

Decaying Rural Power Structure in Bangladesh: An Observation on the Political Institutions of Sherpur Upazila

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ABSTRACT

It is pretty foolish not to expect any changes in society. In dynamic, all the dimensions of society undergo substantial changes over time. The determiner of these changes is plentiful from the time itself to every single aspect of human behavior along with the societal, political, economic, and natural components that influence the change. Through this inevitable process, the rural power structure, which was traditional and tribal, has gone through many transitional periods and has now started to take a new shape. By using a qualitative technique and studying an Upazila in Bangladesh, this study can suggest that the rural power structure, which is predominantly autonomic, has lost its self-reliance due to financial dependence on the central government. In addition, the growth of partisan politics in rural societies has created a situation in which it is nearly impossible to differentiate between local and national policies. This is a consequence of the problem created by the rise of partisan politics because partisan politics in rural societies have intensified since their inception. Clientelist politics has taken a firm shape in every allocation of values in an agrarian society. Political and judicial institutions like the Shalish and Gram Samaj have almost disappeared or transformed upside-down. Growing disbelief of the residents, dysfunctional institutions, and politically backed rural leaders have failed to win the faith of the majority of the society, clearly indicating a decaying rustic power structure.

Keywords: Rural Power Structure, Rural Leadership, Shalish, Gram Samaj, Rural Autonomy

INTRODUCTION

The rural society of Bangladesh is traditional, where many indigenous institutions used to work significantly (Habib & Mizan, 2016). The rustic power structure is considered one of the most influential informal institutions supposed to maintain the rural society's values, discipline, and uniformity. There are two forms of power in rural Bangladesh; institutional and non-institutional. Institutional capacity refers to the formation that is not directly related to the administration and government and acts as a structural power in practice. On the other hand, non-institutional management refers to an unstructured one that is not directly related to the state; the rural power structure belongs within these formations (Habib & Mizan, 2016).

On the other hand, the power structure of rural society is not static; instead, it is very dynamic by nature. So, it has been changed gradually regarding its role and functions. However, the gradual process was not so smooth. The traditional rural society has been altered by the impact of modern technologies and the change in the production system. In addition, infrastructural development and various development activities by the government and NGOs are considered the changing agents of rural society (Habib & Mizan, 2016). Moreover, the traditional rural community has been changed into a diverse organization with the collaboration of education and modern technologies. One could argue that rural culture neither defines nor reflects the present.

For this reason, the question has been raised whether rural power structures can perform as the authority of agrarian society as the previous one. The root-level organizations of political parties and different types of *Samities* (cooperatives) have been involved in power practice at the village level as modern formal agents. But with informal power structures, the other agents cannot work successfully. Both of them want to grab the power and authority of rural society. Thus a conflicting and unrest situation is created in the community.

The rural power structure is the self-governing system of rural society where all sorts of rules and regulations are adopted from their tradition, belief, and customs. So, all inhabitants of the rural community show their respect to the rules and regulation of power structure. But other formal organizations have no such kind of rules and regulations related to the culture of rural society. As a result, inhabitants of the rural community show their reluctance towards imposing disciplinary tolls by that organization. The conflicting situation has been raised among the authority of the rural society. So, unrest is being made in the rural community due to many sources. Those who established their reign on the rustic power structure were young and comparatively more educated than the previous leadership. But most of them are the children of an old powerful. In that case, he did not notice any probability of fundamental evolution in the rural power structure.

METHODOLOGY

This is a case study of Sherpur Upazilla. As for its primary source of data, it considered various books and journals. To illustrate a comparative discussion, the article mainly uses origins that date back to the birth of Bangladesh and this very day. However, there is a dominant use of a secondary source. As for the primary source of information, the researcher closely observed the Sherpur Upazilla, which was conveniently chosen for better access. Influential people and UP personnel were interviewed in an unstructured manner to understand the culture of rural power practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Changing Pattern of rural leadership

Anthropologist Aminul Islam has marked the *Matobbars* (village influential) as falling elites back then in the 1970s. Islam had noticed a clash between old and modern leadership in the rural area. He stated that the young comparative administration had started challenging the traditional senior leadership. He also mentioned the leadership between this growing leadership and local and national politics. He did not hesitate to call them *Dalal* (he only acts for the one who patronizes them irrespective of what is just). The new genre started to develop among the children and relatives of the traditional elites by taking advantage of rural constructive activities because of the essential democracy of Ayub Khan (Islam, 1974).

Day by day, the leadership of this steam became more powerful. But their number was not huge yet. This tendency increased in the 70s and 80s. The influence and presence of both powers have increased with the help of dictatorship, especially in the last decade. In the time of tyranny, the process of making powerful new types from the youth became very severe by giving weapons, money, and institutional advantage to fill the lack of legitimacy and find local polls. The dominance of tout, bully and armed collectors increased at that time. This genre's domination of power increased because of local constructive programs in Upazila.

Rural Bangladesh is forced to leave its old tradition and accept new values and customs because of the clash between rural society and the modern state. The importance of the current rural institution, Union Parishad, has increased. Karim also showed that those who established their reign on rustic power structures were young and comparatively more educated than the previous leadership. But most of them are the children of the old powerful. In that case, he did not notice any probability of essential evolution in the rural power structure (Karim, 1990). But a significant change was observed after the parliamentary form of government was reintroduced in 1991 when major political parties concentrated on root-level political activities. As a result, political parties extended their organizational capacity in the rural society to increase their support base in the rural people so that their influence is visible in elections (Rahman & Habibullah, 2015).

Rural elites' weakness in the ruling political party was a common phenomenon. Their primary mission is to enjoy the providing facilities of the government (Rumy, 1985). Rural elites were connected with the ruling political party loosely. The tendency of rural elites was a typical attitude considered by the political parties. In those times, the political activities in the agrarian society were limited to election-related functions like publicity, propaganda, procession, and so on (Habibullah, 2017). So, the communication between political parties and rural elites was appropriately made at the national election time. No interference occurred in the local self-government election by the political parties due to being considered a local election. But then, as mentioned earlier, such a concept was changed after 1991. The political activities were spread comprehensively by the ruling political party and the opposition. Thus, the rural society is sharply divided into two streams: ruling political party-oriented elites along with their fellow and the main opposition supported rural elites along with their fellow clients. In this stage, most of the rural elites connected with the political parties were identified as members or supporters of a specific party. So, a change of political identity was not accessible due to the opposition of their rival elites. Distinct party identities make them party loyal, and they try to make a considerable supporter sustain their influence in rural society. These are the informal ways to maintain their power and impact on the agrarian community. But they are not satisfied by only performing their everyday political activities. They want formal power. Union Parishad (UP) is the traditional institution in a rural society where the election process is non-partisan. Influential and respected persons who belong to the reputed lineage also in the respective area were participating in the local election on a non-partisan based. Influence on the society, skill to mitigate the local problems, the role of regional development activities, and communication with the government officials were significant factors in electing a person as chairman and member of the UP. There was no relation with national political parties at that time.

Political parties had no interest as well. But the tradition has been changed gradually. At the beginning of the beginning, the candidates of the election (especially the chairman of UP)

were indirectly supported by the political parties. This process was full of local and unofficial methods. The higher authority of respective political parties could not recognize the process legally (Rahman & Habibullah, 2015). But the local government election on the party line in Bangladesh was initiated with the promulgation of the Local Government (amendment) ordinance 2015 for holding the local self-government election on the party line (Habibullah, 2020). As per the amended law, for the first time, local government elections were held on the party line (Anam & Sayadur, 2015).

The tradition of local government elections is a century old. Rural people were used to following the traditional non-partisan local government election. Introducing the new system in local self-government elections has created a different type of tension, conflict, and clash at the grass-root level of politics. Competition, ultra-challenge, desperateness, threat, attack, impatience, dishonesty, and so on were essential characteristics of the latest Union Parishad election (Seraj, 2015). Factional politics in rural areas have been converted into grouping politics making inter-party conflict severe. In contrast, an intra-party dispute arises due to the competition for achieving nomination from their party. It has predominantly occurred in the ruling party, where getting nominations faces many challenges.

The introduction of the partisan system of the Union Parishad election would seriously affect the rural power structure. The rustic power structure touches the whole agrarian society. The integration, harmony, discipline, and values of the rural community depend on the functioning of the agricultural power structure, forming different influential persons who belong to family, lineage, "somaj," and so on. It was another leadership pattern traditionally achieved and supported by its inhabitants informally. Introducing a partisan system of the Union Parishad election would severely destroy that rural power structure (Habibullah, 2020).

An existing informal power structure based primarily on clan, landholding, and patronage became incorporated into these local administrative bodies through a 'loose coupling' arrangement, with the UPs remaining closer to rural administration than to genuine local government (Jahangir, 1982). However, the rustic power structure depended on the patron-client relationship. There is no denying that the new system would undermine the established authority in rural areas, which has historically been based on factors such as blood relations and family trees (Habibullah, 2020).

Throughout the last ten years, particularly between 2001 and 2007, in rural Bangladesh, a massive paradigm shift occurred in the power hierarchy. The younger members of the elite class dominated the villages. In contrast, the more senior members of the privileged class lost their status as elite because their positional quality and power had declined over the years. It was also discovered that the rural leaders changed their policies to generate and maintain energy. These new policies included the formation of party networks involving various government and non-government organizations, the building of business associations, and the maintenance of positive links with local members of parliament, among other things. We can say that the leadership and power structures in rural Bangladesh have undergone a dramatic change. This can be said with certainty because of the evidence presented here. Looking at the shifts that have occurred throughout the past few years demonstrates this to be true. That more women have stepped into positions of power in recent years is a significant factor in this change. More women have been in these positions than ever before (Mozumdar et al., 2008).

The power structure was far from static, and its traditional aspects were evolving and changing. The changing pattern and the degradation role of matobbars started after the 1980 decade, and the new generation has also emerged as new leaders (Rahman, 1981). With the persistence of patron-client relations, elite clan politics, and patriarchal norms, an older power structure's elements remain, but these are slowly changing. The range of patrons people can access has continued to widen, increasing opportunities for those with less power to pursue more favorable forms of connection. Within the power structure, the blurring of formal and informal roles and relationships has continued, creating a complex 'web' of relationships that limits civic engagement but offers opportunities for incremental inclusive change (Lewis & Hossain, 2019).

Local level political competition has also diminished as the ruling political party has consolidated control of local power structure and weekend formal political opposition. The forms of political completion that do take place are now primarily expressed through increasing factionalism at the local level within the ruling party (Lewis & Hossain, 2019). As a result, the formal power structure may become more fragile, brittle, and less resilient. Moreover, the ruling party's increasing dominance within the networks that connect people with less power to those with more comes at a cost.

The traditional lineage group did not uphold their honor, influence, and so on because of their mobility, incapability of leadership, and reluctance to role play. Meanwhile, a considerable proportion of the traditional aristocracy makes all their money by operating out of a single rural stronghold. Instead, they embarked on a new trip to the next town, armed with new goals and objectives. The transformation process began in 1990 when they extended their views on education for their generation. In this stage, they have uprooted their root intentionally. On the other hand, the poorer people of the rural area have shifted from their village to the capital, Dhaka, for new hope and to join garment factories. As a result, they can open their opportunity to be land owners. They invest a lot in buying land. In this process, the power and influence of rural society get a new shape. And the new emerging leaders come up with their land ownership and political affiliation. Karim (1990) mentioned in his study that most rural leaders are the children of the old powerful (Karim, 1990). This reality has changed significantly.

Lewis and Hossen (2017) found that patron-client is still pervasive but is growing less rigid. Landlord patrons, who previously locked poor rural people into long-term exploitive relationships of sharecropping, domestic labor, and indebtedness, and who captured resources coming into the village, have less grip. Moreover, the phenomenon in which some loan-providing NGOs act as petty patrons in local communities and is occasionally visible in the earlier study seems to have declined. New forms of patronage, such as media support for small struggles, and local struggles over land, might be emerging. As a result, people's access to information is improved by technology and infrastructure, and at least in theory, there are more patrons with whom to elaborate relationships (Lewis and Hossain, 2017).

Mannan terms a multifocal power structure distinct from the existing land-based unifocal (BRAC, 1982). In this new context, 'no single patron' can dominate the rural power structure as in the case of erstwhile land-centric patrons. The competition among patrons created a situation of balance. Otherwise, patrons continue to dominate local village-level activities and people's options, but these power holders today are more diverse and connected to broader business, politics, and civil society elites, deriving their power to a lesser degree from land holding and agricultural wealth (Lewis and Hossain, 2017).

Elusive Power Structure in Rural Society

The power structure of villages of Bangladesh has faded away. It has lost its role and performance as it passed. The power and authority of the rural power structure are not working correctly in its society. The effectiveness of the agrarian power structure has faced many challenges due to alternative sources like the involvement of national politics in the rural community. Power structure explores itself through the mitigation of conflict raised among rural inhabitants or arranges different types of cultural activities. As a result, the existence of a power structure is being faced with challenges. Instead, the elite politics has been working, and they are bearing the legacy of their old traditional family lineage. They want to involve the village politics to ensure their position and status. Their education, land ownership status of origin, political linkage, formal work, and situational role play a vital role in their situation.

Divisive Samaj (an indigenous rural institution) in the Rural Society

The Samaj is a traditional association of people having jurisdiction over a particular area within a village community (Hoque et al., 2019). There is no formal administrative unit at the village level, so this Shalish system provides social administration to the villagers (Barman, 1988). It is a legal guardian for the villagers (Alim, 2004). The Samaj of rural society is considered an umbrella of an agrarian society that the people of the village depend on to save their life and property. Nowadays, the Samaj structure has been divided due to the interference of external affairs like politics, power, and so on. Local leaders who have linked with politics exercise their power. But neutral leaders cannot do that because they do not want to face such political pressure.

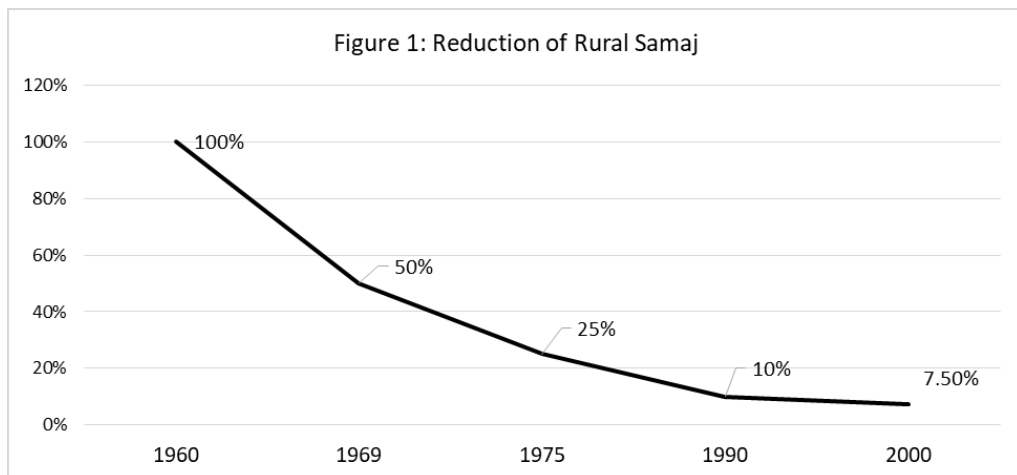
Traditionally, the most important social institution of villages in Bangladesh was Samaj, meaning community. It is a symbolic and institutional reference for the political and religious community. As argued by Bertocci, the institution of the Samaj is a cultural model of solidarity (which) takes concrete shape in rural Bangladesh as the expression of the power domains of the economically and politically dominant families and their members (Bertocci, 1980). The Samaj system reflected the clientelist relation of domination maintain through patron-client ties. However, the government does not recognize the Samaj. Despite this, it is a corporate social organization that carries out religious, ritual, ceremonial, and adjudicative functions within the village.

Additionally, it serves as the protector of norms and values within the community. For instance, the Samaj has held sway in Bangladesh for a considerable time (Karim, 1990). The villagers considered themselves to belong to Samaj; the religious functions were performed within the Samajes, for instance, at the time of Kurban Eid, where the affluent households slaughtered animals and distributed part of the meat among the poor members of the Samaj (Kirsten & Hossain, 2005).

Until late 1960, the Samaj in Boringram, the present research area, was coterminous with the village, and it was under the leadership of the village headman. He was the head of the wealthiest household in the town. This person was also influential outside the village, and he had been the chairman of the Union Board in the British period (The British introduced the Local Self-Government Act in 1885). At the Union level, self-government was referred to as the Union Board. During the Pakistan time, the name was changed to Union Council. In Independent Bangladesh, the Bengali name was originally Union Panchayat, but later it was changed to Union Parishad (Kirsten & Hossain, 2005). After the death of the old headman in 1969, his second son wanted to continue as head of the entire village; a dispute

arose and the town became divided into two factions. The two leaders of the rival faction belonged to the middle peasant category. A few years later, the original factions split in two; one is headed by the oldest son of the old village headman and the other by the younger son. At that time, the head of a surplus family not belonging to the head man's patrilineage started yet another faction. In 1975/76, village unity had broken down into four factions, each with its Samaj (Kirsten & Hossain, 2005).

Until 1979/80, there were no further splits within the four Samajes. At that time, the government introduced a village-level government (gram Sarker); the son of the first son of the old village headman was elected secretary, and the son of the wealthy Samaj leader outside the old headman's family was elected president. Because of a change in government policy (after President Ziur Rahman had been killed), the Gram Sarkar system lasted for less than a year. Still, during this short period, the grandson of the old village headman emerged as a village leader. At the same time, the Samajes started to split up for various reasons, including not obeying Samaj rules of not taking meals in households outside one's own Samaj, quarrels over the distribution of meat, moral misbehavior, etc. (Kirsten & Hossain, 2005). In the late 1990s, there were ten Samajes in the village, many of them of a few related households, who celebrated religious functions together. Until 1995 the biggest Samaj in the town was headed by two school teachers, one being the wealthy Samaj leaders and former president of the defunct gram sarker. It had 64 members and functioned as a Samaj for religious purposes, but they could not at the time of the Kurbanī Eid in 1996. The well-to-do households slaughtered the animals individually and distributed meat according to their wishes. This meant that the poor could not claim their part of the meat. The members were also distributed that there were no Shalish (dispute adjudication) within the Samaj, not least because the two leaders had become rivals (Kirsten & Hossain, 2005). There are 15 Samajes in the village since 2000 (Figure 1).



Source: Kirsten & Hossain (2005)

The figure shows that the unity of the people of the village has been split gradually. After independence to 1990 decade, this process was very smooth. This meant division of the society ran fast due to the political and economic change at the village level. Since the 2000 decade, this process has been stable. Kirsten & Hossain (2005) rightly mentioned that the breakdown of the biggest Samaj was a challenge to the system. They were inclined to relate this breakdown to economic developments. The institution of the Samaj in the political and

religious spheres parallels the institution of the patron-client relationship in the economic sphere. Bangladesh's society is strongly hierarchical, and patronage is a crucial component of social relationships. Barman (1988) defines patronage as a relationship pattern in which members of hierarchically arranged groups possess mutually recognized, not explicitly stipulated, rights and obligations involving mutual aid and preferential treatment (Lewis & Hossian, 2017).

Patron-client relationships are, therefore, central to understanding the local power structure. Jahangir (1982) emphasis that it is a personal transaction between two individuals rather than one that addresses the collective good (Jahangir, 1982). Both within the institution of the Samaj and within the patron-client relationship, there is implicit reciprocity, often between the same sets of persons: In the religious sphere the wealthy households are supposed to share their meat with the poor at the time of urbanization, and in the economic sphere they are supposed to help their clients in times of need. As mentioned, the patron-client relationship also implied relations of domination and dependency on the part of the poor. At the time of the 1975/76 study, the villagers depended on the big landowners and therefore had to follow their leadership. This did not necessarily imply that they trusted their leaders, but they were not in a position to dispute their power. Following the economic development in Boringram, by the end of the 20th century, the poor were no longer dependent on the landowners for work, as there was an excess demand for their labor within the agricultural sector and work available in the informal sector. They were also no longer dependent on the land owners for credit, partly because of their improved earning capacity and partly because of the availability of loans from the Grameen Bank and the two credit NGOs (Kirsten and Hossain, 2005). Recently more NGOs are operating their functions in the research area as micro-credit organizations. As a result, the financial dependency of poor people on wealthy land owners has been reduced significantly.

Another tendency is that many (poor) go to the capital Dhaka as garment workers. Their lion's share of earnings sends to their families. So, it can be said that most of the poor people in the research area for their financial demand does not depend on the wealthy land owner as previously. With the incipient breakdown of the Samaj system, the village as a community was in an amorphous situation (Kirsten and Hossain, 2005). The study of traditional institutions mentioned in Boringram had also taken place in Jagatpur, and Siddiqui records the complete analysis of the Samaj and the intensification of factional politics (Siddiqui, 2000). Kirsten & Hossain (2005) revisited a village in Bogra district in northern-western Bangladesh, originally studied during the mid-1970s. They found that traditional patron-client relations as a foundation of the local power structure were changing, becoming weaker as poorer people grew less dependent on the local landed classes for their livelihood. Still, they found that no prominent new social or political organization forms were taking their place (Lewis & Hossain, 2017).

Politically Paralyzed Salish System

The traditional Shalish system is Bangladesh's most commonly used method for civil and criminal dispute resolution. The Shalish system in Bangladesh is based on the society's customs and traditions, which have existed almost everywhere in Bangladesh, especially in rural areas from time immemorial. Thus, it is customary and traditional Shalish. It helps restore community harmony formally and informally (Hoque et al., 2019). The 'Banglapedia' defines Shalish as a social system for informal adjudication of petty disputes both civil and criminal, by local notables, such as mat bars (leaders) or Shalishkers

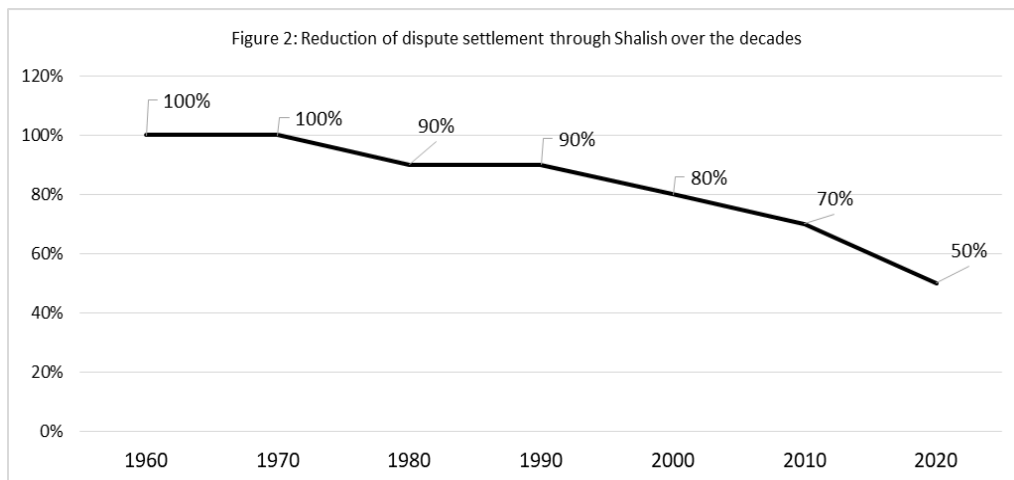
(adjudicators) (Islam, 2003). Shalish is an indigenous, a traditional dispute resolution system usually used in Bangladesh. It refers to a community-based, largely informal process through which small panels of influential local figures help resolve community members' disputes (Hoque et al., 2019). About 60-70% of rural conflicts are resolved through this system (Islam, 2009). Salish, which means village-level dispute settlement bodies convened by elders and local officials, is also being changed by its functions (Lewis & Hossain, 2019). Shalish was still conducted within the individual Samajes where the leaders controlled social regulations (Kirsten and Hossain, 2005). Disputes between the brothers, brothers and sisters, husband and wives and father and sons, illegal relations between man and woman, pilferage and neighbors in different issues are settled in the village arbitration. A particular man or woman makes a charge against another specific man or woman and demands to get justice from the Shalish. The Shalish is formed informally. Arguments and interrogations are done in front of the Shalish board. Hearing all the opinions the Shalish board gives the decision on that particular issue. Generally, the conclusion of the board is honored, yet some problems go to Union Parishad and district court as sometimes the elites and members of the Shalish board, became biased (Rumy, 1985).

With the incipient breakdown of the Samaj system, the village as a community was in an amorphous situation. Shalish was no longer conducted within the individual Samajes. However, most cases, disputes continued to be settled within the village. The villagers were concerned that dispute settlements should occur within the town and not be referred to the police, as they are known to take bribes. In the middle of 1999, the leaders of the various factions got together and decided that they would conduct Shalishes for the whole village in the presence of all the villagers. The assumption was that the villagers would protest if they made bad decisions (Kirsten and Hossain, 2005). About 60-70% of rural disputes are resolved through the Shalish system (Islam, 2009). But most cases or disputes settled through the Shalish in the research are. So, the effectiveness of Shalish in the research area is better than the average effectiveness of Shalish in Bangladesh. Such usefulness of Shalish is being challenged due to unwillingness to conduct the Shalish under the respective Samajes. Lack of consensus among the members of Samajes, the role of Samajes is limited by the festival functions and the influences of the leaders of the ruling party are the significant causes of the ineffectiveness of the Shalish system.

On the other hand, the Shalish system has lost its effectiveness and significance due to the elusive nature of the power structure. The leadership of the rural power structure conducts the Shalish system. The rustic power structure is the ultimate authority of Shalish. As the rustic power structure is not working sufficiently, the Shalish system is expected to be less functional. But there is no doubt about the effectiveness of Shalish. Instead, it works to maintain the social order, establishing the values and discipline which are very important for social harmony in rural society. The amicable settlement between rival groups through the Shalish process in the research area has been narrowed down gradually.

No disputants want submissive attitudes to the Shalish to maintain the society's harmony. Instead, each wants to win against another and even use politics. A ruling political party can enable a vital role in this regard. This is why disputants try to get shelter under the ruling political party. In response, the ruling political leaders of the local area take this opportunity seriously because of establishing their control over the society. They can favor the local administration and even *thana*, which are significant to prove their effectiveness in leadership. Thus the local indigenous Shalish process has been changed. The emerging local political leaders have emerged as the shalisker of the Shalish process in place of traditional ones. They

are very sincere in upholding their own and their fellows' interests. Amicable settlement or justice is nothing in comparison to their self-interest. Their main target is to win against their rival at any cost by using actual bribes. Using bribes in the Shalish process is the new phenomenon of rural politics. Such a tendency destroys an agrarian society's discipline, norms, and values. No authority takes responsibility for killing the traditional Shalish which has performed as an institution to maintain the spirit of the unity of the rural community. There is no way to avoid the responsibility of the political parties in this regard when the donors are inspiring and providing funds for the effectiveness of Shalish (Figure 2).



Source: Survey, 2021.

Salish is the indigenous process to ensure the amicable settlement between the rival groups involving a different type of conflict and chaos in the rural society. The leaders of the Samaj (social institution) like moral, matabbar, and pramanik (area wise another status) conduct the Shalish. But the existence of a rural power structure has been elusive due to the presence of multi-authority in agrarian society and they have no coordination. So, the question has been raised whether the Shalish has effectiveness. It is mentioned that many formal and informal authorities try to interfere in the Shalish process. The rural inhabitants depended on Shalish to resolve conflicts, clashes, and chaos. But now a day the dependency has decreased due to having no authority or power structure and also the reluctance of rural inhabitants to get shelter from different sources like political parties, Union Parishad, and thana. Some scholars thought that the salish is the instrument of torture or repression of poorer (Rahman, 1981). That is why they do not want to depend on the Shalish instead they want to rely on a formal institution like thana, court, etc. Conflict, chaos, and violation of social values are widespread phenomena in any human society. Rural society is not exceptional at all. Due to this availability, urban society's discipline and social order are to be monitored very quickly by the different formal authorities. Still, lack of availability and distance from the proper legal authority means no alternative for resolving conflict, clash, and chaos of Shalish. So, the Shalish process can perform adequately as the authority of peacekeeping. Thus, the social harmony and the financial cost of local people might be saved. But recently the reality of rural society has been transformed. The impact of urbanization, the development of communication, and the change in rural people's professions contribute immensely to the transformation of an agrarian society.

Politics is extended its influence over rural society. The Shalish system is not out of the trend. This is why politically influenced persons involved in the ruling party show their interest in conducting the Shalish despite having no such experience. Sometimes their wishes are not accepted by the members of the respective Samaj. Then he wants to take the issue in thana so that he can perform adequately as the adjudicator with the help of the police.

Consolidated Partisan Political Control

Political parties of Bangladesh have been trying to consolidate their partisan political control at the local level since 1991 while the parliamentary form of government has been restored. But the process has been formally established since 2015. At that time, the government decided that, for the first time, voting in the elections was to be organized along strict political party lines. This was a significant difference from the previous election in 2011 since all candidates were now nominated by political parties and would use party symbols on their campaigning materials and ballot papers to contest the election. Previously political parties had given only informal support to their candidates and aspiring candidates could therefore file their nominations without requiring party approval. This formal change reflects the ruling party's intention to create a greater level of centralized party politicization of local processes (Lewis & Hossain, 2019). Changing forms of local political practice have enabled the ruling position and its supporters to consolidate regional power by reshaping interactions between local government and civil society. The ruling work has gradually concentrated its control over state resources in research due to its growing use of informal connections between party and state networks (Lewis, 2008).

Lewis & Hossain (2019) mentioned that the extension of the ruling party's power means that local power relations in each location have been further incorporated into the broader political game'. The use of informal strategies is becoming a vital tool for this incorporation. If an elected official is in place inconveniently from the opposition party, they have simply worked around it by creating informal coordinator and intermediation roles, using patron-client relationships. In the same way, critical local civil society organizations such as business associations are increasingly co-opted by placing politically affiliated individuals in charge. One overall result is that local political competition has been reduced since the earlier study. Competition is expressed through increased regional factionalism within the ruling party, evident from the tensions between MP and UZP/UP levels in the peri-urban site. The tendency of local politics is almost the same as analyzed by Lewis and Abul Hossain. Locally distributed resources are, therefore, still being mobilized in ways that give ordinary people little influence or control over decisions (Lewis & Hossain, 2017).

Rural politics in Bangladesh is the politics of kinship. Using kinship ties for mobilizing followers is a key to political leadership. Being a successful leader depends on the ability of an individual to keep his poribar (family), cattar, and gosthi (patrilineage) to him (Karim, 1990). At the Union level (study area), three influential families had for a decade compared for the chairmanship of the union Parishad. The traditional leadership in the study area was at the forefront because of the old village headman who had been chairman of the union board during the British period and chairman of the union council during the Pakistan period until 1954. His second son had been a member of the council in Pakistan time, and his third son had been chairman twice since the independence of Bangladesh. The old village headman and his sons had been influential in the Muslim league during the Pakistan period. They remained loyal to Pakistan during the liberation struggle and later joined Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (Kirsten and Hossain, 2005). Now the previous union

Parishad has been divided into two union Parishad. The study area is under the Shabondaghi Union. A member of the influential family has been elected as the UP member who supports BNP. The compelling family was involved in Muslim league politics and later BNP. All of the family members are following the legacy. Most of the ordinary people of the village do support the BNP due to the influence of an influential family, except for a family whose involvement in the politics of the Awami League since the liberation war. But they had no such influence as the influential family. Recently this family has to explore themselves as influential ones with the help of their relationship with the top leader of the Awami League at the district level. Last time, the significant family decided on the village matter without challenges from Samaj leaders. The villagers respect such decisions. But this tendency has been changed, and raised voices have been against the decision. The Awami league-oriented family is involved in the local issue and sometimes sends it to the Upazila level for a political settlement. So, traditional political matters and the settlement process are being challenged.

CONCLUSION

The components of social change, along with society itself, are continual. The rural power structure has long been a crucial topic for social scientists to study. We can see how the power structure in rural areas today differs from that in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. However, some factors—such as having land or money—are permanent. However, their impact is also rapidly waning. Agrarian power structures in particular are being impacted by adding new components to the modern rural power structure, such as information and communication technology.

Since 2000, there has been an increasing trend for reasonably young individuals to hold management positions in rural power structures. At the level of rural Areas, this trend of the power structure was quite active. The chairman and member candidates of the union council placed a greater emphasis on positioning themselves as individuals representing the people, particularly in local elections. Moreover, the political establishment in rural areas has come under growing pressure from the national government and politics. As a result, the power structure in rural life can be impacted by membership in politicians, occupation of a family member within the police or bureaucratic cadre, and other factors.

Finally, it can be said that the rural power structure has gone through a gradual change. The change might be visible with high contrast, although the paradigm of people's mindset in the rural area has undergone a significant transformation. Now, a group tries to remain out of the rustic power structure and is often disqualified them. Their reason for disqualification often turns out to be devoid of principles. By the way, this whole transformation is irreversible and inevitable as well. Adaptation and developing competency to cope with partisan politics and other emerging influences on the rural power structure are called for. Unless the transformation sustaining on the system seems quite impossible.

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