

**INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF
DEMOCRACY IN THE POLITICAL
PARTIES IN BANGLADESH
DOES CULTURE MATTER?**

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Dedication:

This work is dedicated to those leaders of the political parties, who know how to do self-assessment, who are sidelined from the forefront as they want to stick to party ideals, and who consider that survival and strengthening of the parties depend on institutionalization of party rules and regulations.

Abstract:

Bangladesh shares its history of political development with the British and Pakistan era. The political parties in Indian sub-continent struggled for the rights, freedom and justice in the society. Westminster style parliamentary democracy was the driving force of the political parties, and the party leaders were mostly known for their values, principles, and devotion for the causes of society. Leaders were given high respect for their vision, charisma, courage, and sacrifices. Right after independence, Bangladesh has sad fate in terms of political development. The pioneering party Bangladesh Awami League omitted parliamentary democracy, brought changes to the Constitution, and the party itself became an autocratic organization. In 1978, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was formed, it became another major political party in Bangladesh politics. The following two decades after independence saw a lot of changes in state power, political institutions, party structure, party leadership, and subsequently a new party system developed, which is mostly known as undemocratic, unconstitutional, autocratic, and based on financial power, clientelism, and patrimonialism, and party chiefs became unchallenged. After 1991, these two parties come to power by turn through popular elections. Though they form government as coalition with other small political parties, but they remain as flag bearers. Unfortunately, the regimes have been marked by indiscriminate politicization of government, semi-autonomous and even autonomous offices and institutions, and by corruption and misrule, violations of state laws, which make the governance weak and undemocratic in practice. There have been academic studies on democracy and democratic practices in the different political institutions including that in political party. This study is focused not on finding the presence and practices of democracy in the party, rather it investigates into the causes which hinder the institutionalization of democracy in the political parties, here 2 major political parties in question – Awami League, and BNP. The researcher for this short research project has supposed the factors – power distance of society, patron-client relation and patrimonialism are affecting institutionalization of democracy in the political parties. Under the study, interviews of the Union, Upazila and District and Metropolitan level party leaders and activists are carried out, and FGDs are conducted with the cross-sections of people. Though the feudal system has disappeared long back from the rural society of Bangladesh, but the society remains hierarchic, wherein liberal values are not practiced, and a section of elite people, now a days political actors define good or bad in the society. The same practices are reflected in the political parties. Patron-client relation in the parties remains an obstacle to systematize the party rules and mechanism, and it affects the party governance and the state governance as well. Patrimonialism has been another setback within the parties for which the central party leaders remain submissive, and demoralized. This also affects the whole party governance. The local party leaders frequently claim systematic practices, ie, democratic practices do not exist in the center, so the local units also don't care for democracy in the party. This study also reviews cultural values of Bangladesh society, and takes perception of the people and the political leaders about democracy and the party system to analyze the causes affecting institutionalization of democracy in the political parties.

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List of Abbreviations and Indigenous Words

BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
<i>Chhatra Dal</i>	Student Front (of BNP)
<i>Chhatra</i>	Student
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
<i>Jubo Dal</i>	Youth front (of BNP)
<i>Jubo League</i>	Youth front (of Awami League)
LGED	Local Government and Engineering Department
<i>Mastaan</i>	Muscleman/miscreant
<i>Samaj</i>	Society
Thana	Administrative unit at the metropolitan city
Union	Lowest tier of administration
Upazila	Sub-district
<i>Zamindar</i>	Landlord {the system introduced by British rule}
Zila	District

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background of the Research

When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the most popular party, the Bangladesh Awami League, popularly known as Awami League dominated the scene. During the next 20 years there has been a proliferation of political parties. In the 2001 general elections, 52 political parties contested. The exponential growth of political parties indicates the breadth of political liberalism which the country enjoys despite periodic suspension of the Constitution; prohibitions on political activities and even banning of political parties during the 1970s. In contemporary Bangladesh the major political parties are Awami League, BNP, Jamaat-i-Islami Bangladesh and Jatiya Party. Awami League, with roots dating back to 1949, is the oldest political party and enjoys widespread grassroots support, particularly for its leadership role in the war of independence in 1971. Awami League was in power during 1972–1975 and during 1996–2000, and currently for 2008–2012 term. BNP was established in 1978 by the late army general-turned president Ziaur Rahman and enjoys equal popularity as Awami League. This party was in power during 1979–1983, 1991–1995 and 2001–2006. There are dozens of other smaller, personality-centered parties that operate under the shadow, in cooperation with, or by the grace of, the large parties. In addition to these, there are a number of splinter communist and socialist parties that represent the socialist ideology. However, in reality the country has effectively ended up today with a two-plus party system led by Awami League and BNP. After overthrow of the military power by the joint movement by the political parties in 1990, either Awami League or BNP formed government but each time in coalition with other political parties.

Most political parties in pre-and post-independence Bangladesh have remained prone to factionalism. Nevertheless, there were occasions when rival parties worked together to achieve particular national goals. For example, during the anti-Ershad democratic movement in the latter half of the 1980s, all political parties came under two large alliances called 14-parties (led by Awami League) and 15-parties (led by BNP).

The dream of democratic governance system faced difficulty soon after its independence. The nation got snarled into a legacy of blood (Mascarenhas 1986). Although it started with Westminster model of democracy, Bangladesh took little time to turn itself into a single–

party regime in 1975. The majestic leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was brutally killed with most of his family members by some army officers. From 1975 to the fall of Ershad regime in 1990, the country shuttled back and forth between military and civilian rule. During the five years of his rule President Ziaur Rahman faced 20 mutinies and coup attempts; the twenty-first killed him (Mascarenhas 1986). Between 1972 and 1992 the cabinet was reshuffled 87 times (Bichitra, 19 June 1992). A nine-year long mass agitation led to the fall of the Ershad regime. Through the general election of 1991 the country was once again on the road to democracy.

Inheritance of political culture:

As part of Pakistan, Bangladesh got independence from the British rule in 1947. Pakistan rejected parliamentary democracy in the late 1950s on the ground that western model of parliamentary democracy brought about political instability which led to economic stagnation and national disintegration, and on the argument that a more authoritarian form of government would lead to effective and stable government with rapid economic growth, modernization and national integration in the sense of centralization of authority. Basic democracy was the device to restrict popular participation in government and to maintain power in particular regimes. They dichotomized the values and goals like political democracy vs. economic development, political participation vs. national integration.

Restricted political participation (manifested in the issue of transfer of power to the political elite after election in 1970) eventually led to war and disintegration of Pakistan and birth of Bangladesh.

Prior to independence, the political leaders placed a great deal of emphasis on the liberal democratic values, they pledged to achieve these goals. Before independence, liberty and freedom were the goals, and participation a means to achieve them, but after independence nation-building became the goal, and effective government a means to achieve that goal. The task of establishing an effective government was equated with that of regime-stability – the perpetuation in power of a particular ruling elite or a person. This concern for staying in power brought a change in the ruling elite's attitude to political participation and their commitment to the liberal democratic model of government and politics. The liberal democratic model assumes that the ruling elite will participate in the system of alterocracy –

that there will be periodic rotation of ruling elite through the mechanism of election. The politicians rejected even this concept of alterocracy. (Jahan, 2005).

Focus of the current study:

Given the time limit of the proposed research, the researcher will analyze the institutionalization of democracy in the two major political parties – Awami League and BNP. Here institutionalization has been taken as process of bringing democratic practices within the political parties. This process represents a wide range of components including free and fair political participation, and contestation, and wide protection of civil rights. Participatory democracy strives to create opportunities for all members of a political group to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities. The proposed research will investigate into the process for party leaders, particularly the local leaders to participate in party decision making, and to investigate into the way and the extent they can participate. The research will focus on the provisions BNP and Awami League kept in their party constitutions and or other legal documents for democratic practices, and the real practices they do.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The two major political parties in Bangladesh – Awami League and BNP suffer from lack of internal democracy. The failure of democracy in the state as a whole seems to have been caused by absence of democratic political culture within the political parties.

Awami League formerly Awami Muslim League was established on June 23 in 1949. In 1955 the word Muslim was dropped from the nomenclature. The BNP was formed on September 1 in 1978. It seems that both the parties have become quite old and matured, but the two parties have not been seen making any effort to bring or practice democracy within, rather dictatorship in running party affairs seems getting stronger day by day. There is none in the two parties dare speak against any decision of the party chairman or president even it goes wrong.

When Bangladesh became independent in 1971 after nine months of brutal war with the Pakistani army, the political leaders promised a society based on democratic principles and social justice. In fact, during our liberation war, Bangladesh became a by-word for people's

resolve to fight injustice all over the world. Unfortunately, democracy has remained in the paper; while a few have been enjoying an economic boom, most of the citizens still live far below the poverty line; economic injustice coupled with lawlessness and corruption have put the country on the brink of a total chaos. Thirty-three years after our glorious independence we try to find the answer to a fateful question; where are we at now? [The Daily Start, 2004]

1.3. Illustration of the Problem

Following partition in 1947, top leaders of All-India Muslim League migrated to Pakistan and formed the Pakistan Muslim League, operating it in an authoritarian style. Shortly after, the Awami Muslim League was formed in Dhaka in 1948, with giants like HS Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhashani, in reaction to Muslim League's anti-East and pro-West Pakistan policy. Leaders moving in from the Muslim League once again moulded the new party to its authoritarian pattern. With the advent of Bangladesh, the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman emerged as practically the only political party to be reckoned with. But with the authoritarian style rooted in the party, run by heavyweight leadership at the top, members in the lower hierarchy, instead of cultivating an open culture or grooming themselves for leadership remained complacent with hero worship, awaiting commands from the top. So, at a later stage when Sheikh Mujib introduced his one-party BAKSAL system, no one except General Osmany, dared to oppose it. This step cost the party heavily with its opponents constantly using it as a leverage for mud-slinging.

Before coming to power in 1996 – 2000, in an address to the nation on the state run national television, the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina sought mercy for the sins committed by her party-men during its three and half years rule after independence. But the Awami League's five-year-term that followed outmatched even its first term in office in misrule and corruption. The party politicized everything; even the committees that ran primary schools were not spared. Hoodlums belonging to the Awami League ran the country; state run tenders were given to members of the ruling party flouting rules and regulations. Most of the ministers, after years outside power, saw this as a god-sent opportunity to make a fortune. Rules regarding promotions even in the army, in most of the cases were ignored; thugs belonging to the Awami League maimed journalists across the country. Several Awami League MPs became infamous for their blatant terrorism in their constituencies. Joynal Hazari for instance, an Awami League MP from Feni, soon became a godfather, controlling

businesses, terrorizing all those who opposed him, especially members of the opposition. Other goons of the cabinet included MP Shamim Osman from Narayanganj, Haji Selim of Dhaka – all of them established their mafia-don in their respective constituencies without any kind of obstacle from their leader Sheikh Hasina. Hasina, in fact, has been the biggest disappointment for even Awami League supporters. Throughout her term she showed incredible tolerance to her party-men, who virtually unleashed a reign of terror all over the country. She did not ask any of her cabinet members to resign even after knowing about their criminal activities. The *Chhatra* League, carried on the legacy of their predecessors, the *Chhatra Dal*, with equal zeal, occupying the university halls, controlling tenders and spreading crime across the country. [The Daily Star, 2004]

BNP won the general elections in 1991 that came after the fall of Ershad. The scale of corruption and repression remained markedly low during the BNP's new term in office. The party, however could not able to finish its five year term. Anti incumbency factor ran high during the next elections, and with its long-term ideological friend, Jamaat-e-Islami, running the elections alone, the BNP had lost power to Awami League. Again, the situation has not changed since the Awami League was routed by BNP in the general elections of 2001. In fact, it has deteriorated further; sheer lawlessness, coupled with cronyism and corruption, has made the country the most an uninhabitable place. Incidents of attack on religious minorities have become rampant. Both the BNP and Awami League have been using religion for their own petty political interests; rising unemployment along with the government's inability to crack down on extremists religious outfits have resulted in several bomb blasts, and the attack on writer Humayun Azad. Repression of opposition members became high in this regime with *Chhatra Dal* coming into the forefront to brutally clamp down on all opponents with of course the help of the completely politicized law enforcers. In just a few weeks, when the opposition started its 'the government must step down' programme, several violent incidents took place such as the beating up of Awami League leaders including Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Ahsanullah Master MP, beating up of students protesting attack on Dr Humayun Azad, beating up of journalists during the general strikes, and finally, the latest attack on Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury, Maj (Rtd) Mannan and their supporters. [The Daily Star, 2004]

Immediately after Major Mannan resigned from the parliament and joined Dr Chowdhury's 'Alternative Platform', thugs under the shelter of the ruling party vandalized different

industrial compounds owned by the businessman turned politician. As the newspaper reports suggest, the attacks were, in fact, backed by the ruling party's high command. Mannan's bank accounts with five financial institutions were seized. State's repression on opposition leaders has never reached this height before. Dr. Badruddoza's new stance to create a third platform with the support of Dr. Kamal Hossain, has been met with some enthusiasm from the public although many cannot quite believe how a staunch supporter of a party can suddenly become its biggest opponent. [The Daily Star, 2004]

During the regime 2001-2006, in the 60-member cabinet, ministers often pulled in different directions, which held up decisions. Reforms of local government were one of the examples of this. Decision-making process was not transparent. Often, cabinet ministers complained that they had no power, and that decisions were made “elsewhere” (presumably by people who were close to the Prime Minister) [*Rancor in BNP over Promises not Kept*, The Daily Star, 1 May 2002].

Rivalry among senior ministers, discord between ministers and state ministers, and conflict between ministers and bureaucrats contributed to indecision and lack of policy direction. Cabinet ministers often refused to take initiative or ownership of policy decisions, claiming that real powers lie in the hands of either the Prime Minister's Office or the BNP party office (popularly known during the regime as *Hawa Bhaban*) [*Crime, Corruption Mar Success of Ruling Alliance*, The Daily Star, 10 October 2003]. The rank and file of the civil bureaucracy became increasingly demoralized as rewards and punishments appeared to be based on the performance but on partisan loyalty/disloyalty.

Two events underscored the dynastic impulses of the BNP. First, the President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury had to resign on June 21, 2002 after he faced criticism in the BNP parliamentary party meeting for not showing respect to the memory of the party's founder, Ziaur Rahman (Zia's widow Khaleda had inherited the party leadership). Though Professor Chodhury is a founding member of the BNP and was a nominee of the party for the post of the President, he irked Zia loyalists for attempting to rise above partisan politics after he became president. The second event was the emergence of Tarique Rahman, eldest son of Khaleda Zia from behind the scene of formally taking over the leadership of the BNP. Tarique Rahman reportedly masterminded the BNP's successful election campaign and was the key decision-maker after the elections though he held no formal position. One June 22,

2002 he stepped forward and became the joint-secretary general of BNP. Rumors were rife that this was a prelude to consolidating dynastic succession; that if the BNP wins the next election then Tarique Rahman would take over as Prime Minister and Khaleda would become the President.

During the last Caretaker Government tenure a number of reforms were made to make the major institutions of the country effective, and also bringing changes in the constitutions of political parties. These changes are long due for institution building and for ensuring good governance in the country. But like before, political institutions face setbacks from the ruling party. Awami League pledged to ensure local government, but what happened is far behind expectation, and contrary to expectation in reality. The government institutions are heavily politicized. The youth fronts of the party, as before in other regimes, have become so unruly, criminalized, and anti-social that the party itself fails to manage.

The mandatory political institutions of the country, which need to function effectively and efficiently to the interest of the citizens and to ensure institutionalization of democracy, are not functioning, seemingly because the political parties, the foremost important political instruments are not institutionalized.

1.4. Scope and Objective of the Research:

The proposed research will investigate into the setbacks in the process of institutionalization of democracy in political parties in Bangladesh. For investigation in the given time period, the researcher has considered two major political parties in Bangladesh – Awami League and BNP. Both the parties have historical background and experiences of politics, still they seem to lack internal democracy within. There can be a number of factors affecting institutionalization process in the political parties, however, this research project is considering three factors as independent variables – power distance of the society, patron-client relation and patrimonialism – to analyze nature of organizations, their orientation towards democracy, and practices conducive or detrimental to institutionalization of democracy. Party decision making process according to the party constitutional provisions is the primary focus of the study, in consideration with the participation from the local level and effects of socio-cultural values and norms on party democracy.

1.5. Specific Research Objectives:

- i. To understand the effects of socio-cultural values on party organization;
- ii. To understand the level of participation of the party leaders in the decision making process inside the party;
- iii. To understand how patron-client relation and patrimonialism are affecting institutionalization of political parties.

1.6. Hypotheses:

- i. Socio-cultural values affect democratic practices in the political parties.
- ii. Local level leaders have less participation in the party decision making process.
- iii. Patron client relationship affects institutionalization of democracy in the party.

1.7. Significance of the Research:

This proposed study will add to the understanding of the cultural dimensions of the society affecting institutionalization of democracy in the political parties, particularly in their decision making process. Historical background has been used in most cases by the political scientists and sociologists to understand the nature of party organizations and democratization process. This project will consider power distance, which is a normative root of socio-political culture, to understand the nature of party structure, and relationship among the party leaders, perception of the leaders towards democracy, as well as perception of the common masses towards party organization and democracy.

1.8. Review of Literature

There remains a correlation between the level of success of party programs and the strategies they follow to implement those. The citizens in long run can judge the values the political parties carry. Electoral success depends not only on how precisely and subtly the political parties present their ideals and principles, but on the measures they undertake to realize those. Weber (1858) emphasizes 'Parties may aim to realize a program of ideal political principles, but unless their activities are based on systematic strategies for achieving electoral success they will be doomed to insignificance.'

Political parties remain the principal force around which public contestations are organized, serving to structure political alternatives for the people, formulating policies and translating them into a popularly intelligible set of choices. Political parties in South Asia are usually described through a series of absences: immature, inchoate, insufficiently institutionalized, devoid of organizational structure, not professionalized and lacking in ideology and policy agenda. Here, “people feel that political parties are essential for the functioning of democracy but do not seem to trust them for making democracy work. Routinely, parties are accused of short-term horizons, falling prey to populist agendas and an obsession with somehow winning elections without adequate concern for longer-term consequences.” [Oxford University Press (2008)]

What is commonly observed is that there is high level of citizen’s involvement in the political parties, particularly big political parties, but at the same time dissatisfaction among the citizens regarding political parties is also very high. Even the factions and political leaders themselves express utter grievances about their own party structure and behavior. “Political parties are increasingly being seen as a source for amassing wealth and power for the leaders, using all means. Criminality and corruption among party leaders has become more common, parties are becoming leader-centric as leaders appear unwilling or unable to institutionalize systems of selecting leaders or candidates, to resolve inner-party differences, increase the participation of members in party functioning and decision making processes, raise funds and so on. This has serious implications for democracy in these societies, expressed both in low levels of trust in parties and politicians and, more disturbingly, the rise of extra constitutional politics.

State governance is affected by the confrontations among the political parties, intolerant and egocentric attitudes of the political leaders, their agitation programs, indiscriminate politicization of the public offices, and so on. The internal conflicts of the political parties spill over in the societies and in other institutions, and the party units at both central and local levels are not well organized and managed. The undemocratic and unruly attitudes of the party people affect public resource management and development, and public funds are sometimes distributed to the party patrons. The absence of inner-party democracy is a result of parties functioning as patronage machines. Ruling parties enjoy a differential access to state resources and are thus in a better position to reward members and supporters, be it

through jobs or licenses and contracts. In societies where the state plays a dominant role in the generation and distribution of resources and where other institutional mechanisms remain weak, as is generally true of South Asia, avenues for the distribution of patronage remain high. Again, here, the parties extraordinarily depend on party leaders. Oxford University Press (2008) continues... "Electoral victories or defeats are thus read as legitimation or denunciation of the leader rather than the policies and programmes of the concerned party. This trait indicates another deficiency: apart from being non-democratic, parties are overly centralised in their structure of decision making. The local units or members rarely count in these matters. What increasingly counts in a large number of parties is the role of a political dynasty. One family plays a key role in the founding and day to day running of the party and the leadership passes on to the next generation with the same family."

Inkles (1991) points out: "There can be no meaningful democracy at the national level without a system of stable, responsive and responsible political parties."

Democracy should be understood as a political method in which the people as electors periodically choose between possible teams of leaders. (Schumpeter, 1950). Political scientist Sidney Verba, describes political culture as a "system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values, which defines the situation in which political action takes place." Almond and Verba (1963) showed a relationship between democracy and political culture in this way, "What must be learned about democracy is a matter of attitude and feeling, and this is harder to learn." "... the political system as internalized in the cognition, feelings and evaluations of its population."

There are dominant classes in Bangladesh society, and these classes tend to be the intermediate classes-groups that in the Marxian perspective stand intermediate between capital and labor. The intermediate classes that control state power in Bangladesh are the urban middle classes, i.e., civil and military bureaucrats, professionals and businessmen and rural rich peasants, the latter having the ties of property and kinship with the former.

The patron-clientelism can be identified in the following characteristics (Roniger, 1981):

- i. They are vertical and grounded in strong economic and political inequality.
- ii. There is a continuous exchange of a variety of resources between a patron and his clients. Most of these resources are instrumental.

- iii. These exchanges form a package deal.
- iv. There is a strong element of solidarity based on affective ties in these relations.
- v. These relations are informal and often opposed to official laws.
- vi. They seem to undermine and cut across class solidarity.
- vii. Patron-client groups are also conflict groups and various patron client groups become engaged in intermittent conflicts. Thus such groups can be also viewed as factions.

Jahan (2005) says the nationalist leadership repeatedly blamed Pakistan rulers for exploiting and appropriating Bangladesh's resources and promised people a very different kind of policy and politics once Pakistani colonial rule is overthrown. Implicit in the idea *Sonar Bangla* (golden Bengal) was the vision of a society economically prosperous, free of exploitation, democratically governed, tolerant of pluralism, and respectful of people's rights. This vision mobilized the nation behind the liberation war and is still alive in the minds of the average citizens as evidenced by people's movements for democracy and human rights and their initiatives for economic wellbeing. But the political and civil-military bureaucratic leadership that rules Bangladesh in the last three decades has failed in large measure to demonstrate their commitment to this vision through their policies and performances. Successive regimes have fallen far short in delivering on their promises to promote economic prosperity, social justice and people's welfare. Undeniably there has been some progress in the last three decades. The rate of economic growth in the decades following independence is higher than preceding independence. Poverty has been reduced. Infant mortality has been halved. Fertility has declined significantly. Literacy rate has nearly doubled. Rate of primary school enrolment has gone up. Gender gaps in human development, though still significant, have been narrowed. But these achievements in economic and social development have to be viewed in the light of the country's potentials and the performance of the other comparable states. For example, the rate of GDP growth in Bangladesh has been slower than the growth of other countries in South Asia. Similarly the improvements in human development have been faster in many Southeast Asian countries. Income disparities and access to opportunities and services between the rich and the poor have widened.

However, citizens' dissatisfaction with state performance is not simply due to slow pace of progress. They have started losing faith in leaders as successive regimes patronized corruption and abused public offices for personal gains. State power has been used by all regimes to intimidate or suppress political opposition, buy support of individuals and groups

and make money for personal use and party building. The state's credibility in maintaining law and order has been eroded as it has failed to uphold the rule of law. Despite rhetoric commitment and prolonged struggles to establish democracy, the political parties have failed to establish a consensus over the ground rules for democratic competition and dissent. They have relied heavily on money and *mastaans* (muscle men) to mobilize support and capture votes. Though over the years, the policy differences between the two major parties, the Awami League and the BNP, have narrowed the only difference being identity question and relations with India and the two parties have succeeded in taking turns to wield state power after winning free and fair elections, they have up to now failed to demonstrate their willingness to abide by the rules of democratic competitions.

Patrimonialism erodes the strength of systematic party formation and development, and ultimately affects the government system. Patrimonialism is accompanied by the sudden rise and fall of regimes. The fate of patrimonial rulers is great instability. (Weber, 1978).

There have been investigations into the state of democracy and governance in Bangladesh to a large extent, and there are also studies on historical background of the political parties, as well as the confrontational attitudes of the political leaders. There are also widespread allegations from the commoners as well as from the civil society that the political parties and the politicians behave undemocratic and autocratic. This researcher for the current thesis finds a space to find effect of traditional *samaj* system of Bangladesh on the political party structure and behavior, and how clientelism and patrimonialism are affecting institutionalization of democracy in the parties, and also what people and the party workers perceive about democracy in the parties.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

This proposed study follows a conceptually grounded investigation of two major political parties in Bangladesh to find out factors hindering institutionalization of democracy within political parties. In this research project, institutionalization of political parties has been considered as dependent variable, which is affected by a number of factors, among which power distance of the society, patron-client relation, and patrimonialism have been considered as the three independent variables.

Political parties are organizations, however rudimentary, set up more or less intentionally and with some kind of formal rules and objectives. Institutionalization should be understood as the process by which the party becomes established in terms both of integrated patterns of behaviour and of attitudes, or culture. It is helpful to distinguish between internal and externally related aspects of this process. Internal aspects refer to developments within the party itself; external aspects have to do with the party's relationship with the society in which it is embedded, including other institutions. [Randall and Svasand, 2002]

The survival of an organization depends on its efficient and effective (optimal) performance. The essence of democracy is, as the protective theorists of liberal democracy rightly emphasized, the ability of citizens to replace one government by another, and hence, to protect themselves from the risk of political decision-makers transforming themselves into an immovable force. Here, the government is perceived as not only the government formed by a political party or a coalition of political parties through elections, but also any governing authority in an organization, particularly in a public or citizen organization including political parties. This governing authority or the leaders must change by turn to keep the organization democratic in true sense.

Observers and analysts of politics and political parties have studied how democracy depends on the institutional strength of political parties. They have blamed the shortfalls of new democracies on the absence or weakness of political parties. Democratic theorists are more likely to view parties not as a weed but as a necessary microbe lodged deep in the digestive tract—not pretty, but vital to keeping the body politic in good health. Parties are the link between citizen interests and government actions. Democratic political systems are those in

which important governmental posts are decided by fair, competitive elections held on a regular schedule, freedoms of association and speech are protected, and the franchise is extended to nearly all-adult citizens.

Political parties played significant role in attaining independence in Bangladesh and subsequently struggled a lot to achieve democracy in the country. Yet, internal party democracy did not improve satisfactorily. Democratic principles and systems are not followed in areas of internal party organization like managing different tiers within the party, and electing party leaders and activists. Bottom-up planning was rejected rather all major organizational decisions come from the party chiefs. Party decisions became centralized at the whim of the party chiefs of both Awami League and BNP, and hence the intelligence or ideas of the local leaders are not encouraged, and the dedicated party leaders at grassroots faced challenges of access to party high ranks. 'Political party affairs revolved around personality cult of the party chief and general members were weighted down by the supreme leadership.' [Hasanuzzaman, 2003]. Neither Awami League nor BNP held their party councils and convention regularly. Even if councils and conventions were held, election of party leaders did not take place. The party leaders did not follow systematic way to change leadership rather, submitted to the party chiefs for decisions. In BNP, there exist National Executive Committee and Electoral College, but they depend fully on the party Chairperson for her supreme leadership. Even if there is Working Committee in Awami League party system, but the party planning and activities depend on the party President. As the party decisions are in the hand of the party chiefs, the party internal organizational strength has been weakened and reliant upon one person. These resulted into blood relation appointment and promotion and imposed nomination. Again the Article 70 of the Constitution also made the party representatives loyal to the party chief.

Socio-cultural roots:

Again political parties as institutions are grounded in historically emergent cultural patterns and social structure. The way political parties behave is greatly influenced by cultural and social factors.

Sociologist Alex Inkle and Psychologist Daniel Levinson identified three basic issues in the society which count in functioning of societies, of groups within the societies, and of individuals within those groups. The issues are:

- i. Relation to authority
- ii. Conception of self – in particular, the relationship between individual and society – and the individual's concept of masculinity and femininity
- iii. Ways of dealing with conflicts, including the control of aggression and the expression of feelings

Geert Hofstede identified four dimensions of culture, which affect the behavior and practices of organizations. [A dimension is an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures.] The dimensions are:

- i. Power distance (from small to large)
- ii. Collectivism versus individualism
- iii. Femininity versus masculinity
- iv. Uncertainty avoidance

Power distance can be defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

This proposed study will consider Hofstede suggested basic societal power distance indicators like inequality among people, respect system, authoritarian values, obedience, dependence, hierarchy, centralization of power, autocracy, charisma and tradition based power, and the privileged powerful etc., which presumably affect the political parties as organizations.

Patron-client relationship and power distance:

Patron-client relationship is the foundation of making of political parties and party system in Bangladesh. Excessive inequality remains in the socioeconomic structure of Bangladesh, which arises from the power distance of the society.

Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Institutions are the basic elements of society, such as family, the school, and the community; organizations are the places where people work. Inequality within a society is seen in

different social classes: upper, middle, and lower. Classes differ in their access to the opportunities and advantages of the society.

Power distance can be seen in the family life of our society. Children are expected to be obedient towards their parents. There is an order of authority among the children themselves, younger children being expected to yield to older children. Independent behavior on the part of a child is not encouraged. Respect for parents and other elders is seen as a basic virtue, children see others showing respect and soon acquire it themselves. Respect for parents and older relatives lasts through adulthood. As the family is the source of our very social mental programming, its impact is extremely strong, and programs set at this stage are difficult to change.

Hofstede (1986: 301-302) distinguishes four types of institutions: the family, the school, the job and the community. He goes on to state that they ‘interact, so that, for example, patterns of parent/child interaction in a society are carried over into teacher/student ... relationships’. Basically, it is said that models, which are used, have been created and present in the society for years and have been transferred from one institution to another. If compared to the conclusion from the previous paragraph, these two perceptions seem to be very similar.

Hofstede says that power distance as a cultural characteristic defines the extent to which inequality in power is accepted and considered as normal by less powerful people in a society (Hofstede, 1986: 307). To better describe and compare differences between societies functioning within this one dimension, he divides it into two categories: small and large. Listed below are the differences in teacher-student and student-student interaction related to the power distance dimension adapted from Hofstede (1986:313):

Small power distance society	Large power distance society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers respect the independence of his/her students • Students’ initiative is considered very important (student-centered education) • Students initiate communication • Teachers expect students to find their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students respect their teacher • Order in class is very important (teacher-centered education) • Students wait for the teacher to initiate communication • Students expect teacher to show them

<p>own way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are encouraged to speak up spontaneously • Students are allowed to express their own opinion • Effective learning depends on two-way communication in class • In conflicts between teacher and student, parents take the student's side • Teachers are treated as equals outside class • Young teachers are more liked than older ones 	<p>paths to follow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students speak up only when asked by the teacher • Students always accept what teacher says • Effective learning is a result of excellence of the teacher • In conflicts between teacher and student, parents take teacher's side • Teachers are respected also outside class • Old teachers are more respected than young ones
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These two extremes describe to what extent members of a society are willing to accept the inequality, and so: small power distance means that the extent to which less powerful people accept the social inequality is small, that is members of a society are treated as equal as possible in an unequal society; large power distance means that a big inequality in power is considered by the less powerful members of a society as normal.

Social change and the basis of power

The idea that resource control is the basis of power tends to imply that differences in power between individuals and groups are relatively static and enduring. So long as one controls sufficient resources, it seems, one has power and those without resources have little option but to submit. It is difficult to see how power ever changes hands in this view. In practice there are many examples from real life of relatively rapid gains and losses in power where individuals and groups without initial resources become more powerful and those with overwhelming resources suddenly lose power.

The power distance of the society of Bangladesh

The society of Bangladesh is basically a hierarchic system based on a person's social position, caste, status, educational background, seniority, and gender. (Jamil, 2007). The principle of hierarchy in interpersonal relationship, is, and for hundreds of years has been

accepted as necessary and morally right in rural Bangladesh, even among the Muslims. In a hierarchic system, roles and duties in relation to others are defined in details. If these are not followed, chaos and conflict are expected to result.

According to Stanley Higginbotham, religion in our social life teaches proper way of living and behaving in a society. The social function of religion is to hold together, maintain and perpetuate a given social order.

A patron-client relationship binds group members with specific norms and values. These norms determine role definition and role expectation, i.e., the role of a patron and a client. The concept of obedience and deference to patrons by a client is an important value in a hierarchic society like Bangladesh.

Jansen (1983) writes: When people meet for the first time they commonly attempt to establish relative rank. The basis on which they establish rank may vary, but it mainly depends on wealth, lineage, education, or difference in age.... The person who is accorded higher rank has the right to expect respected behavior. Respectful behavior is expressed and ritualized in many ways. There are elaborate rules, developed during centuries of what constitute polite and proper behavior towards a person accorded the higher status. These rules relate to ways of addressing and speaking to the person, ways of looking at the person or standing and sitting in front of him or her. The relate to which issues the poorer person can raise in front of the person accorded higher and how the poorer should praise and show support for the richer.

In a society which is so obsessed about hierarchy in interpersonal relations and where the possibilities of employment and sharecropping contacts make such a difference in one's way to survive, it is a great asset for a poor man to know the codes and practice of respectful behavior. Proper and pleasing manners towards a potential patron may be as important for obtaining a favorable employment or sharecropping contract as the ability to work hard.

Patterns of rights and duties maintain both order and balance in our society. Superiors in the society are supposed to give orders and advice to those with a lower status. People having low ranks are treated as children and they enjoy little opportunities. The patron-client or parent-child relationship developed over centuries has taught the superiors to be harsh and commanding towards the subordinates, and has taught the subordinates to be respectful to

afraid of the superiors of the society. Due to power distance in the society, the subordinates seek direction and guidance from the superiors. Subordinates or those with lower rank in the society feel dejected when they don't receive favor from the superiors. In practice, the people being loyal to the superiors are bestowed with favors (even undue), and those who do not are distanced and discriminated.

In large-power-distance situation in our political institutions, we see relationship between subordinates and superiors as emotional. Superiors and subordinates consider one another as existentially unequal; the hierarchical system is based on this existential inequality. Power is centralized in a few hands. Subordinates expect to be told what to do. There are a lot of supervisory personnel, structured into tall hierarchies of people reporting to each other. Superiors are entitled to privileges. The ideal boss in the subordinates' eyes, the one they feel most comfortable with and whom they respect most, is a benevolent autocrat, or good father.

Power distance in our social, cultural and political arenas can be identified through the following existing situations:

- i) Inequalities among people are expected and desired.
- ii) Less powerful people should be dependent.
- iii) Respect for the older ones or seniors is a basic and lifelong virtue.
- iv) Subordinates expect to be told what to do.
- v) Subordinate-superior relations are emotional.
- vi) Privileges and status symbols are normal and popular.
- vii) Might prevails over right: whoever holds the power is right and good.
- viii) Power is based on tradition or family, charisma, and the ability to use force.
- ix) The way to change a political system is by changing the people at the top (revolution).
- x) There is less dialogue and more violence in domestic politics.
- xi) There is more perceived corruption; scandals are usually covered up.

Power distance of the society, patron-client relation and patrimonialism are the three considered variables in this study which affect participation and democratization process as a whole. With these three basic independent variables, the research intends to measure the dependent variable 'institutionalization of democracy in the political parties'. The researcher

assumes that these are the critical factors, which are affecting the institutionalization of democracy within the political parties, destabilizing socioeconomic stability, and in turn affecting the whole governance system and policies of the state.

Indicators of Power distance of society:

- Inequality among people, respect system, authoritarian values, obedience, dependence, hierarchy, centralization of power, autocracy, charisma and tradition based power, and the privileged powerful etc..

Indicators of Patron-client relation:

- Participation and influence of the powerful, moneyed and elite people in the political party;
- Party being loyal to clients and protection of their interests;
- Party ideals are overlooked;

Indicators of Patrimonialism:

- Party chief not elected by the party leaders;
- Most party decisions not taken by committees, rather by party chief;
- Choices of the party chiefs are not challenged;
- Family members of party chief become next chiefs;

In this study the three independent variables considered – power distance in the society, patron-client relation and patrimonialism – are inter-linked with one another. In general terms, power distance in the society remains the source of other two variables – patron-client relation and patrimonialism. Here power distance has been considered the most important variable, which carries the core values of the culture affecting the behavior in an organization, ie, practices in the political parties. Patron-client relation is again distinct in a sense that there are different patrons and clients with different interests operate in the political parties. This relation does not fully reflect same cultural values. So, patron-client relation in the study of political parties has been considered as a separate variable. Again patrimonialism or dynastic character, in general sense, arises out of the power distance in the society, but in the society the dynastic character has almost disappeared, while in the political parties it remains strong. So, patrimonialism is also taken as separate variable.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This will be basically a qualitative research.

3.1. Sources of Data

- Historical data regarding growth of political parties, fragmentation and alliance will be collected from secondary sources, i.e., through content review, which will include newspapers, periodicals, party documents such as constitutions, manifestoes, press statements etc. From the secondary sources, the historical background of the political parties before and after independence of Bangladesh, formation of major political parties, changes of regimes, characteristics of political cultures in Bangladesh will be understood.
- Primary data will be collected from interviews and FGDs.
- The interview of political leaders covers 4 from Rajshahi, 3 from Kushtia Awami League, while 1 from Rajshahi and 6 from Kushtia BNP

The two political leaders – one from Rajshahi Metropolitan Awami League and one from Rajshahi Metropolitan BNP – are taken as central level leaders.

Thorough interviews with the political leaders at both local and central level, the decision making process, will be understood. The independent variables with its indicators will be checked during the interviews.

- 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were arranged. 2 FGDs with Awami League minded cross-section of people at Kushtia and Rajshahi, 1 from BNP minded cross-section of people at Kushtia, and 1 with high school teachers and local elites.

Through FGDs with cross-sections of people, orientation of the common people towards political party and democracy will be understood.

3.2. Sampling:

- Bangladesh Awami League has a long experience of political development, and in fact Bangladesh became independent under their leadership, but its leadership became controversial due to some radical changes in the governance system and the Constitution, which were undemocratic. Following military coup in 1975, anti-Awami League people as well as different interest groups united and subsequently BNP was formed in 1978. Upto 1990, there were several coups, and democracy was restored only after 1990. In 5th, 7th and 8th Parliament elections in 1991, 1996 and 2001 respectively, many political parties competed, but in fact governments were formed either by BNP leadership or the Awami League leadership, ie., these two big political parties stayed in ruling or opposition. After restoration of democracy, a two-party democracy system backed by other small parties is effected. So, for this study, Awami League and BNP are selected to understand intra-party democratization process. Given the short time for this thesis, the sample size has been limited to 36. For interviews, purposive sampling would be used.

3.3. Validation of Data

- Data collected from local level will be validated with those collected from central level. The primary data will also be compared with those reviews by the contemporary political analysts.

3.4. Data Processing and Analysis Plan

Simple mathematical tools will be used for data processing.

3.5. Challenges or Limitations of the Research

While preparing this research proposal, the researcher presupposes some challenges, which include access to party leaders and significant party documents like meeting or council resolutions etc. If access to central level party decision makers is too difficult, the researcher will go for convenience sampling in other division levels in Khulna or Chittagong or Rajshahi or Barishal.

Chapter 4: Field Findings

(based on interview and FGD)

Formation of party committees:

According to the party constitutions of both Bangladesh Awami League and BNP, there are four tiers of district level party structures viz., Ward Committee, Union Committee, Upazila Committee, and Zila (District) Committee. The formation of these committees will follow a bottom-up process, ie, the Ward Committee (the lowest tier) will form Union Committee, Union Committee will form Upazila Committee and Upazila Committee will form Zila Committee (the highest tier of local level party structure), while in the metropolitan city, the Ward Committees will form Thana committees, and Thana committees will form metropolitan committees.

Generally the district councilors would consider loyalty, personality, dedication, experience, honesty, education, manner etc. of the leaders, and propose names for the district committee. Here the reality is different. The councilors, while proposing names for committee, become divided into different panels, and thus the participating central leaders cannot decide easily on the choices. The center thus receives panel nominations from the districts and takes decisions later. Sometimes, for internal conflicts and misunderstanding the district committees cannot be formed for years together. For example, the Kushtia district Awami League committee was formed in 2004, and the next committee was supposed to be formed after three years, but could not be formed.

The experienced party activists identified one basic indicator of democracy as the right and ability of the party people in each tier of the party to select or elect their own leaders on the basis of majority choice. Mr. Saiful Islam, Union level Awami League leader laments, “The committees at Upazila and Zila levels are formed or directions for the same are given by the central leaders sitting in Dhaka. Here democratic practices are absent within the party. Democracy and citizen’s rights are not respected. We, the local level party activists want to choose our leaders through election, which should be foundation of party democracy, but election procedure is absent in the party. I cannot express my opinion in this regard.” Mr. Mahatab Uddin, Organizing Sectary, Human Rights Advocates Association, Kushtia, who is

also active in district level BNP politics, has his view that democratic practice in the organizational committees of the political parties at different levels is absent because the committees are not formed constitutionally or according to the organization's provisions. The Upazila and Zila leaders keep lobby with separate central leaders, and thus panel based committees are formed. In some cases, the center chooses president and or secretary at the district or Upazila levels, and the latter chooses other like minded office bearers. Such lobbies between local and central tiers are maintained with and in exchange of money and muscle power, or regional or kinship identity. These committees do not reflect the democratic opinion or choice of the majority party workers.

Relationship among party leaders:

Patron-client relation between the powerful moneyed people and the political parties is evident in the Bangladesh political culture. During general elections, the party centers forget and deny those grassroots leaders who are politically renowned figures, and nominate those with money and power in exchange of huge donations to the parties. While talking about their position for such practices of the party centers, the grassroots leaders, even though they themselves are involved in different intra-party lobbies or factions, express their dissatisfaction and concern and sometimes grievances. Prior to the Eighth Parliament election, the BNP nomination for Kushtia Sadar Upazila surprised the party leaders and activists. As they said, there were protests within the constituency and the party leaders in big group went to the center for asking for a fair nomination, but the center did not listen. The same is the case at Rajahshi 6 constituency, where Awami League nomination for Ninth Parliament election surprised the constituency leaders and activists. The constituency people said, they were so opposed to the central decision that the party leaders did not participate in the election campaigns until little before the election. One grassroots leader says, "That's our political culture. We can't change it. At last we have to listen to the center. After all we have to be in politics."

Mr. Saiful Islam, local level leader of Awami League shares, "Political intrusion, criminalization and immorality have deeply affected the social justice system. Political patronage has paved ways for further corruption and mal-practices in the society and state. When party opens door to the ill-educated and immoral people, these people turn into opportunists and look for return, violating rules and regulations, refuting laws and rights on the power politics supported by party. Wrong nomination, wrong decisions and lobby politics

aggravates the injuries deep into the heart of politics; it adds to the enmity, clash and divisions, which evidently lead to politics of violence and killing.”

Awami League leaders commonly mention turbulent political situation during the last BNP led coalition regime, reform initiatives of the caretaker government, militarization, and subsequent election preparation as reasons for not forming the district level committees. In the case of formation of Rajshahi Metropolitan committees, the Metropolitan Awami League General Secretary claims that the committees here formed through council and mostly through secret ballot. The current committees were formed in 2004, and though provisions are there for election of new committees every 3 years, new committees are not formed. The Secretary said that elections were held in the positions of President and Secretary. In the case of ward committees, the Metropolitan Committee leaders bring their favored people in positions. The Secretary says that it is true that efforts are there to maintain constitutional provisions in Rajshahi committees, but in many other districts the provisions are ignored.

The interviewed Awami League leader of Kushtia district notes that the concept of democracy among the political leaders at the center is nontransparent and incomplete. They themselves don't respect the democratic norms. The center interferes in the normal functioning of the district level committees. The discrepant behavior of the central leaders is detrimental to nurturing of political ideals and conscience. Local level party leaders assert that there is no system in the party for the local leaders to be promoted in the central level based on their merit and experiences. If there is no promotion of leadership based on sincerity, dedication and talent, the governance system of the state would be affected.

BNP held its national council on 8 December 2009 after long 16 years. According to the provisions in the BNP constitution [amended in August 2009 following the Representation of Peoples Order], the National Executive Committee and Standing Committee are to be formed through election during national council. During the council, Khaleda Zia was re-elected as party's Chairperson. Seemingly the re-election follows a proposal and support from the councilors, but in fact, there is no alternative leader to seek the position, or no leader to propose an alternative person in the position. As the respondents of this research project comment, in fact no leader in the party dares to propose alternative person as the Chairperson, because, they think, in such case, that leader or person might lose or is afraid of losing position in the party. The local level leaders of BNP are happy to say that they transfer

their voting power to the Chairperson for forming the committees to her choice. While talking about the change in the position of the party chief, or recommendations or propositions by party leaders for change in central positions, Khokon Khan, former member of Union *Jobo Dal* (youth front of BNP) sarcastically said, “Why I need to stand with *laathi* (baton) while the chief holds gun in her hand.” “She will choose over 251 office-bearers and members for the executive committee and 19 members for the standing committee. During the closed-door session, former BNP lawmaker Ilyas Ali proposed that formation of the committees should be left to the Chairperson's discretion. The councilors backed the proposal, ending speculations over the process of picking new leadership [The Daily Star, 9 December 2009]. “The councilors have given me the responsibility to announce new committees and I will do that soon. Those who are competent and have acceptability among people will be chosen to run the party,” she said. [The Daily Star, 9 December 2009].

As regards Awami League national council, the district leaders participate in the party's council. In the last council of Awami League in July 2009 the district leaders, each representing 50000 people in the district, appeared with hope that the central leaders will be elected in the important positions of the National Executive Committee, but like in BNP council, the central Awami League leaders transferred their power to party chief for forming the committee on her own. There are arguments and counter-arguments for such process. The district level leaders think that the central leaders still have not learnt to behave democratically, and do not practice democracy among themselves, so the party chief remains the sole authority to decide on the committees.

While asked about their right to hold the central committees accountable, the local leaders assert that they can put forward their demands, raise different issues for discussions, and even demand corrections in some cases, but decisions and implementation are not in their hand. Here works are done at the sole discretion of the party chief. Khokon Khan said, “The centers try to impose democratic practices at the grassroots and push for elections and changes, but most of the central positions remain static for years together, or remain at the discretion of the party chiefs only. There is no concern for democracy at the centers. In this case, both BNP and Awami League have the same character.”

As regards the downslide failure of BNP in the last general election, the local leaders lamented over the excessive eulogy to party founder and less concern over meeting current

needs of the people. One view was like “How long will we only sell Zia? We asked for a number of development activities, which the people demanded for long time. In the locality we need to build bridge, culvert, and build and maintain roads. The ministers become minister of their own areas, and forget interest of the whole nation, and in a sense forget the long-term interest of the party.”

For candidate selection for the general election, the political parties have provision that the Union Committees will make priority basis choice list of 5 candidates, which will gradually move to district committees, that will approve the choice lists and send to the central committee for nomination. The provision to this effect is there, but whether to follow those are solely dependent on the center; local leaders have no way to ensure it. The local leaders say it's common practice that the central level will decide who will compete in the general election. As regards the selection and decision process of the center, one local leader comment, “Here at the grassroots, there is a system of survey and performance assessment particularly during election, but the problem remains at the center. Of course it's also true that party needs support and funds, and so, some businesspeople and bureaucrats enter party and get election nomination.”

Holding of elections of the political parties or the Parliament does not mean democracy. The word democracy in the present day world implies accountability, transparency, good governance and rule of law, apart from holding of fair, free and impartial elections. Democracy affords the people the most opportunities for meaningful participation in making decisions that shape their lives. No one knows the criterion on which members of the national executive council and standing committee of BNP are selected. These leaders are apparently selected, not elected through secret ballot, which is the fundamental principle for election. Therefore, the purpose of democracy is defeated.

Local leaders understand the true democratic process as being changes in the party positions at various tiers including the party chief's. At the same time, they perceive that the people do not support the change in chief position, though here by the people refer to the majority party leaders and activists. They mention the example of the last Caretaker Government regime, while the reform minded people tried to speak against the party chief and tried to restructure the center as well as gather support for it, but they did not succeed, rather they were

eventually sidelined. This is because, as the leaders and party activists think, people have not learnt to think beyond Khaleda Zia or Sheikh Hasina.

The party leaders think that the party chief has onus to continue in the position, because of their long experience, stamina and dedication. One section says that sometimes the party has tough situation like aftermath of eighth parliament into the last Caretaker Government when many of the party leaders including the party chiefs were put into jail. Many central leaders stood against the party chiefs directly or indirectly. The party leaders think that the chiefs' convictions are unflinching. They would not compromise with their position and would not surrender to the external pressure. BNP leaders refer to the unconvincing stand of Tariq Zia during the toughest time. Tariq Zia, as they commented, has learnt politics from his family, has seen many ups and downs, and has known the political culture well enough. He would not break in any situation. In bad time of the party, many other leaders, even the central ones, will look for opportunity or will turn back. They may not think of party chain of command and party strength. But Tariq Zia will stay as the symbol of power for the party and behind him the party people in the coming days would rally. This is proven while Tariq Zia is made Vice-Chairman of the party during the last national council. Mr. Akamal Khan, a BNP supporter says, "Most of the common people of the country think they owe to either Sheikh Mujib or Ziaur Rahman for their contributions to the country. So, they want to serve their family members. People like us have not learnt as yet to assess candidates or leaders based on their personality, education, talent and patriotism."

Local level leaders are not happy in the way the parties function. A major part of the aggrieved party activists and commoners observe that autocracies have been ousted from the state, but party autocracies are governing the state. They have little hope for changes with the current party leadership. Out of our excessive loyalty and submission to the powerful, we have turned into flatterers. Mr. Saiful Islam observed, "The party people through their flattery would bring Joy as their next leader. We are also looking forward to someone new who might bring good to the party, politics and country. Even if his favored entrance in politics would disregard the democratic transition of party leadership, his absence might as well cause confusion and split in the party."

At the grassroots level, the political leaders often point to the politicians themselves and the bureaucrats being weak and corrupt. Money can buy most of the politicians and bureaucrats.

Weakness and corruption in these two sections have transferred into each corner of the society. The respondents lament that these mal-practices have damaged the social justice system, offended the rights of the citizens, suppressed the voice of the liberal people, restricted the door to choices, and above all obstructed the path to democratic improvement in the society. A potential district Awami League leader expressed his concern over the omnipresent misrule, misbehavior and misdeeds in the current society mostly due to the degradation in political culture as well as bureaucratic malfunctions. Corrections of these are not possible at the grassroots level, rather a top-bottom approach is required, because power and money are lying in the hands of a section of people. Common people cannot bring changes. Corruption in the field of student admission into colleges and universities, and misappropriation of government funds in the district are due to the interests of the political leaders. He says, “Admission business and tender related offences could not be possible, if the political leaders were honest and strict.” Advocate Mahatab says the political parties have their involvement in the local level big project or fund management. The parties or political persons give shelter to the miscreants and embezzlers. In many cases the central leaders get involved directly or indirectly.

Democracy minded sections of both the parties doubt that the party chiefs want to maintain democratic order in the parties, or want the party leaders to practice democracy either. Being the President or the Chairperson, the party chiefs enjoy supreme authority, and unchallenged dictating power, which they don't want to lose in any case. The party chiefs are well aware of the performance and achievements of the party leaders, particularly of those at the party centers. The central level leaders maintain various nexuses of business, administrative power and cadres from the center to the grassroots. These take place right under the chiefs' nose. They keep mum and blind to the activities of these nexuses, and hardly make any sound against these until the patrons go too far for the commoners to tolerate, or until they do great harm to other party leaders let alone to the interest of the public, which is negligible to the parties.

Political leaders in Bangladesh have failed to build an identity and a consensus around certain broad-based public policy goals. Unfortunately, both major political parties govern the country on a partisan basis, where the opinions of the majority remain unheard. This is the result of non-practicing of democracy in political parties. It seems that no political party is practicing democracy. The great enemies of our political leaders are sycophants who are in

most cases corrupt, dishonest and inefficient. If a national leader is surrounded by such people, it pollutes administration, helps breed corruption and retards promotion of welfare of the people. Unfortunately, no reform of political parties has taken place, which is a necessity in the present day world. [Practicing democracy in political parties, Mohammad Amjad Hossain, DS, 21 December 2009]

Village society in Bangladesh is often divided into a number of factions that follow the lines of kinship or party identity. The heart of the local elder's authority is his control over land and the ability to provide land or employment to poorer villagers, who are often his kin and/or supporters. Land control may be an ancient prerogative, stretching back to the *zamindars*, or it may be the result of gradual purchases since independence. A village may have only one faction, but typically there will be several factions within the village, each competing for influence over villagers and struggling for resources from local administrative and development offices.

The leaders of local factions or party units exercise their influence in village courts and as managers of village affairs with other administrative units. The traditional means for resolving local disputes is through the village court, which comprises leaders of village factions and other members of union councils. Throughout Bangladesh, village courts address the vast majority of disputes, but it is rare for the courts to decide in favor of a poor peasant over a rich peasant, or for the weaker faction over the stronger.

Chapter 5: Analyzing political culture and power distance of society

The sociologist MacIver wrote many years ago that "culture is what we are" and "civilization is what we have." A broader meaning of culture is what we are, what we have and what we can be. That is, our ways of life, our inheritance and our aspirations are known as culture. For Tocqueville, who was much impressed by American democracy of the 1830s, culture is the habit of the heart. Collective habits can be either positive or negative for the development of a viable political culture. Culture is the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought. The predominating attitudes and behavior that characterize the functioning of a group or organization are culture.

According to Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, culture is "Integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that is both a result of and integral to the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. Culture thus consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and symbols. It has played a crucial role in human evolution, allowing human beings to adapt the environment to their own purposes rather than depend solely on natural selection to achieve adaptive success. Every human society has its own particular culture, or socio-cultural system. Variation among cultures is attributable to such factors as differing physical habitats and resources; the range of possibilities inherent in areas such as language, ritual, and social organization; and historical phenomena such as the development of links with other cultures. An individual's attitudes, values, ideals, and beliefs are greatly influenced by the culture (or cultures) in which he or she lives. Culture change takes place as a result of ecological, socioeconomic, political, religious, or other fundamental factors affecting a society."

5.1. Political Culture [definition and theory]

Political culture can be defined as "The orientation of the citizens of a nation toward politics, and their perceptions of political legitimacy and the traditions of political practice," and the feelings expressed by individuals in the position of the elected offices that allow for the nurture of a political society.

Wyn Grant, Professor of Politics, University of Warwick, UK, defines political culture as “The attitudes, beliefs, and values which underpin the operation of a particular political system. These were seen as including knowledge and skills about the operation of the political system, positive and negative emotional feelings towards it, and evaluative judgments about the system. Particular regional, ethnic, or other groups within a political system with their own distinctive sets of values, attitudes, and beliefs were referred to as subcultures. A greater awareness developed over time in the literature of the importance of studying elite political cultures, given that the influence of individuals in the political process varies significantly. Cultural explanations can, nevertheless, assist the understanding of how reactions to political events and developments may vary in different societies, while the analysis of subcultures remains important in understanding tensions and cleavages within particular societies.”

Political scientist Sidney Verba, describes political culture as a "system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values, which defines the situation in which political action takes place." Political culture is a distinctive and patterned form of political philosophy that consists of beliefs on how governmental, political, and economic life should be carried out. It creates a framework for political change and are unique to nations, states, and other groups. A political culture differs from political ideology in that people can disagree on an ideology (what government should do) but still share a common political culture. Some ideologies, however, are so critical of the status quo that they require a fundamental change in the way government is operated, and therefore embody a different political culture as well.

Types of political culture

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba outlined three pure types of political culture:

- Parochial - Where citizens are only remotely aware of the presence of central government, and live their lives near enough regardless of the decisions taken by the state.
- Subject - Where citizens are aware of central government, and are heavily subjected to its decisions with little scope for dissent.
- Participant - Citizens are able to influence the government in various ways and they are affected by it.

5.2. Power Distance of the Society [definition and theory]

Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Institutions are the basic elements of society, such as family, the school, and the community; organizations are the places where people work. Inequality within a society is seen in different social classes: upper, middle, and lower. Classes differ in their access to the opportunities and advantages of the society.

Power distance can be seen in the family life of our society. Children are expected to be obedient towards their parents. There is an order of authority among the children themselves, younger children being expected to yield to older children. Independent behavior on the part of a child is not encouraged. Respect for parents and other elders is seen as a basic virtue, children see others showing respect and soon acquire it themselves. Respect for parents and older relatives lasts through adulthood. As the family is the source of our very social mental programming, its impact is extremely strong, and programs set at this stage are difficult to change.

Hofstede (1986: 301-302) distinguishes four types of institutions: the family, the school, the job and the community. He goes on to state that they 'interact, so that, for example, patterns of parent/child interaction in a society are carried over into teacher/student ... relationships'. Basically, it is said that models, which are used, have been created and present in the society for years and have been transferred from one institution to another.

Idea of Power

The basic ideas are that power is the capacity to influence other people, that it is conferred by the control of resources (positive and negative outcomes, rewards and costs, information, etc.) that are desired, valued or needed by others and which make them dependent upon the influencing agent for the satisfaction of their needs or reaching their goals, and that different types of resources confer different types of power leading to different kinds of influence. (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Festinger, 1950, 1953, 1954; French & Raven, 1959; Kelman, 1958).

Social change and the basis of power

The idea that resource control is the basis of power tends to imply that differences in power between individuals and groups are relatively static and enduring. So long as one controls sufficient resources, it seems, one has power and those without resources have little option but to submit. It is difficult to see how power ever changes hands in this view. In practice there are many examples from real life of relatively rapid gains and losses in power where individuals and groups without initial resources become more powerful and those with overwhelming resources suddenly lose power. Power has had a bad press. It is believed to corrupt, lead to abuse, stereotyping and prejudice (Keltner et al., 2003; Lee-Chai & Bargh, 2001). Power is an emergent property of human social relationships, not something that stands outside of them, and power relations can take as many concrete and nuanced forms as the social relationships they express.

5.3. The Power Distance of the Society of Bangladesh

We had an age-old traditional *samaj* system, which was basically peasant-based, and which was combined with *zamindari* or landlordship system. Traditionally the landed or moneyed people had been regarded as the heads of this *samaj*. They held respect in the society as the masters. In the landed society, the relationship among people were based on patronage – the upper tier, ie, the landed and moneyed people, used to hire and allow the peasants to live on and cultivate their lands and thus the peasants would make their living. So, the peasants would honor them as their masters as if the peasants were slaves and living on the favor of the landlords. These landed people were surrounded by one or more tiers of middlemen or mediators, who would act as bridge between the landed gentry and the peasant classes. The peasants or the common masses would not have direct communication or interaction with these lords or masters.

The society of Bangladesh is basically a hierarchic system based on a person's social position, caste, status, educational background, seniority, and gender. (Jamil, 2007). The principle of hierarchy in interpersonal relationship, is, and for hundreds of years has been accepted as necessary and morally right in rural Bangladesh, even among the Muslims. In a hierarchic system, roles and duties in relation to others are defined in details. If these are not followed, chaos and conflict are expected to result.

This traditional rigid *samaj* system rarely was convenient to the people, and mostly was utterly inconvenient. Fortunately enough if the lords or masters were kind-hearted and philanthropic, the masses could expect their sympathy and justice, whereas if the lords or masters were unfeeling and unmerciful, the common masses would face lot of difficulties, sometimes, intolerable sufferings, which were more commonly known.

Depending on their interests, the middlemen or the councilors or the mediators connected to the landlords, mostly the fortune seekers and flatterers, would make the rule harsh or intolerable for the masses. This system was very much undemocratic, which was more commonly a kind of despotism. Poor peasants would unquestionably trust the judgment of the landlords or masters. They would very often take this judgment as their fate, and so never would they challenge the ruling. In case of any challenge or violation, the peasants would have a misfortune. Because of this strong hierarchy, loyalty and submissive mindset of the common masses, there were hardly any violations of law and order, however inhuman or insensitive, imposed upon them, and so, in a sense, people used to say this tough hierarchic system as a peaceful society.

Gradually, this landlord dominated single-authority *samaj* system was replaced by an elite class dominated multi-authority *samaj* system. The basic social structure remained the same – the common masses depended on the heads, mostly the landed and moneyed people of the *samaj* for support in their living, work and justice. The heads of *samaj* interpret the rules and regulations, and the common masses take this class of people as extraordinarily knowledgeable, and differentiate their level of understanding as far superior and not to be challenged. So, the common masses remain loyal to them.

According to Stanley Higginbotham, religion in our social life teaches proper way of living and behaving in a society. The social function of religion is to hold together, maintain and perpetuate a given social order.

A patron-client relationship binds group members with specific norms and values. These norms determine role definition and role expectation, i.e., the role of a patron and a client. The concept of obedience and deference to patrons by a client is an important value in a hierarchic society like Bangladesh.

Jansen (1983) writes: When people meet for the first time they commonly attempt to establish relative rank. The basis on which they establish rank may vary, but it mainly depends on wealth, lineage, education, or difference in age.... The person who is accorded higher rank has the right to expect respected behavior. Respectful behavior is expressed and ritualized in many ways. There are elaborate rules, developed during centuries of what constitute polite and proper behavior towards a person accorded the higher status. These rules relate to ways of addressing and speaking to the person, ways of looking at the person or standing and sitting in front of him or her. The relate to which issues the poorer person can raise in front of the person accorded higher and how the poorer should praise and show support for the richer.

In a society which is so obsessed about hierarchy in interpersonal relations and where the possibilities of employment and sharecropping contacts make such a difference in one's way to survive, it is a great asset for a poor man to know the codes and practice of respectful behavior. Proper and pleasing manners towards a potential patron may be as important for obtaining a favorable employment or sharecropping contract as the ability to work hard.

Patterns of rights and duties maintain both order and balance in our society. Superiors in the society are supposed to give orders and advice to those with a lower status. People having low ranks are treated as children and they enjoy little opportunities. The patron-client or parent-child relationship developed over centuries has taught the superiors to be harsh and commanding towards the subordinates, and has taught the subordinates to be respectful to afraid of the superiors of the society. Due to power distance in the society, the subordinates seek direction and guidance from the superiors. Subordinates or those with lower rank in the society feel dejected when they don't receive favor from the superiors. In practice, the people being loyal to the superiors are bestowed with favors (even undue), and those who do not are distanced and discriminated.

Table 1: Source of power of *Samaj* heads

Area	Total No.	Hereditary [linked with land]	Money and land	Education and knowledge	Political linkage
Kathulia, Kushtia	25	12	8	4	1
Solua, Chargat, Rajshahi	19	6	7	5	1
Total	44 (100%)	18 (41%)	15 (34%)	9 (20%)	2 (5)

Source: Calculation from the present study

The data table shows traditional source of power or authority of the *samaj* heads. The data were collected during the FGDs in the given villages in 2 districts. It is estimated that 41% of the heads get their authority from forefathers, 34% people get authoritative power because of their accrued money and property, 20% people are taken in the society as heads because they have education and can speak, and 5% people in the society are regarded as heads because they are political leaders or aligned to some political parties. The authority being hereditary and with money and land together counts 75%. These 75% people in fact dictate the rural society in social life, rules and customs, mutual behavior and justice system. The people known as educated and knowledgeable are found unwilling to participate in social matters, and sometimes they are rejected. So, the society remains hierarchic, conventional and undemocratic in structure and behavior.

5.4. Social Connection between Common Masses and the Political Leaders:

Whatever ill-educated and immoral these grassroots leaders are, each of them comes from the community and has some sort of local and external patrons of muscle power and political influence. These people are also connected with different sections of people, partisan or neutral, in the society. The grassroots political activists and leaders are having relationship with the district level or central level leaders of the parties, and such relationship is based upon some exchanges of influence, power and resources. Thus the grassroots people are somehow or other connected with the district or central level leaders via these local level leaders acting as mediators. As the respondents say, even the basic rights like freedom of speech, right to jobs available locally and rights to justice are now subject to political connections, because all government and autonomous bodies are heavily politicized. So, the rights due for the common masses in the society, or the rights which they should enjoy being the inhabitants of the society and being the citizens of the state are subject to support and alignment to some political leaders, ie, parties, and subject to the favor by the political sections. Around 82% respondents at the grassroots claim that either we need a political identity or strong political reference to get a job, around 90% people say these days we cannot even argue against or oppose any wrongdoing in the society because of fear of musclemen linked to political parties.

Table 2: Presence of *mastaans* in the party:

Responses	Percentage
Present	89
Absent	5.9
Don't know	5.1
Total	100

Source: Khan et al (2009)

In large-power-distance situation in our political institutions, we see relationship between subordinates and superiors as emotional. Superiors and subordinates consider one another as existentially unequal; the hierarchical system is based on this existential inequality. Power is centralized in a few hands. Subordinates expect to be told what to do. There is a lot of supervisory personnel, structured into tall hierarchies of people reporting to each other. Superiors are entitled to privileges. The ideal boss in the subordinates' eyes, the one they feel most comfortable with and whom they respect most, is a benevolent autocrat, or good father.

Power distance in and political parties can be identified through the following existing situations:

- Inequalities among people are expected and desired.
- Less powerful people should be dependent.
- Respect for the older ones or seniors is a basic and lifelong virtue.
- Subordinates expect to be told what to do.
- Subordinate-superior relations are emotional.
- Privileges and status symbols are normal and popular.
- Might prevails over right: whoever holds the power is right and good.
- Power is based on tradition or family, favor, and the ability to use force.
- The way to change a political system is by changing the people at the top (revolution).
- There is less dialogue and more violence in domestic politics.
- There is more perceived corruption; scandals are usually covered up.

5.5. Judging the Nature of Party Culture of Bangladesh

Every political party as an organization has its own culture and behavior. The members' behavior and attitudes of the organization reflects the culture and behavior of the

organization. It is very true finding that in the top-to-down leadership style the local members/groups follow the group behavior and attitudes of the central group. The central group makes the policies and decisions to be acted in the whole party. The local group always instructs and influences to follow the central commands and decisions. This chain of command follows in many organizations. The question may rise about the participation of the group members in the decision-making process. How does the local members involve in the decision-making process that the local groups can feel and realize that they are also part of the decision-making process, and they feel they are the ownership of the result of any activities. One of the recent talks of the nation issues that BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia was proposed to be lifelong chairperson in BNP. In a democratic organization how does it could be possible for a person to be lifelong chairperson? The nation feels doubt of the democratic practice in the parties. Even the leaders have changed in the party top rank positions, but human behavior and attitudes not yet have been changed; their inner hearts and souls not yet have been modified. After two years, the political party and its members just have turned over the other side of the same coin.

In new democracies, distorted democratic culture affects both the polity and political activists. Polity becomes power-oriented in the sense that power turns out to be the motive force at every layer of administration. The political activists, on the other hand, become motivated to use political power as the medium of power, influence, and in some cases property for mobilizing more power in their baskets.

Habibul Haque Khondker, a sociologist at Zayed University, Abu Dhabi says in his article in the following way [The Daily Star, February 6, 2007]: In Bangladesh some people ask why former prime minister Khaleda Zia's son, Mr Tarique Rahman, should become a senior leader of her party automatically? Is this democracy? What kind of politics is this? Surely, it may not be democracy but it is *rajniti* (I switch to the Bengali word for politics deliberately). Politics has been translated as *rajniti*. I think this translation is problematic. The literal translation of *rajniti* (*raj* is royal, *niti* is principle) is principles or policies of the royalty. Many people in Bangladesh see politics as the domain of the rich and powerful, the modern day incarnations of *rajahs and mahrajahs* (kings, lords).

Uncovering a link of power distance, administration and political power

Political power primarily originates from the control over land, labor and capital. Economic dependency gains expression in the patron-client relations which constitute the economic foundation of political power at the village level. Kinship grouping in the Muslim rural society of Bangladesh is structuring factor for the wider social organization in the villages. Kinship embodies the primordial loyalties which function as an important mediating factor in the articulation of political power. Different economic, political and ideological relations are generally expressed through kinship. Kinship is therefore not an isolated institution with certain functions in the society but a social relation assuming different meanings and functions depending on which social group, class or political dependency are analyzed. The power structure at the village level is also shaped by the modern, national political structures. The relationship between local and national level politics is one of mutual influence. [Kurt Merck Jensen]

The national political structures are represented locally through formal administrative bodies such as Union *Parishad* (lowest tier of local government), which covers a number of villages, and connects national political and administrative levels through a network at upazilas and districts. The Union *Parishad* is a formal political arena with most of the participants coming from the local village elite, whose power and authority depend on their socio-economic status, patron-client relations and support based on kinship and *samaj* loyalties. The political power and authority of an individual village leader is also derived from his connection with the Union *Parishad*, either as a member himself or through influential members. Local leaders who control land, people, and education also tend to control the disbursement of rural credit and development funds. Union *Parishad* chairmen and members have dominance over rural political and economic life. They hold and accumulate properties during their tenure in power, and spend lacs of Taka in elections.

The metropolitan areas had large numbers of conflicting constituencies and political machines linked to national parties. In smaller cities and towns, some leaders emerged directly from the local social system, whereas others became politically established as a result of their professional activities. Members of the government bureaucracy and the military, for example, form an important part of a district town's leadership, but they typically have roots, and connections to land, in other parts of the country. Members of the permanent local elite, such as businessmen, union leaders, lawyers, or religious figures, are more concerned with

strictly local issues and have strong support from family networks stretching into the nearby countryside. Most retain close links with their rural relatives, either locally or elsewhere. Urban elites included professional politicians of national parties, and the entire social group that made up the urban leadership – military, professional, administrative, religious, and business personnel – interacted in a hotbed of national politics.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh has had a very poor tradition of growing leadership through democratic practices in the parties. Instead, the chiefs have been elevated to their positions under the aegis of what is an institutionalized dynastic culture – effectively extending these undemocratic structures of power to the party level and subsequently as the incumbent ruler at state level. The concentration of power at the top of both the parties have edified these leaders into unquestionable leaders to fellow party leaders and party workers, hence elevating them above all criticism.

Both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina remain key sources of power in their parties. Many important decisions are taken by dint of their personal charisma and without any discussion in party forums. If there is a discussion, it remains ceremonial. Other leaders could hold posts, only according to the sweet will of their chiefs. The chiefs can do and undo anything that they want in the party. Personal liking and disliking carry heavily in the weight for considering party positions and portfolios.

5.6. Political Characteristics at the Center Affecting Bangladesh Society:

Since immoral anti-social elements in the society in most cases are linked to some political stalwarts or sections, law is easily violated and justice system broken. The wrongdoers have far long connection with the state machinery, than that the common masses might think of. So, in many cases, even when they see laws being violated, social norms being refuted, they keep mum, and even when their own life and properties are affected, they are reluctant to seek assistance from law enforcing agencies. Mr. Mahatab says, “The weak sections of the society are afraid of seeking legal assistance from court or administration. They are found tolerating the oppressions keeping their mouth shut, rather than opposing those. The society seems to be on the side of the oppressors. The corruption mongers have better relation with the administration.”

5.7. Current Trend of Politics Reshaping *Samaj* Justice System:

The unexpected, unfortunate and indiscriminate politicization process has segregated the *samaj* to the very heart. During the interviews with the Union level political leaders and activists, meetings with the schoolteachers and FGDs, it is known that today's society is sharply divided politically – broadly by Awami League and BNP. Political influences have been transfused from district to Upazila, Upzila to Union through villages. It's no more the prerogative of the traditional *samaj* landlords, moneyed people, or of the educated and knowledgeable sections to look into the *samaj* system, discerning good or bad, correcting errors or controlling the unruly in the society. These authorities are now taken over and controlled by the so-called local political activists annexed to the political leaders of upper tiers. Mr. Abdul Mazid, Union level Awami League leader comments, "Some so called social leaders do not have any source of income. They earn by various rural arbitration process, which they take as their ancestral property. Justice system does not exist any more. Those who are known as good people in the society cannot participate in arbitration process." The grassroots people accuse that these local political activists are devoid of education, honesty, sense of good or bad, and are equipped politically with money and muscle power. They don't hesitate to threaten the *samaj* elderly to keep mum over mischievous activities, misrule, and violations of rules and regulations. Mr. Mahatab says the people with illegal money and weapons do violence under political shelter. These people are found dictating different political and educational institutions at the grassroots, and even they decide or influence who will lead those institutions. The respondents say that in around 80% cases the village elderly cannot talk or act justly in meeting or arbitration. If there is any offensive activities in the society, the political identity of the offenders becomes the major factor for judgement. Judgement goes in favor of who are politically more powerful in the society, refuting truth or falsehood in true terms. The young respondents say that the leaders need them for their evil interests or misdoing in the society, for exerting power, threatening the gentlemen or honest or comparatively honest sections. The fact is, while some sections of community people respect and entertain these so-called political leaders, these sections turn into their supporters, mediators or collaborators, and subsequently these sections become the next generation politicians. Mr. Mahatab observes, "Even when the community finds some sections involved in misdoing, they cannot protest or oppose, because these sections are linked to some political quarters. Even if we often hear all are equal in the eye of law, but reality is different. Law is defeated under the influence of politics in the state."

5.8. Restraining from Political Misbehavior Can Improve Rule of Law:

As we observed during the last few national elections, there were reports of violent incidents before and during the elections, even though Caretaker Government had been in power. This year due to strict electoral rules, the major the political parties tended to bring few positives changes to their party constitutions, selection criteria of the party candidates were found positively different, and the candidates were also found behaving according to the laws. The election campaigns, as observed by the national and international election observers, were peaceful and on the election day (29 Dec 2008) the people had festive mood. So, electoral rules and their applications have direct link to political culture. On the other hand, few legally convicted political leaders are exempted from the court and contested the election this year. More neutral and strict judicial procedures would have positive bearing on the political culture of Bangladesh. A positive trend of both the main two political parties was seen this year: Khaleda Zia of BNP was found confessing the mistakes, if any, they made during their regime, on the other hand Sheikh Hasina of Awami League asked all to build a clean political culture through united efforts of the government and opposition parties, save democracy, and let people in peace.

Chapter 6: Analyzing Patron-client Relation and Political Parties

It was found during the field investigation that the Union level committees of Awami League during the ninth parliament election 2008 selected 5 candidates on priority basis in each constituency, but to the surprise of the Union level leaders and activists, the center selected new faces for contest. This irregular selection process has left far reaching effects on internal management of party, relationship among the party leaders in various tiers, trust of the party leaders and activists in intra-party systematic management, as well as the communication process between central and local levels of the parties.

6.1. Parties Ignore the Basic Indicators of Democracy:

The experienced party activists identified one basic indicator of democracy as the right and ability of the party people in each tier of the party to select or elect their own leaders on the basis of majority choice. Mr. Saiful Islam, Union level Awami League leader laments, “The committees at Upazila and Zila levels are formed or directions for the same are given by the central leaders sitting in Dhaka. Here democratic practices are absent within the party. Democracy and citizen’s rights are not respected. We, the local level party activists want to choose our leader through election, which should be foundation of party democracy, but election procedure is absent in the party. I cannot express my opinion in this regard.” Mr. Mahatab Uddin, Organizing Sectary, Human Rights Advocates Association, Kushtia, who is also active in district level BNP politics, has his view that democratic practice in the organizational committees of the political parties at different levels is absent because the committees are not formed constitutionally or according to the organization’s provisions. The Upazila and Zila leaders keep a lobby with separate central leaders, and thus panel based committees are formed. In some cases, the center chooses president and or secretary at the district or Upazila levels, and the latter chooses other like minded office bearers. Such lobbies between local and central tiers are maintained with and in exchange of money and muscle power. These committees do not reflect the democratic opinion or choice of the majority party workers.

Though there are provisions in the constitution of the parties for selecting and electing party leaders in each tier, these provisions are hardly followed. The council at each tier will make the executive committee. Ward executive committees at Union are formed with those who support and rally to the programs of the parties. The Union executive committees are formed with the Ward committee members. Few of the leaders at the Union committees are selected on basis of their experiences and attachment to the parties, but most in the committees are as per the choices of upper tier, ie, Upazila committees. The same is true for the Upazila executive committees, which are made with the people favored by the Zila committee executives. Accordingly, Zila executive committees are to be formed through an election process by the district councilors. In reality, making of these committees, particularly making of Zila committees is sometimes too much aberrant. Here there are more than one lobby groups or panels. Each lobby group has a kind of power relation with the center. The groups often have rivalries among themselves. They oppose one another vehemently in political programs. Sometimes during district councils, one lobby group vandalizes the arrangement of another group. As some local leaders comment, this is a long standing issue at district level politics, which is mostly known to the center, but due to divisions at the center itself over these intra-district factions, these differences cannot be resolved and the councils cannot be held properly. Here the center and these lobby groups have patron-client relationship; particular leader at the center favors particular faction/lobby in the district committees. These factions of the district also control various groups across the units of the party at the grassroots.

Though some sections of the leaders claim that there are mechanisms from the top level of the party to collect reports on the district level party activities and assess the performance of the district level leaders, but these mechanisms hardly count to correct irregularities, and solve crises. Rather during the nomination for elections, something else counts the most. Some leaders strongly hold that the parties need funds, and general election is a crucial period for them. Business people and retired bureaucrats provide support and funds to the parties and get nomination for election. These business people stand patrons to the parties, and following election, the party in government become patron to these business people in turn. Thus, a patron-client nexus network is built between political parties and the non-professional business people entering politics.

6.2. Party Funds and Management:

This process of candidate selection affects the internal party management greatly. The leaders with long experience are found disheartened, demoralized, and discouraged to maintain political ideals, ethics and morality. They lose confidence and sincerity towards the party center. It has a trickle-down effect on the supporters of each leader down the line of local tiers.

Apart from the systematic and constitutional provisions, and in defiance of the performance and achievements of the party leaders, nomination and election of business people or of comparatively less qualified people create an additional faction in parallel to the existing factions in the constituency. The local level leaders identify this new faction as interest group keeping off the voters and staying above the interests of the common people.

When the center does not pay due attention to the system, it itself leaves an example of defiance and violation of rules and regulations in the intra-party management system. Defiance of regulatory constitutional laws by the center of the parties breaks the chain of regulation and order within the parties. Local level leaders with experiences and dedication become demoralized in politics in true sense.

Through the investigation under this research project, it is known that the patronization and nomination of non-professionals or businesspeople through election contributes to deterioration of overall governance of the constituency and of the state. When the businesspeople become parliament members through huge financial contribution to the party centers, they obviously seek favors for their own business or corporate interests, which, in many cases, is non-systematic, non-compliant with normal rules of business and which sometimes go against general public interests. This favoritism creates unhealthy competition in business and commerce – the favored groups get government supports and approvals in due and undue process, while the majority business community loses their business. The favored business groups sometimes also exercise their unholy authority to evade national laws and taxes. Mr. Anowar Hossain, former Member of Alampur Union Parishad of Kushtia district said, “The political parties nominate the business people for general election. Being elected to parliament, these businesspeople enjoy opportunity to evade taxes from their business.” It has a negative impact at the grassroots as well. When the parliament members

are non-politician businesspeople, they usually do not have political connections at the grassroots. Since they are businesspeople, they have to stay away from the constituency mostly in the capital. The local level leaders allege that these parliamentarians do not have proper idea of the needs of the constituency people, and what development projects are to be undertaken. It is rather seen that these businesspeople turned parliamentarians create a separate client channel bypassing the existing party line for implementing of the development projects. In some cases, these cause clashes among the lobby groups with the parties. In the long run, the local experienced politicians also get disconnected from the grassroots people as well as the supporters of the parties. Mr. Akamal Hossain, a businessman of Alampur Union, Kushtia said, “Anwar Ali is a robust figure in Awami League politics of Kushtia district. His brother Anwar Yusuf, being a millionaire, but not connected in politics, once got nomination from Awami League. This created heat in the district Awami League politics. The party did not win in the constituency, rather the district level politics became further divided and more lobby groups were created, and intra-party clashes followed. He further said, “Sometimes only greed of the center for money has pushed the grassroots politics into turmoil. Money did bad to the party position. The parties as well as the candidates are sometimes so blind that they think whoever stands, the party symbol will make him winner.” This process is hampering the way to political development and institutionalization of parties at both central and local level.

6.3. Political Clientelism and Social Effects:

An early definition of clientelism emphasized the exchange of votes for favours, over a long period of time, among actors with asymmetric power, the clients having little power. Politicians would reward a portion of their supporters with public resources in return for electoral support. Scholars have found this definition increasingly wanting: first, clients can offer politicians financial contributions and other non-monetary resources, not just votes. Second, clients could be rather powerful. Third, the sale of one's vote in exchange for a benefit to which the client is not otherwise entitled qualifies as corruption. Clientelism involves three actors, a principal, an agent and a client. Typically, a client (say, a politician's supporter and financier) transfers resources over which he has control to the agent (the politician). The agent will then transfer resources he obtains from the principal (the electorate) back to his client. Clients are rewarded with public contracts, appointments and

the like not because of merit or qualifications but prior support. Given the nature of this exchange, the relationship between agent and client tends to be long-term. [Reference online political dictionary: www.answers.com/clientelism]

The concept of clientelism creates confusion and controversy because of the wide and diverse range of political exchanges, which can be accommodated by the term. Stripped down to the essentials, clientelism is a form of personal, dyadic exchange usually characterized by a sense of obligation, and often also by an unequal balance of power between those involved (see Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984: 48-9, also Piattoni 2004). This definition reflects the origins of the concept as a descriptor of hierarchical patron-client relationships in traditional rural societies (Piattoni 2001: 9). These relationships involve the patron providing clients with access to the basic means of subsistence and the clients reciprocating with a combination of economic goods and services (such as rent, labor, portions of their crops) and social acts of deference and loyalty (Mason 1986: 489). In other words, clientelism is a way of describing the pattern of unequal, hierarchical exchange characteristic of feudal society, in which patrons and clients were tied to durable relationships by a powerful sense of obligation and duty. [Cited in Jonathan (2006)]

Patron-client relation between the powerful moneyed people and the political parties is evident in the Bangladesh political culture. During general elections, the party centers forget and deny those grassroots leaders who are politically renowned figures, and nominate those with money and power in exchange of huge donations to the parties. While talking about their position for such practices of the party centers, the grassroots leaders, even though they themselves are involved in different intra-party lobbies or factions, express their dissatisfaction and concern and sometimes grievances. Prior to the Eighth Parliament election, the BNP nomination for Kushtia Sadar Upazila surprised the party leaders and activists. As they said, there were protests within the constituency and the party leaders in big group went to the center for asking for a fair nomination, but the center did not listen. The same is the case at Rajahshi 6 constituency, where Awami League nomination for Ninth Parliament election surprised the constituency leaders and activists. The constituency people said, they were so opposed to the central decision that the party leaders did not participate in the election campaigns until little before the election. One grassroots leader says, "That's our political culture. We can't change it. At last we have to listen to the center. After all we have to be in politics." Mr. Saiful Islam, local level leader of Awami League shares, "Political

intrusion, criminalization and immorality have deeply affected the social justice system. Political patronage has paved ways for further corruption and mal-practices in the society and state. When party opens door to the ill-motivated, ill-educated and immoral people, they turn opportunists and look for return, violating rules and regulations, refuting laws and rights on the power politics supported by party. Wrong nomination, wrong decisions and lobby politics aggravates the injuries deep into the heart of politics; it adds to the enmity, clash and divisions, which evidently lead to politics of violence and killing.”

6.4. Patronage and Intra-party Control:

The Organizing Secretary of Kushtia District Awami League observes that democratic parameters have been absent in the political parties since long even before 1947. We have lack of education, and presence of high poverty. The social and cultural structures are not favorable to democratization. Even though the party is elected to from government and the government functions, but democracy is not taking shape within party. Few central leaders for their undemocratic and immoral characteristics are liable for disgrace of the party. Some central leaders are involved in corruption, and intellectual sections to great extent are also politicized and corrupt. Most of the central leaders are having black money or being connected with the business community having black money and miscreants. There have been examples that the killers can escape trial, the miscreants turn politicians, and money can cover up crimes. Here works a nexus of political patronage. So, the party chief alone is unable to tackle such precarious situation and correct the wrongdoers in the party. Corrections are more urgent in the central tiers of the political parties.

Democracy minded sections of both the parties doubt that the party chiefs want to maintain democratic order in the parties, or want the party leaders to practice democracy either. Being the President or the Chairperson, the party chiefs enjoy supreme authority, and unchallenged dictating power, which they don't want to lose in any case. The party chiefs are well aware of the performance and achievements of the party leaders, particularly of those at the party centers. The central level leaders maintain various nexuses of business, administrative power and cadres from the center to the grassroots. These take place right under the chiefs' nose. They keep mum and blind to the activities of these nexuses, and hardly make any sound against these until the patrons go too far for the common people to tolerate, or until they do

great harm to other party leaders let alone to the interest of the public, which is negligible to the parties.

6.5. Party Chiefs Take All Personal:

How both the parties fund themselves remains a mystery. Gone are the days when, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was at the helm of the Awami League, the parties depended on the donations of the masses to run its day-to-day activities. Now the parties rely on extortion, donations of enthusiastic criminals looking for favours, and huge nomination fees before the elections. Most of the major political parties do not have a bank account from where its running costs are funded, the party chief's personal account is the party's bank account; it is as feudal as it can get. To begin with, the major political parties must realise that, in the changed scenario, they must reform themselves, and reform has to take place from within the parties, with sincerity and efficiency. They must ensure free and fair elections in various tiers. Leadership should be elected by the ordinary members of the parties, and it has to be held in a transparent manner. The parties must disclose the statement of its income and expenditure and should make the names of its patrons public. [The Daily Star, 2007a]

Chapter 7: Analyzing Patrimonialism or Dynastic Politics

Bangladesh is one of those new democracies where democratic culture is yet to strike deep roots into the social soil. Institutional framework has been created, but these institutions have not been vibrant with life forces. Scores of political parties exist in the country, but all of these are organized on feudal lines rather than democratically, thus creating ample opportunities for personalized power for the party bosses. [The Daily Star, 2007]

The party people think leadership here in Bangladesh politics is based on charisma. The family members need to lead the parties, or else the parties would be fragmented further. BNP leaders think Tarique Zia does have a kind of charisma just because he is son of Ziaur Rahman, and if he does not take over the party leadership when necessary, no one knows what fate the party will face. In the same way, if Khaleda Zia did not take charge of BNP following assassination of Ziaur Rahman, BNP might not have existed in the present form. Here in Bangladesh symbol is very important, which bears the testimony of historical personality, impressions, events etc.

Jahan (2005) says, unfortunately Bangladesh has had a very poor tradition of growing leadership through democratic practices in the parties. Instead, the chiefs have been elevated to their positions under the aegis of what is an institutionalized dynastic culture – effectively extending these undemocratic structures of power to the party level and subsequently as the incumbent ruler at state level. The concentration of power at the top of both the parties have edified these leaders into unquestionable leaders to fellow party leaders and party workers, hence elevating them above all criticism. In this way, both Khaleda Zia of BNP and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh Awami League remain key sources of power in their parties. Many important decisions are taken by dint of their personal charisma and without any discussion in party forums. If there is a discussion, it remains ceremonial. Other leaders could hold posts, only according to the sweet will of their chiefs. The chiefs can do and undo anything that they want in the party. Personal liking and disliking carry heavily in the weight for considering party positions and portfolios.

7.1. Party High Command Tends to Retain Family Rule:

As the party high commands or centers do not care for the political chain, and do not pay due attention to the political career and contributions of the grassroots leaders, it demoralizes the party leaders particularly at the grassroots, because these political leaders given their dedication and contribution in party mobilization and organization at the grassroots deserve priority, justice and power from the high commands or party centers. When they are deprived of this priority and power, they might usually turn back from the zeal and motivation they hold for the party. They might discard the ideals and morale they cherish long for the party and the people. The grassroots leaders think this has happened given the unusual, fickle and incongruous behavior of the party centers. This practice virtually contributes to misunderstanding, distrust and disconnection between party centers and local tiers, and also creates conflicts of interest among the party leaders. Grassroots masses are currently well aware of such undemocratic behavior and practices in the political parties. The common masses including party leaders are critical of their own party centers, particularly of the party chiefs. The grassroots party leaders put in question the good will and democratic mindset of the party chiefs. The grassroots people are found grievously pointing to the party high commands, especially to the party chiefs that they have seized democracy, and established *familicracy*, which in nature is dynastic or monarchic. The grassroots identify that there is no democracy in the party centers – the party chiefs are unchangeable, and the surrounding leaders are blind to the unilateral decisions of the party chiefs, and moreover they are flatterers. The local leaders as well as the grassroots people gave examples of Badruddoza Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Abdul Jalil who tried to behave little rationally which angered the party chiefs, and thus they lost their party positions.

The party leaders think that the party chief has onus to continue in the position, because of their long experience, stamina and dedication. One section says that sometimes the party has tough situation like aftermath of eighth parliament into the last Caretaker Government when many of the party leaders including the party chiefs were put into jail. Many central leaders stood against the party chiefs directly or indirectly. The party leaders think that the chiefs' convictions are unflinching. They would not compromise with their position and would not surrender to the external pressure. BNP leaders refer to the unconvincing stand of Tariq Zia during the toughest time. Tariq Zia, as they commented, has learnt politics from his family, has seen many ups and downs, and has known the political culture. He would not break in

any situation. In bad time of the party, many other leaders, even the central ones, will look for opportunity or will turn back. They may not think of party chain of command and party strength. But Tariq Zia will stay as the symbol of power for the party and behind him the party people in the coming days would rally. This is proven while Tariq Zia is made Vice-Chairman of the party during the last national council. Mr. Akamal Khan says, “Most of the common people of the country think they owe to either Sheikh Mujib or Ziaur Rahman for their contributions to the country. So, they want to serve their family members. People like us have not learnt as yet to assess candidates or leaders based on their personality, education, talent and patriotism.”

7.2. Local Leaders Not Happy with Patromonialism:

Local leaders understand the true democratic process as being changes in the party positions at various tiers including the party chief's. At the same time, they perceive that the people do not support the change in chief position, though here by the people refer to the majority party leaders and activists. They mention the example of the last Caretaker Government regime, while the reform minded people tried to speak against the party chief and tried to restructure the center as well as gather support for it, but they did not succeed, rather they were eventually sidelined. This is because, as the leaders and party activists think, people have not learnt to think beyond Khaleda Zia or Sheikh Hasina.

Local level leaders are not happy in the way the parties function. A major part of the aggrieved party activists and common people observe that autocracies have been ousted from the state, but party autocracies are governing the state. They have little hope for changes with the current party leadership. Out of our excessive loyalty and submission to the powerful, we have turned into flatterers. Mr. Saiful Islam observed, “The party people through their flattery would bring Joy as their next leader. We are also looking forward to someone new who might bring good to the party, politics and country. Even if his favored entrance in politics would disregard the democratic transition of party leadership, his absence might as well cause confusion and split in the party.”

Mr. Badsha observes that for bring democratic practices in the party, qualitative change in the central leadership is required in the first place. But here reality is that we lack replaceable leadership in the center, even at the local level. Now we None in the party will dare to correct

or oppose the activities of the senior leaders. If replaceable leaders do not emerge, democratic system in true sense cannot be established, even cannot be expected.

No internal democracy exists in the big political parties. Even though both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina have led the great democratic revolution of 1990, inside their respective parties they have remained two incorrigible autocrats. The top tier of their parties is accountable to no one but the party chiefs who handpicks them. The party-chiefs' wishes remain a command for the central leaders, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party is a case in point: according to the party constitution the party chairperson can hire and fire anyone, even the party secretary general, she can give nomination to anyone she deems fit, she is accountable to no-one. Sheikh Hasina, too, has never tolerated dissent: honest, competent leaders like Dr Kamal Hossain had to leave the Awami League for challenging Hasina's leadership. [The Daily Star, 2007a]

7.3. Party and Family Being Synonymous to Each Other:

Party and family in the context of Bangladesh politics have been have been synonymous to most of the common people, even to the party activists. But the knowledgeable and conscious sections of the society as well as the party leaders assert that if the next generation of the Mujib and Zia families, more specifically if Tariq and Joy come in politics without political ideals and honesty, they would falter and ruin the credibility of their forefathers. BNP leaders observe that during the 1991-'96 regime of their party, the party leaders had more unity and shared the party achievements as their own, and that the party decisions reflected their opinions. During the 2001-'06 regime, the party somehow lost the credibility; the senior party leaders were sidelined on many occasions; their opinions were not given due attention; Hawa Office run by Tariq seized party power, and became the single regulatory instrument for party and the government.

Mr. Mahatab comment on both the parties that they are carrying on family rule in the name of democracy. A section of leaders staying close to both the party chiefs always seek attention and mercy of the chiefs. They follow a kind of mechanism to maintain status que in their positions with all eulogy and flattery to chiefs and the two leaders Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman, as well as their next generation family members in respective cases. They do not or cannot suggest changes in the fear of reprimand from the chief.

7.4. Political Parties Do Not Want Institutionalization Within:

Our politicians do not practice democracy within their parties. This is one of the main reasons why three free and fair general elections held by the caretaker governments over the past 15 years have failed to institutionalize democracy in the country. A key aim of the on-going process of electoral reforms is to force politicians to practice democracy in their parties, to make our political system acceptably democratic. However, a closer look reveals that neither the election commission (EC) nor our civil societies have proposed anything substantial which will help achieve this goal. It is perhaps common knowledge that all our political parties have this provision in their constitutions, although they have not followed it faithfully and regularly. And making them obey their constitutions is a necessary condition for practicing democracy within parties, but certainly not sufficient. The critical point to be noted here is that ordinary members of any democratic association are, and ought to be, directly involved with appointing the individuals who will represent them and further their interests. The same principle must be followed in practicing democracy in our political parties. In the parliamentary form of government, ordinary members of a political party ought to be involved in two very important party functions. First, they must be directly involved in the selection of the leadership teams, from the grassroots level up to the national level. Second, they must nominate their party candidates for the national as well as local elections. When ordinary members are allowed to perform these two functions adequately, only then can a political party be said to be practicing democracy in the party. [The Daily Star, (2007b)]

Table 3: Internal democracy within parties

Reasons	Percentage
Excessive domination by individual leaders	47.3
Lower level leaders are not involved in the decision-making process	33
Party is run by coterie	6.2
Lack of democratic norms in the party	1.1.
Dynastic politics prevails in the party	0.3
Others	1.1.
Don't know	11
Total	100

Source: Khan et al (2009)

7.5. Democracy Within Party: Statements Of The Leaders Attending The Last Awami League National Council:

The party leaders are supposed to be elected democratically through secret ballot. This process is avoided intentionally to keep away potential candidates in the positions of party chiefs and secretaries or other significant office bearers. Nobody has the guts to raise hand for the positions in front of the party chiefs. This is the reason why the chiefs stay in the same positions without any contest. It was threatened before council day that no name can be proposed or none can support any candidate either for the position of secretary, and if anyone does so, they would be charged with violating the party chain. So, even if some leaders were willing, but none dared to be candidate. In such circumstance, the chosen and blessed by the chief become secretary without any competition. No democratic procedures – neither subject committee nor council – were followed. Thus the national central committees are formed.

During formation of the national committees democracy is neglected. The leaders observe that the central committees should be examples of democratic organization and management to the local committees, and they exercise democracy accordingly. When the central committees ignore democracy, they cannot preach about democracy and against violations. Under the guidance of such committees, democracy is not possible neither within the party nor in the state.

During formation of central committees of various front organizations of the party, performance of the leaders is overlooked and regional identity get priority. Leaders get highest posts not because of their better quality, dedication, sincerity and experiences, but because of regional identities, or of being near to the influential party leaders. So, to be leaders submissiveness and proximity count more, and these are the reasons why significant positions are not elected during the council, rather the authority is transferred to the party chiefs who declare names sometimes later.

If those people having dedication and sacrifices for the party could be made leaders, some positive changes could take place on the way to strengthening party democracy.

Table 4: Prevalence of regionalism and nepotism within party

Extent of prevalence	Regionalism (Respondents in %)	Nepotism (Respondents in %)
Very widespread	25	32
Widespread	55	51
Not very widespread	19	16
Don't know	1	1
Total	100	100

Source: Khan et al (2009)

During formation of national committees, the political parties give priority to the regional identity of the leaders and favor those near to the chiefs or central leaders. According to the table, 55% of the respondents say regionalism has wide effect in getting posts in the national level committees of the political parties, while 25% say it's very wide. Again, 51% of the respondents say that nepotism is widely prevalent in getting posts in the committees.

Chapter 8: Understanding Perception of People and Local Leaders about Democracy and Party Politics

While talking about the people's understanding of democracy, the party leaders themselves think the grassroots people still cannot think more than availability of or access to foods. The grassroots people think they have right to vote and elect a government and the government in turn will ensure availability and cheap prices of food items. They don't understand big issues like party democracy, party organization, democratic changes in the party positions, or who is being nominated or elected as candidates.

The BNP leaders emphasize that as regards political parties people cannot or don't want to think other than the party chiefs. While people vote for BNP, it means they want Khaleda Zia in power. In the long run, they do not turn away from Khaleda Zia. This is our culture.

8.1. Party Leaders Work as Mediators:

Since people are connected in some channels or others with the Union level through district level party units, they tell about their needs to the party leaders. As regards people's demands from political parties, Mr. Nurul Islam, a high school teacher, said, "When a party is in power, the local people ask for tube-wells from the leaders. The people think they would get their things from the state through these political leaders. While party is in power, these leaders become more powerful than the local level government bodies. They act as the media for fulfilling people's needs. Here democratic considerations like equality, justice etc. do not work, but resources are distributed through political process and political identities. Even the common people in the village pursue political leaders or activists to reach the Union Parishad for their demands. Even for widow allowance, the disadvantaged women catch a leader or political activist to tell the UP Chairman."

Table 5: Causes of parties' failure to sustain democracy

Causes of failure	Percentage
Absence of leaders with high ideals	55
Lack of well-conceived programs	14
Internal conflict	9
Absence of honest and dedicated workers	8
Others(other minor percentages are omitted)	

Source: Khan et al (2009)

As per the data table, 55% of the respondents say that parties cannot bring democracy within the parties, because leaders are not with high ideals, while 14% say that the parties do not have well-conceived programs. Because of lack of ideals in the top or central level party leaders, they themselves do not practice democratic principles in the party activities, which demoralize the other district or grassroots level party leaders in maintaining democratic orders and principles. On the other hand, absence of well-meaning, well-defined programs, cannot also bind the party activists in order and in principle.

8.2. Leaders of Local Party Units Know Little about Party Committees:

While talking about their perception of party democracy and their own orientation towards democracy, Union Awami League leader Ohidul Haq said, “Many of us do not have fixed ideal or orientation to a particular political party. Local level party has very few, if not no, political activities. There are a few people who think of party ideals and policies. Those in the society who are influential join a political party based on their consideration of personal privileges.”

At the Union level, the party units have merely any political activities. There is provision for meeting, but most the respondent local leaders can't even remember when they sat for meeting the last time. Some them tried to related their group presence in big political gatherings addressed by district or central level leaders as their regular committee activities, but in fact these are not their constitutional committee activities.

8.3. Local Units Of Political Parties Remain Busy With Government Funds:

While asked about their political activities Mr. Kamal Hossain, Union Awami League leader said, “We do not have communication among the party workers here. We cannot even name properly who are in the committee. Here committee was formed 10 years back. The local level leaders [mostly the committee people] are busy looking for government funds coming through party channels. They are interested in government donations and fund distributions.” He further said, “No political party units have any role or planning for social development. If the party is in power, then the local units are busy in government project management and fund distribution.” Solua Union (Rajshahi) Awami League committee was formed in 2002, and at the same time, district, Upazila committees were also formed. It was known from the interviews with the Upazila and Union level political leaders that there are few people who are pulled in the parties, because they work for the party, and they have capacity in organizational management, but many come because they have money and muscle power. Many are just pulled because they have connection to miscreant groups. Many also come because the district or central leaders want them. Mr. Mokhlesur Rahman, one Union Awami League and also district *Jubo* League leader, gave a picture of the party workers saying, “Awami League leaders and workers are now busy getting test relief funds. Development projects and funds are distributed among the party workers. Party workers have implemented 80/100 day program [food for work program].” Mr. Saiful Islam said, “Regular committee meetings are not held. The activists do not know and do not understand the party manifestos.” It is known from the Union, Thana/ Upazila level political leaders that the committees do not have meetings to fulfill the constitutional needs, but they do have some internal meetings in the name of committee meetings in which they discuss issues like how they would receive the visiting leaders from center or the constituency representatives, and what projects they would get from the elected representatives and how to spend allocated funds.

A section of respondent leaders made self-assessment saying that politics and business have been synonymous. As other sectors in the state are dominated by a big chain of middlemen or mediators, the political parties are also full of mediators at their different tiers. Party workers at different tiers work as patrons and agents.

8.4. Politicians And Bureaucrats Favor Corruption And Misrule:

At the grassroots level, the political leaders often point to the politicians themselves and the bureaucrats being weak and corrupt. Money can buy most of the politicians and bureaucrats up to the grassroots level. Weakness and corruption in these two sections of people have transferred to each corner of the society. The respondents lament that these mal-practices have damaged the social justice system, offended the rights of the citizens, suppressed the voice of the liberal people, restricted the door to choices, and above all obstructed the path to democratic improvement in the society. Dr. Ratan expressed his concern over the omnipresent misrule, misbehavior and misdeeds in the current society mostly due the degradation in political culture as well as bureaucratic malfunctions. Corrections of these are not possible at the grassroots level, rather a top-bottom approach is required, because power and money are lying in the hands of a section of people. Common people cannot bring changes. Corruption in the field of student admission into colleges and universities, and misappropriation of government funds in the district are due to the interests of the political leaders. He says, “Admission business and tender related offences could not be possible, the political leaders were honest and strict.” Advocate Mahatab says the political parties have their involvement in the local level big project or fund management. The parties or political persons give shelter to the miscreants and embezzlers. In many cases the central leaders get involved directly or indirectly.

8.5. Constituency Representatives Have Little Knowledge Of State Policies:

During FGDs, 70% respondents said that the elected leaders or members of parliament don't have enough education and talent to assess on their own the merits of laws and policies in the state. This is the reason why they do want to attend discussion on important national issues or laws raised in the parliament. While asked about how much the elected candidates could contribute to uphold their rights, fulfil needs of the constituencies, and ensure law and order in the society, the respondents critically questioned sense of judgment, values and prudence of their own leaders. Mr. Mahatab added that people doubt the capacity of the political leaders to give their considerate opinion on different significant national issues like education, health, security etc. These leaders cannot speak loudly in favor or against a proposition in the parliament or outside.

8.6. Political Misrule Remains A Obstacle To Right And Development:

The respondents claim it is the duty of the political leaders to tell them about the citizens' rights, choices, advantages, disadvantages and the ways to development. They are supposed to show us light and solve our crises in the society that the political leaders never bring issues like violence in society, miscreants, load shedding, prices of commodities etc., which threaten the day to day life of the common masses. The political leaders do not talk of or do not pay attention to the fundamental and human rights of the citizens. Some respondents critically said that their own elected leaders and law makers are rather engaged in breaking rules, violating laws, threatening good people with their oppressive cadre weapons. They have not contributed to employment locally or centrally to solve crises, rather they have played role in closing state run industries which could employ thousands of people. Common people have very little, if not any, scope to engage in corruption, misrule and embezzlement. They remain victims no matter whom they elect in power.

The educational institutions at the local level bear the marks of party politics. The political leaders influence appointment of teachers, particularly head teachers, in the high schools. Even the local political activists influence selection of students for stipends. During the FGD with the group of teachers at Alampur Union, Kushtia, the teachers lament that with the change of political parties in power several chapters of textbooks also change. Under the party influence, different fees for students are also exempted without attention to the poor and meritorious students. These all are examples of dismal practices of party politics, leaving gravely immoral lessons for the students – future generation of the state.

Bangladesh society, specifically rural society is hierarchic, but the traditional *samaj* customs, beliefs and manners hardly exist in the present society. People now feel threatened to behave rationally, ie, they cannot simply say the right as right. The age old social fabrics and patterns of trust, loyalty, respect and belongingness have now disappeared and virtually are replaced by another set of intimidation, isolation, castigation and criminalization. Social coherence, cooperation and harmony have been invisible. Over the years, these have been almost irremediable wounds, beyond the knowledge of the common masses. Bottom-up polices to correct these will fail because of absence of resistance power in the social body. The knowledgeable sections of the society hold the political parties that say in power and ironically speak of practicing and improving democracy, building society and brining

development, responsible for such disastrous situation in the society. Corrections are possible only when the top leaders will realize the damage they have done to society and humanity over the years, and will bridle their chain of misconduct, misrule, mal-practices, and the unfettered band of cadres.

8.7. Civil Administration Remains A Constraint To Political Development As Perceived By Local Political Leaders:

The bureaucrats from top level to the grassroots have a kind of critical and negative attitude towards the politicians. They maintain a strict chain of command and loyalty from tip to toe, and ready to impose burden of all misdeeds and corruption on the shoulder of political leaders. The political leaders acknowledge that the meritorious students are selected for public service, and on the other hand, in most cases the weak or comparatively less meritorious students engage in different social activities or join political parties, and subsequently become political leaders at least in the present context. This is one reason why the bureaucrats do not want to respect the people's representatives, rather try to confine them with various rules and regulations, and stop their files with critical comments. The people's representatives seek their considerations for their files or projects. The bureaucrats take the ill-advantage and snatch money as percentage or commission. While they are appointed to protect and better utilize the resources of the state, in practice they plunder those and build their own riches. These bureaucrats, given such mal-practices and corruption, are not divided into various groups or factions. One bureaucrat does not criticize another or they do not raise these on any platform. Thus their corruption and plundering remain silent beyond the eyes of the society and state.

These bureaucrats whenever possible blame the political leaders and name them corrupt. With their tactful explanations, the bureaucrats depict the politicians to the society as bad people. The common people in many cases believe the bureaucrats and lose their confidence in political leaders.

The political leaders violate rules and regulations and engage in corruption as well, but it does not stay undercover. There are different political parties with different ideals and policies. But the fact is, one leader stands against another, one party against another, and they present in public or in media or in gatherings the pictures of activities of others. So, the

common people come to know ins and outs of the political leaders and the parties. Thus they lose confidence in one leader or party and choose the other.

People's representatives remain attached with different institutions, but when it comes to the projects or fund management, the bureaucrats systematically hold the authority to scrutinize, recommend or approve those. With their power and authority the bureaucrats have scope to do good to the society and nation, but they misuse them and make the politicians scapegoats.

They themselves after their service period join politics and become leaders. The local leaders suggest that an audit be done against these bureaucrats before they are granted entrance in politics.

Mr. Badsha says, there exists a kind of tug of war between the politicians and the bureaucrats. For political developments, the political leaders need to be given priority as people's representatives. Once elected as political executives, they should be in place to plan, design, implement and monitor public programs and projects to the popular interests. It remains a question how much capability the current political leaders as a whole have to plan for development of the society, and of democracy. But bureaucracy, from top to bottom, does not want to see authority in the hands of political executives, and stands a constraint to political leadership.

8.8. Student Wings And Youth Wings [*Chattra League/Chattra Dal, Jubo League/Jubo Dal*] Of The Political Parties Cripple In The Society, And Eating Into Political Credibility:

There was a time when students being attracted by the political ideals and manifestos would join political parties. Now students do not see the party manifestos, and do not join parties with motivations and good intentions. One BNP leader at Rajshahi Metropolitan city said, "Now nobody comes being motivated by 19 points or party ideals. Students come for tender business and they gather around big business deals, projects and in LGED, water development, power development offices etc. One does not need to be honest to join the party. Being flatterer is a good quality for entry. We know people who had hardship before without any work or with petty jobs like peddlers or food suppliers, but once they joined party, they became millionaire later. Party is providing such booties to these guys through

tenders etc. These young party activists are linked to the sons of the party chief. Even she is blackmailed for them.”

While talking with the leaders of the party youth fronts, some internal and factual activities were established. These fronts are used as cadre wings of the parties. Their foremost work is to provide strength to the main parties. They collect and supply trucks of people in the rally, procession or during any public addressing by the leaders. One naked aspect of their activities is to oust the opponent groups from the area from scene with muscle or weapon power.

8.9. Access Of Better People In Politics Gets Difficult:

Here better people refer to those who are known in the society as educated, knowledgeable, and honest. The grassroots masses report that good people cannot come in politics, because the existing politicians do not welcome this kind of people. Even the better known people including the youth are not expected and welcomed in community level arbitration, institutions including local government bodies, and different committees. The grassroots politicians including the rural elderly people warn the better known people not to be involved in these, because, as they respondents say, there is politics here, and politics is not for the good people. Moreover, in the general election the election expenditure is too huge. Even though there is ceiling for expenditure for the candidate, but the real expenditure is several times higher. One businessman of Alampur Union of Kushtia district during FGD commented, “Politics needs lot of investment. One has to spend exhaustively to compete in election, so being elected to parliament, one remains busy recovering the invested money.” Referring to the last general election, he said, "From our constituency Mr. Mozaffar, known in political arena as good person, could not compete with so much of money.”

8.10. Dilemma Remains Between Military Rule And Politics:

The Awami League leaders observe that after '75 military regimes have contributed a lot to corrupt people with money and power. The military rulers are to some extent liable for political decadence, because when they take over power they create new political parties. The military regimes invite civil bureaucrats as well as the politicians from different parties to join their newly formed political parties, and for this the regimes offer money, position, and property. The less resilient, opportunity seeking politicians break apart from their own ideals and parties in order to join the regime parties. Mr. Badsha observes that in absence of

democracy during the military regimes, black money and business people entered politics. This time, At the same time, it is also true that there are politicians who do not submit to the military regimes even after threats and oppressions. But the political parties cannot accuse the military regimes unilaterally for their failure to improve democracy in the parties and in state. Even if the parties were elected to power time and again, they failed to prove to behave democratically, organize themselves systematically, elect committees in time and as per their constitutional provisions, rather the parties ran more or less in autocratic manner. Mr. Mahatab said, “There are provisions in both the parties to elect leaders at different tiers and nominate appropriate candidates for election, but the party high commands themselves violate the party provisions and rules, and set bad example of dictatorship before party activists. There is no opportunity for district level party workers to choose their leaders. It’s true that the party people are divided themselves in different lobbies and panels, but this is also due to the central influences. So, the parties remain vulnerable, intra-party and inter-party conflicts are too unpleasant. The political parties, ie, the leaders have no scope to accuse the military rulers for weakening the party strength and plundering their character. The party chiefs remain like the dictators of the military regimes.

8.11. Position Of The High Commands Regarding Local Level Party

Management:

The party centers have witnessed since long that there remain conflict of interests, view differences, and clashes within the different leaders and lobbies. Usually there arise violence when the district councils are held. Sometimes, the high commands do not find acceptable people at the district level to give responsibility. Mr. Mahatab thinks that if the high commands follow due process, keep neutral and monitor the whole process, they could avoid such violence.

8.12. Third World Leadership:

It is commonly seen that leadership in the third world countries turns autocratic even though they promise to keep up democracy. Democratic attitude, aspiration and efforts are usually questioned. Fund for candidates in the election is a big factor in these countries. There are business people to fund the candidates in election.

8.13. Change In Political Culture Is Not Visible In Near Future:

Immediate change in the positions of party chiefs is not possible, as the respondents commented, because the party chiefs do not want to leave their chair. The behavior of the party people at the centers sounds that they are appointed by the party chiefs in different positions, and their employment terms and conditions are decided by the chiefs. One district leader lamented that even their violations of party rules and regulations which become open secret, many central leaders do not comment or raise those, because they are greedy for staying in power position, with money, command and other benefits conferred on them by the party chiefs. These leaders remain silent when the party chiefs rule autocratically. So, there remains nobody else to try to hold the party chiefs accountable on any ground.

Table 6: Why could democracy not be established in Bangladesh?

Causes	Percentage
Failure of political parties	32
Lack of democratic values	13
Illiteracy	12
Imperial conspiracy	9
Failure of government	5
Poverty	5
Intervention of army	4
Lack of commitment on the part of the parties	4
Bureaucratic conspiracy	4
Lust of power	2
Dependency on foreign aid	1
Others	3
Don't know	6
Total	100

Source: Khan et al (2009)

There can be a number of barriers on the way to establishing democracy in the country. The respondents point at failure of political parties as the foremost obstacle to establishing democracy. 32% of the respondents say it's the political parties who fail to maintain democracy, while 13% say absence of democratic values (in parties, and in people) is another major obstacle.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

Political parties form government through popular election, engage in or represent different national institutions, and remain responsible to carry on good governance of the state. Democratic governance depends on the nature and organization of the political parties that exercise the political power. The activities of the political parties affect the citizens' life and society directly or indirectly. They act as the change agents to nurture the social values and achieve the goals of the society. Institutionalization of political parties is essential for social, economic and political development, and push forward with overall national objectives.

In Bangladesh society, family value and the social cultures have great influence on the practices and behaviors of the political parties. Traditional family values where head of the family has the prerogative of being dictatorial in decision making, which other members of the family are obliged to accept. This value discourages the consultative decision making process in other matters of life too, including running of political parties and governments. Though the feudal system is no more in principle, still the society remained divided between rich elites with wealth and influence and the poor working class with no power. The elites having wealth and influence are considered as ruling class, with the poor people being their subject. The commoner could never be considered in this society to become a ruler. Bangladesh remained a feudalistic society long after the departure of feudal lords. Even during subsequent democratic systems, political power used to be handled mostly by the elites. The competition for political power was also amongst the elites in most cases. The same trend still exists. Presence of a growing middle class is too insignificant till date to make any impact on the feudalistic social outlook of the mass. So, in fact, true democratic cultural was never practiced here. The so-called democratic system of the People's Republic which was in practice may be termed feudal democracy. People are still for the look out of a king/queen/prince to run politics and political power. They are not yet ready to accept a commoner in that place. Real king or big landlords or their heirs or elites by hereditary means are no more available as the system was abolished long time back. Now a commoner who has ambition for political power tries to look like a king/queen/prince in the eyes of the other commoners to have their acceptance. For achieving that it becomes necessary for that person to acquire sufficient wealth by hook or by crook and other trade-mark qualities of those old time elites like having private army of their own to establish their own rule.

As has already been told, it is difficult for people at large to perceive any person other than from elite class, identified these days with wealth and influence including muscle power, to become a part of ruling class. Only the rich or the rogue is considered fit to be a political leader in the eye of a commoner. This is the way money and muscle had to come in the political system as a natural consequence of our political culture due to social pressure. Environment of corruption and criminalization thus flourished in the political arena with the passage of time. Political parties or other political institutions have also been developed following the same culture for similar reasons. Leader being considered as master and the other rank and file being the servant to serve as per order has been evolved. Decision making is being kept confined within top leadership with no participation from the common members, which affect institutionalization of the parties.

Democracy and good governance are synonymous. To nurture democracy in the state the political parties have to practice democracy within, ie, the political parties need to be institutionalized first. Otherwise, the people cannot expect good governance if the party comes to power. Since independence, we have witnessed eight parliamentary elections along with military rule, but unfortunately no political party, big or small, has been practicing democracy within itself.

For institutionalization of political parties following measures can be taken:

The parties need to make party conferences meaningful and effective, avoiding the present practice of day-long eulogies to top leaders, past and present, laced with volleys of abuse for rival parties, focusing on speeches on specific topics on health, education, trade, labour, agriculture, foreign relations etc, avoiding duplication and repetition.

In party chief and significant high command positions, proper election through secret ballot should be in place stopping the practice of keeping a panel of office bearers handy with prior invisible blessings of the Chief/influential party bosses for a quick approval, preferably unanimous, and with disputed cases left for the Chief's decision only.

Excessive dependence on the patrons or financiers has broken the chain of systematic management of the political parties as institutions, weakened the party strength and aggravated the violation of laws and regulations, and misuse of national properties. Until the

political parties function under some regulatory framework, abide by electoral rules and procedures, and collect funds from approved sources, they will not function as effective democratic institutions. For bringing democracy within the parties, application of electoral laws, determining code of conduct, and establishing transparency in raising and spending of party funds are utmost important. Election expenses of the party nominees can be borne/shared by the parties. Thus, the candidates being spared of huge election expenses, and also other invisible expenses in the form of contributions to party fund and party bosses' fund, they will not need to treat this expenditure as investment. Thus a tendency of recovering invested amount and building reserves can be discouraged.

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Appendix 1: List of Political Leaders Interviewed

Rajshani Metropolitan Awami League

Name	Position
I. Shafiqur Rahman Badsha (Principal)	General Secretary
II. Moshtaq Ahmed	Organizing Secretary
III. Nurul Islam Sarker	Secretary, Legal Affairs
IV. Md. Mokhlesur Rahman, Rajshahi district <i>Jobo League</i> member	

Kushtia District Awami League

Name	Position
I. Dr. AFM Ratan	Organizing Secretary
II. Shahidullah	Circulation Secretary
III. Akter Hosasin	General Secretary, Kushtia Sadar Upazil

Rajshani Metropolitan BNP

Name	Position
I. Mizanur Rahman Minu	President

Kushtia District BNP

Name	Position
II. Sohrab Uddin	Secretary
III. Bashirul Alam	Member
IV. Omor Ali	Member
V. Kutub Uddin Ahmed	Member
VI. Advocate Mahatab Uddin	BNP leader [Party intellectual]

Union Level Leaders

- I. Motaleb Sazi, Vice-President, Alampur Union Awami League, Kushtia
- II. Izazul Islam, Alampur Union AL Secretary
- III. Anwar Ali, Joint Secretary, Alampur Union BNP, Kushtia
- IV. Akmal Khan, businessman, and Ward No. 2 Secretary, Alampur Union

Appendix 2: FGDs with Cross-sections of People

FGD 1:

- I. Khokon Khan, former Secretary of Alampur Union Jubodal
- II. Shahdul Karim, businessman
- III. Abdul Hamid, farmer
- IV. Mikail Islam, mason
- V. Abdul Aziz, farmer
- VI. Bazlu Bishwas, businessman
- VII. Aslam Munshi, businessman

FGD 2:

- I. Kamal Hossain, Organizing Secretary, Alampur Union AL
- II. Rabiul Islam, Joint Secretary, Alampur Union AL
- III. Ohidul Islam, Member, Alampur Union AL
- IV. Ashraful Islam, Secretary, Union *Shessashebak* League
- V. Nurul Islam, teacher, Swastipur High School, Alampur

FGD 3:

- I. Moinuddin Ahmed, President, Swastipur High School Managing Committee, Alampur
- II. Md. Kabir Hossain, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- III. Md. Golam Kabir, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- IV. Abdul Hye Siddique, Assistant Head Teacher,
- V. Md. Khejer Ali, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- VI. Md. Ajar Ali, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- VII. Md. Mahsin Ali, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- VIII. Firoja Bulbul, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- IX. Mahmuda Afroz, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- X. Md. Shamsul Alam, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- XI. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- XII. Md. Nurul Islam, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School
- XIII. Md. Shahjahan Ali, Assistant Head Teacher, Swastipur High School

FGD 4:

- I. Md. Mazedur Rahman, War No. 6 AL Secretary, Solua Union, Rajshahi
- II. Md. Kazimuddin, War No. 2 *Jobo League* Secretary, Solua Union, Rajshahi
- III. Md. Ayud Ali, Charghat Upazila *Jobo League* Secretary, Rajshahi
- IV. Md. Rasul Ali, Union *Jobo League* member, Solua, Rajshahi

Appendix 3: Checklists/Questionnaire for the district level party leaders:

[To find the answer of the research question: i) To what extent can the local level political leaders participate in party decision making? ii) What is the perception of party leaders about democracy?]

Name:
Party: Position:
Length of political career: Age Gender

1. What is the party defined process of formation of district committee/council/...?
2. What are the criteria for nomination and election to fill the posts (President and Secretary in particular) at this committee/council/....?
3. Do you think this process is duly followed in making of the current committee/council/.... and what about the committee/council during 2001 – 2006?
4. Is there any way of promoting the local level party leaders to the posts of central committee/council/....?
5. How does the district committee/council participate in National Council (of BNP)/Council (Awami League)?
6. Is it a must for the district council/committee to participate in the National Council/Council?
7. Can district council give opinions in National Council/Council?
8. Can district council oppose any points/proposals at the National Council/Council?
9. What might happen if the district council opposes any points/proposals at National Council/Council?
10. How is the National Executive Committee (of BNP)/National Committee (of Awami League) formed?
11. Is there any role of the district committee/council in making of the National Executive Committee/ National Committee?
12. When policy issues and programs of the party are discussed and made, can the district council participate in it, or give opinion, or can they suggest alternatives?
13. Suppose you think any policy or program of the party is not fitting in a given situation, or in the current progressive era, how can you give your comments/raise your points to the central committee?
14. In the National Executive Committee/National Committee, most of the leading positions are nominated/decided by the Party Chairperson, do you think this practice is an obstacle to democracy?
15. The National Executive Committee /Nation Committee is supposed to coordinate and manage the activities of different party committees at different levels, do you think this committee works or the decisions come directly from the party chief?
16. When there is any internal conflict in the district council/committee, who solves this?
17. Sometimes we hear that there are some internal factions as panel to seek positions in the district committee/council, if it is then how to decide who will be nominated/elected in the council/committee?
18. Is there any interaction between the National Committee (Awami League) / Standing Committee (of BNP) and district council/ committee?
19. Who nominates the candidature at different district level positions during the formation of district committee/council?

20. Is there any interaction between Parliamentary Board (of both BNP and Awami League) and district committee/council in any case?
21. Is there any way for the local level leaders to participate in any important discussion forums/issue based discussions/meetings organized by the party at the central level?
22. Observers and analysts say that during candidate selection for General Election, economic strength of candidate is more important than political experience or dedication. How do you assess this?
23. People say, the party decision making is autocratic because the party chief is the sole authority to decide on anything, and no one can oppose it. How do you think of it?
24. We commonly hear that the sons of the party chiefs will be next chiefs. How do you think about it?
25. We usually hear that good people have less access in political parties. What do you think? Why people say so?
26. There is a *samaj* system in the village, which includes, among others, a relationship of loyalty, a sense of power in particular people, not arguing with or opposing the elite views etc. Do you find any link between this village *samaj* system and political party system?

Appendix 4: Checklists/Questionnaire for the central level party leaders:

(To find the answer of the research question: i) To what extent can the local level political leaders participate in party decision making? ii) What is the perception of party leaders about democracy?)

Name:
Party: Position:
Length of political career: Age Gender

1. Tell me something about the organizational strength of the party (of BNP/Awami League)?
2. What are the criteria for nomination and election to fill the posts at this committee/council/....?
3. Who nominates the candidature at different district level positions during the formation of district committee/council?
4. How much is this process followed in reality during making of the current committee/council/.... and what about the committee/council during 2001 – 2006?
5. What is the way of promoting the local level party leaders to the posts of central committee/council/....?
6. How does the district committee/council participate in National Council (of BNP)/Council (Awami League)?
7. Is it a must for the district council/committee to participate in the National Council/Council?
8. Can district council give opinions in National Council/Council?
9. Can district council oppose any points/proposals at the National Council/Council?
10. What might happen if the district council opposes any points/proposals at National Council/Council?
11. How is the National Executive Committee (of BNP)/National Committee (of Awami League) formed?
12. Is there any role of the district committee/council in making of the National Executive Committee/ National Committee?
13. When policy and program of the party are discussed and made, can the district council participate in it, or give opinion, or can they suggest alternatives?
14. Suppose you think any policy or program of the party is not fitting in a given situation, or in the current progressive era, how can you give your comments/raise your points?
15. In the National Executive Committee/National Committee, most of the leading positions are nominated/decided by the Party Chairperson, do you think this practice is an obstacle to democracy?
16. The National Executive Committee /Nation Committee is supposed to coordinate and manage the activities of different party committees at different levels, do you think this committee works or the decisions come directly from the party chief?
17. When there is any internal conflict in the district council/committee, what role the central party can take or how can it be solved?
18. Is there any interaction between the Standing Committee (of BNP) and district committee?
19. Is there any interaction between Parliamentary Board (of both BNP and Awami League) and district committee/council in any case?

20. Is there any way for the local level leaders to participate in any important discussion forums/issue based discussions/meetings organized by the party at the central level?
21. Observers and analysts say that during candidate selection for General Election, economic strength of candidate is more important than political experience or dedication. How do you assess this?
22. People say, the party decision making is autocratic because the party chief is the sole authority to decide on anything, and no one can oppose it. How do you think of it?
23. There is a general trend of family rule in our party system? How is it conducive to democratic development in the party and in the country?
24. Why the party chief cannot be changed?
25. Do you think the party nominates and dedicated and right candidate for the elections [council/parliament/.....]?
26. People say, the party decision making is autocratic because the party chief is the sole authority to decide on anything, and no one can oppose it. How do you think of it?
27. We commonly hear that the sons of the party chiefs will be next chiefs. How do you think about it?

28. We usually hear that good people have less access in political parties. What do you think? Why people say so?
29. There is a *samaj* system in the village, which includes, among others, a relationship of loyalty, a sense of power in particular people, not arguing with or opposing the elite views etc. Do you find any link between this village *samaj* system and political party system?

Appendix 5: Checklists for FGD with the cross-sections of people

[To find the answer of the research question: i) What is the perception of common people about democracy and political party?]

1. As we know, we have a *samaj* system in the village? Can you explain how is this?
2. Many say politics in the village surround land, education, link with external power etc. How do you think?
3. We usually hear that good people have less access in political parties. What do you think? Why people say so?
4. Do you find any link between this village *samaj* system and political party system?
5. Why do we need a political party?
6. Do you think the common people have link with political party?
7. Do you think what the political party does is what the people want?
8. What do you know about the formation of local committee/councils/... of Awami League/BNP?
9. We commonly hear that the sons of the party chiefs will be next chiefs. How do you think about it?
10. How can an organization be democratic?
11. Do you think the political parties exercise democracy in their party system?