The former one has strong personal positive mind-set for strengthening local government system and so to the improvement of pro-poor local governance, but officially she is neutral, while the concerned Minister holds vigilant attitude that allow him to stress back to the concern of history of decentralization in Bangladesh. In fact, historical evidence

¹⁹ Although Local Government Division is a part of the government, the study puts it here separately because the former is particularly responsible for this policy initiation, while the government is a holistic mechanism where Prime Minister as well as Cabinet is the main concern.

supports that during the autocratic regimes there were strong emphases on decentralized local governance system, but those were intentional decentralization, intended to sabotage the democracy at the central government. Substantiations of that type of artificial decentralization make him a bit worried to fortify the democratic decentralization. His individual belief, in fact, goes with Davey (2003) who points out that extent of local discretion would be a matter of balance between national and local interests. Neither central control nor local autonomy should have unchallenged priority.

Importantly, research notices that the Prime Minister and the concerned Minister for the local government are two powerful forces for the decision whether proposed decentralized local governance policy would be adopted or adapted so as to proceed to the Cabinet for approval. Even if the Prime Minister would alone get convinced with advocacy movement for the proposed policy, and thus she holds official stand to go with this policy with adoption and/or adaptation, in the context Bangladesh political culture, the advocacy movement would succeed.

The result of these two-dimensional forces (i.e. forces for and against), however, allows the Local Government Division to move steadily toward paradigm shifting to the development of local government system and local governance practices. The avowed movement is evidenced to the performance of developing and/or modifying all Acts/ laws concerning the local governance, and of conducting local government elections.²⁰ Given this analysis, it is to acknowledge that this is the time for mitigating the academic and/or policy bankruptcy for the development of a robust local government as well as local governance system in Bangladesh. Thus, developing this proposed national decentralized local governance policy followed by policy advocacy strategy and implementation strategy is significant to the context of Bangladesh.

Decentralized Local Governance Policy Framework

Following the SWOT as well as Force-field Analysis and taking into account the International Guidelines on Decentralization and the Strengthening of Local Authorities²¹ along with the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,²² local government Acts/laws in

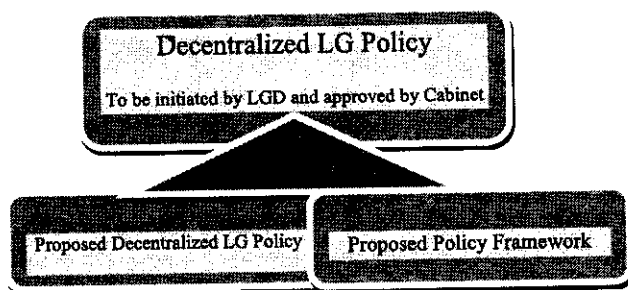
²⁰ Despite the fact that Zila Parishad election is yet to held

²¹ See UN-HABITAT, 2007

²² See Articles 11, 59 and 60 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh and GAF²³ proposed Decentralization Policy in Bangladesh, the present Proposed Decentralized Local Governance Policy for Bangladesh,²⁴ has, after a couple of months of research,²⁵ been tailor-made. Figure 4 shows the how decentralized local governance policy would be crafted.

Figure 4: Crafting decentralized local governance policy



Proposed Policy

Vision

The vision is to develop robust local governance and pro-poor local development system outfitted with structural decentralization and institutional democratization through politically, fiscally and administratively decentralized local government institutions in pursuance of the constitutional commitment and the international guidelines on decentralization.²⁶

²³ Governance Advocacy Forum (GAF) is a renowned platform operating at national level that aims to promote democratic decentralization, strong local government and governance through policy advocacy (see <http://www.gafbd.org/html/aboutus.asp?st=1>).

²⁴ GAF proposed Decentralization Policy in Bangladesh was drafted by Professor Akhter Hussain, Department of Public Administration, Dhaka University, in 2010.

²⁵ The methods and/or techniques of research applied here are in-depth interview of a number of senior officials of the Local Government Division, and Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tract Affairs, and Public Officials and Elected Chiefs of local government institutions, and also discussion with experts, practitioners and a legislator, and participant observation along with social and mass-media observation, and review of constitution, local government Acts/laws, rules and regulations, and international guidelines on decentralization.

²⁶ International guidelines on decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities, UN-HABITAT (2007), envisions serving as a catalyst for policy and institutional reforms at the national level to further enable and empower local authorities.

Mission

To develop a fully decentralized local government system at all spheres of the local government units so as to ensure a full-fledged deliberate democracy and good local governance through citizen engagement, inclusiveness and empowerment, and through ensuring down-ward, horizontal and vertical accountability and maintaining a robust institutional linkage between national government and local government and among the local government institutions.

Goal

To guarantee that this decentralized local governance policy will be translated fully in laws, rules, regulations and practices by 2018, and to ensure that the public services delivery will be made available with fully decentralized approaches so as to meet the civic satisfaction and needs without irrational system loss or corruption practices by 2020.

Overall and Specific Objectives

The overall objective of the policy is to facilitate political, economic, social, administrative and developmental empowerment of local citizens to attain the rights to development and public services, access to the knowledge and information, ability to the decent standard of living, and affordability to long, healthy and secure life.

The specific objectives of the policy are to:

- (i) ensure a full-fledged political, fiscal and administrative decentralization;
- (ii) strengthen accountability and transparency of the decentralized system by making local leaders and service providers directly accountable to the communities they serve through citizen inclusiveness and empowerment with the engagement in decision making, planning, budgeting, implementation and follow up actions (Adapted from GAF proposed policy, 2010);
- (iii) enhance the sensitivity and responsiveness of government agencies to the local needs by placing the planning, financing, management, and control of service provision at the point where services are provided, and by enhancing capacities of local institutions so that they are able to take into consideration the local environment and needs (Ibid); and

- (iv) develop sustainable development planning and management capacity of local government institutions that will serve as the driving force for planning, mobilization, and implementation of social, ecological, political, and economic development of the community and thus of the country (Ibid).

Principles

The basic principles of this policy are as following:

Unity of Diversity: Ensuring that national unity is met with local autonomy, identity, interests and diversity.

Balanced Decentralization: Making certain that a nuanced move towards a balanced political, fiscal and administrative decentralization for the local governance and development is going on, but the democratic decentralization is subject to be met immediately in all local government institutions.

Equitable Distribution: Ensuring that reasonable distribution of reserved, transferred and residual functions and services between the national and local government, and between the local government institutions is customized and similarly equitable distribution of revenue collected from the local level by the national government is tailored between the levels of government as stated above. As such, financial equalization, both vertical (i.e. between state and local authorities) and horizontal (i.e. among local authorities) level would sensibly be ensured.

Material, Financial and Human Resources: Ensuring that the material, financial and human resources of local government institutions are commensurate with their tasks and responsibilities, and the institutions are allowed to determine and appoint their own internal administrative structure with their own resources, in addition to the transferred departments, so as to adapt with local needs and to ensure effective management. Moreover, ensuring that they have access to a broad variety of local financial resources including incurring taxes, levies and service charges provided by the government tax schedule for the particular local government unit, and inter governmental transfers along with development project assistance. Further to these, local government institutions should, within the legislation (i.e. Acts/laws) and/or rules and regulations, have access to national and international capital markets (i.e. sub-national borrowing authority) and/or to the public-private partnership model for capital investment.

Responsibility with Authority: Ensuring that the full control and authority are exercised on transferred departments including their responsibilities and budgets and/or allocations from the national government.

Transparency and Accountability: Ensuring that openness and transparency, and down-ward, horizontal and vertical accountability of all local government institutions, local government division, and other concerned departments of line ministries regarding local governance are maintained.

Engagement and Empowerment: Ensuring that citizen engagement, inclusiveness and empowerment would be the underlying principle in local decision-making, planning, budgeting, implementation and follow-up Actions. As such, the citizen interest ought to be the central to the outputs as well as outcomes of local governance and development. Thus, the legal provision for standing and steering committees is necessary here. And such committees need to be formed and/or Activated in timely and full-fledged manner with the involvement of local stakeholders, especially diverse sectors of the community leaders, so as to get the civic engagement in monitoring and gearing up public services delivery and other expenditure responsibilities with transparent and accountable way. Importantly, the participation of the women and youth embedded in all local initiatives would be highly encouraged here.

Equality and Non-discrimination: Ensuring that all individuals are equal and are entitled to the human rights including the rights to development and public services, access to the knowledge and information, ability to the decent standard of living, and affordability to long, healthy and secure life without discrimination of any kind.

Rule of Law: Ensuring that local government institutions, alongside the state authorities at different levels, have obliged to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, rule of law and social justice.

Legislative Provision: Ensuring that in addition to the constitutional mandates, legislative provisions (i.e. Acts /laws) clearly declare the local government units, and articulate the roles, responsibilities and institutional linkages as well as inter governmental relations among the local government institutions and between local government and national government. Furthermore, it is to be ensured that rules and regulations are aligned with the concerned Acts/laws.

Code of Conduct: Ensuring that the different codes of conduct for local

public civil servants and political office holders are made available by the government, that guide politicians and officials of local authorities to discharge their tasks with a sense of responsibility and accountability to the citizens. However, the material and remunerative conditions of local politicians should be as high as they could continue their commitment to the common good of society with strong integrity and high degree of transparency. As such, disclosure of asset and liabilities of local political office holders are necessary.

Public Service Delivery: Ensuring that the public services delivery will be made available with fully decentralized approaches that meet the civic satisfaction and needs without irrational system loss and/or corruption practices.

Institutional Capacity: Ensuring that bridging communal leadership and institutional capacity building initiatives are initiated both at local level and national level, and these are supported by the national government and development projects.

Empowerment of the Local Authorities: Ensuring that local government bodies are freely exercising their powers, including those bestowed upon them by the national government, within the limits defined by legislation. This means these powers must be exclusive, and should not be undermined by other authority - not even by any individual legislator. Legislation, however, must address the provisions for separation of authorities for revenue assignments, expenditure responsibilities and public services delivery, and administrative, political and social justice authority. This prescription allows authority for revenue assignments including inter-governmental transfers to the councilors, authority for expenditure responsibilities and public services delivery to the secretary of the concerned local government institution, and administrative, political including networking, stakeholder-partnership, public-private partnership, local government borrowing and social justice authority to the chief elected representative (i.e. chairman or mayor). This chief political official, however, should have the discretionary authority to oversee the all other assignments and responsibilities, especially the public services delivery affairs. And the political officials should not involve directly in implementation, rather they will oversee and make accountable the other implantation authorities.

Thus, local government institutions' right to develop partnership with civil society, especially with Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

and Non Government Organizations (NGOs), and with private sector and other interested stakeholders, and also with other spheres of government, needs to be addressed by the legislation and/or rules and regulations so that inclusive development process here is set forth. Furthermore, participation of local government representatives in national and/or regional decision making and planning as well budgeting process is significant to the context of empowerment of local authorities and so to the balanced national development. And as such, national and/or regional government should involve consultation with local government bodies and their associations regarding any policy, Act/law, rules and regulations, and also relating to planning, budgeting and designing of development projects/programmes on local governance and development.

Supervision of Local Authorities: Ensuring that supervision, suspension or dissolution of local government elected representatives or local councils are exercised in accordance with procedures in Acts/laws, but these must be done by an independent local government commission, and subject to oversee such suspension or dissolution Activities by administrative courts and/or high courts to which appeals may be made. In addition, the independent local government commissions will help the government to ensure that the constructional mandate and spirit for the local governance development through the decentralization and local governance policy will be translated fully in laws, rules, regulations and practices as soon as possible.

Proposed Policy Framework

Structural Framework

There will be two types²⁷ of local government institutions in Bangladesh, namely rural local government institutions and urban local government institutions under a total eight regional local government commissions and one national local government commission, while 'division' would no longer be treated as administrative unit of the government. Importantly, rural local government and urban local government units will never be geographically overlapped, which means that the rural local government units and urban local government units must be with separate constituencies fitted with clear-cut area mapping. The proposed structural framework of the local government is presented at Table 5.

²⁷ Currently there are three types of local government institutions in Bangladesh (i.e. Rural Local Government Institutions, Special Local Government Institutions and Urban Local Government Institutions).

Table 5: Proposed structural framework of the local government

Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Local Government Division (LGD)	
One National Independent Local Government Commission	
Eight Independent Regional Local Government Commissions	
Rural Local Government Institutions Zilla Parishad (64) Upazila Parishad (491) Union Parishad (4498)	Urban Local Government Institutions City Corporation (10) Municipality (398)

The Local Government Division would, however, be downsized with limited number of senior officials and support staff, and with limited scope of responsibilities. The basic tasks of the LGD would be liaison with the national local government commission. Given the commission's advice and recommendations, it will deal with international organizations with matters relating to treaties and agreements, and with countries and world bodies regarding the subjects allotted to this division. And it is likely to draft Acts/laws on subjects allotted to this division for the legislative body, and thus issue rules, regulations, circulars, guidelines and strategy papers concerned to the related Acts/laws, and design, draft and initiate related policies to get approved from the Cabinet.

Furthermore, it will also maintain scope for public inquiries, MIS and statistics on any of the subjects allotted to this division. The LGD would also provide secretarial support to the concerned minister and/or state minister so that they defend well in the relevant parliamentary standing committee. However, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), and National Institute of Local Government (NILG) will go under the stewardship of the National Local Government Commission. And as where applicable local offices of these departments and Dhaka WASA, Chittagong WASA, Khulna WASA, and five other new (proposed) WASA will operate under the concerned local government institutions and under stewardship of the regional local government commissions given the guidance as would be determined by the Acts/laws and/ or rules and regulations.

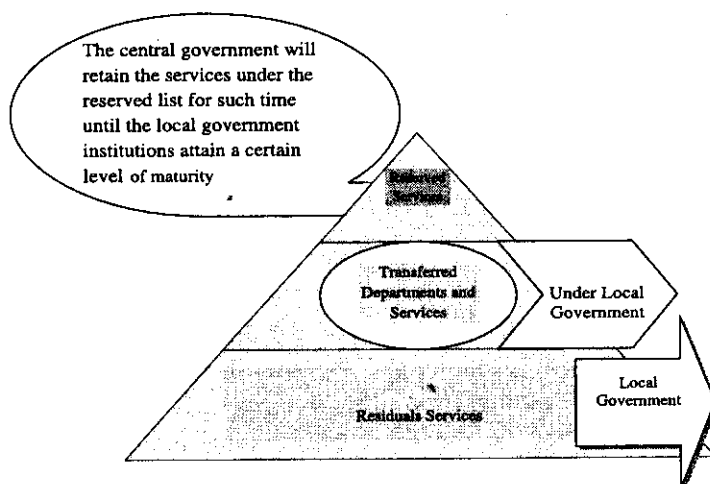
Functional Framework

In order to establish an effective decentralization framework, government services and functions should be divided into three, namely, reserved, transferred and residuals. The services and functions under the reserved list will include the regulatory services such as: maintenance of law and order, administration of justice, and national revenue collection and other regulatory administrations that are central and national in nature (GAF proposed policy, 2010).

The central government will retain the services under the "reserved list" for such time until the local government institutions attain a certain level of maturity. The rest functions and services should be included in the "transferred and/or residual lists". The services under the transferred list should be transferred to the local government bodies. These could include, for example: primary and secondary education, health and family planning, agriculture, youth and sports, water supply and sanitation, disaster management and relief, rural development and cooperatives, livestock and fisheries, and social welfare (Ibid).

And all services and functions under the residual list, for instance, social justice, and social safety and benefit schemes, and government development projects, must be governed by the local government bodies with efficient delivery and transparent administration. In line with the existing enactments, the above devolution should take place at the Zila, Upazila and Union Parishad levels as, relevant administrative set-up and infrastructure facilities currently exist at these levels (Ibid). For the municipality and city corporations, further to these services, inclusive city governance system and services must be incorporated. Figure 5 shows the proposed functional framework of the local government.

Figure 5: Proposed functional framework of the local government



Legal Framework

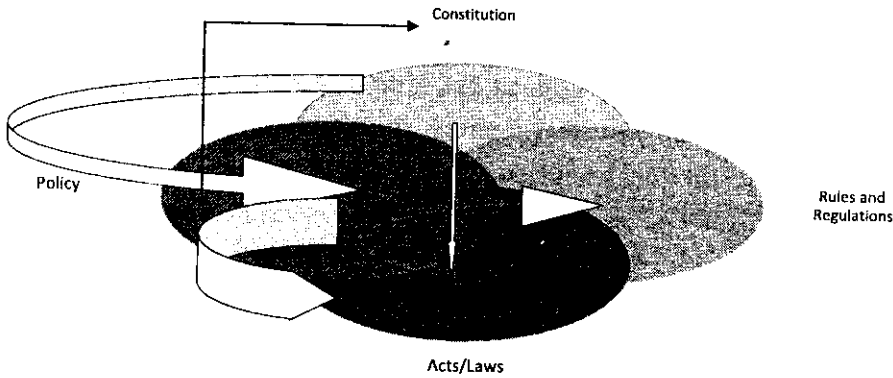
The local government institutions, especially Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad, are passing through a stalemate and transition period. It is probable that this impasse will somewhat be over by amending some controversial laws soon for the purpose of the principles of this proposed policy, and then, of course, by functioning new local government Acts with hurriedly issuing subsequent rules and regulations.

This alone, however, is not the critical factor. Absolute dependency on the mode of the legislature for the power of the local government in terms of the central-local relationship, and of the degree of democratic, administrative and fiscal decentralization, and of functions as well as functionaries of the local government is evidenced in the constitution. This reality leads us to support Indian model of constitutional guarantee that is to say it refers to the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian constitution.

The constitutional assurance, however, is not the ultimate to shape the premium local governance. In Uganda and South Africa, for instance, political authorities passed statutory and constitutional guarantees for local government development just 17 years back, but now both countries are noted as examples for democratic development of the local governance, which is resultant from both the constitutional pledge and democratic practices with high sense of political commitment. The success of these two counties has underpinned a lesson that the

constitutional pledge is as important as democratic commitment does for a strong local government system, particularly for a country like Bangladesh. Figure 6 shows the proposed legal framework of the local government and local governance.

Figure 6: The proposed legal framework of the local government



Conclusion

The national decentralized local governance policy is significant not only to the context of streamlining the decentralization paradigm but also to the perspective of underpinning the confidence of democratic decentralization to all democratic political parties, particularly to the major two. In reality, political regimes are changing between the two political parties, known as BNP and Awami League. Importantly, one major political party alone cannot strengthen the local government institutions because one political regime is too short to garner durable results in this domain. Thus, a political consensus on the issue followed by a policy initiation of the Local Government Division with adoption and/or adaptation of this proposed policy leading to the approval of the Cabinet is undoubtedly very urgent.

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