Political Culture of Char People: A Study on Char Khanpur

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Abstract: *Political culture is the key indicator to get the clear picture of the political milieu of a country or a definite region. Because, it touches and influences the people`s political, socio-economic and even personal life. Definitely, political activities influence the steering wheel of the state economy and people's social life. However, political culture is broad area for study which includes and gives place to analyse political participation, voting behavior, political ambition, electoral politics, political knowledge ,political communication and so many areas which have relation with politics .By analysing the political culture ,we may explore how these factors influence the political culture and are influenced by politics. Although, it is not possible to enter in the realm of knowledge of political culture by studying this small territory. After all, the main objective of the present study is to focus only on the political culture of char khanpur and bring some of shortcomings and the reasons of political backwardness to highlight so that responsible segments can take proper measures for the political development of the concerned area.*

1. Introduction

Historically Bangladesh is struggling to establish true democracy. After independence; Bangladesh has taken parliamentary democracy as the government system. According to the constitution of Bangladesh, it shall be a unitary, independent are sovereign republic. Democracy is the most desired government and social systems of Bangladesh.

Geographically Bangladesh is located at the south part of Asia. For this geographical reason, great deals of reverian Islands (char) have emerged inside the river area. A notable segment of people live in these char areas .There is no way to deny their importance in electoral politics. Isolating this important segment of char people from mainstream politics, true and meaningful democracy is not possible and thinkable. Char people are socio-economically and politically backward like the other root level people of Bangladesh .From this backdrop, there has been aroused a peculiar political culture which is primarily outmoded, parochial and non participatory and these are matters of concerns for flourishing of democracy.

Methodology: The study is based on primary data field survey and secondary data.

Culture: Culture is "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time" [1]

Political culture
The term '**political culture**' is an important concept in the field of social science. It refers to the people's attitude, beliefs, norms and values about the nature of political systems. It is the established political manner of citizens that has historical background. This word first popularized by **Gabriel Almond** and **Sydney Verba** in the decade sixty of twentieth century. They defines political culture in their opus work "civic culture" in this way, "The term political culture thus refers to the specifically political orientations, attitudes toward the political system and its various parts and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system." [2]

Study area: Char khanpur
Char Khanpur is a riverian island of Padma in Rajshahi. It is located to the south side of Rajshahi city at Padma river. Almost 1500 people live in this char. Agriculture is the main occupation of char people. Although, a few people are involve in cow business and agriculture based business. Literacy rate is very less for the reason of irregular education service. They are little bit politically conscious but it is not satisfactory and not up to the level of mainstream people who are politically conscious .

Political culture of char area: From the perspective of char Khanpur
Here, it has been tried to explore the distinctive and conventional features of political culture of char Khanpur from the char people's mode and style of political activities, their political ideology, economic life, political education, political communication and many other barometers. We are calling these barometers because of their importance for determining and getting the crucial idea of political culture of char people.

Parochial political culture
A parochial political culture is a political culture where citizens have only limited awareness of the existence of central government. [3] The char people have no understanding of 'the national political system, do not possess any tendency to participate in the input processes and have no consciousness of the output processes.

Pattern of political communication

Table 1: Pattern of political communication of the char area

leader based political communication	Number of respondents	percentage
Communication with local level political leaders(UP Chairman, member)	37	75%
Communication with Urban level political leaders	11	22%
Communication with local MP	2	4%
Total	Total -100%	

The table shows that 75% people of char communicate to local level political leaders (UP Chairman, member). The reasons of good communication with local level leaders are proximity of existence, kinship, similar life style and devotion of local leader for solving local problems .From table, it shows that 22% char people communicate to urban level political leaders and only 4% people communicate to local MP. Actually most of them are local political leaders those who act as middlemen of communication, a bridge between the common people of char and urban political leader and local MP. Finally, People of Khanpur keep special political communication with local political leaders.

Political participation

Political participation is the key indicator of real democracy. It ensures accountability and transparency of political administration. It manifests the political consciousness of the people about national political events and problems. But there has to be consideration about the level of their involvement in politics. To measure the level of their involvement in politics, we may consider the local level political participation and national level political participation. It is observed that the political participation or involvement or consciousness of young population is simply higher than other segment, basically from old aged people and women. Another important thing is that all the political decisions are taken by the women are the influenced and recommended by men.

Table 2: Political affiliation and modes of political participation

Preferring political activities		Nature of Political participation		Barriers of involvement in politics	
Public meetings	54%	Regular	10%	restricted by father and mother	0%
Processions	4%	Irregular	90%	Husband's direction	2%
Hartal/Blocade	2%			Not interested	98%

The table-2 has given the partial picture of preferring political activities, nature of political participation and barriers of involvement in politics of char khanpur .Although it is not possible to depict the whole picture of political activities of people of char Khanpur. But from the table -2, we see that 54%people prefer public meetings ,4%processions and 2% in Hartal or Blocade. The reason of preferring public meeting is the festive looking environment that is heard from the common people. But their participation in politics is not satisfactory. Only 10% people regularly participate in politics but 90%people are irregular in political participation. There is also reason of irregular participation. Although, approximately all of the respondents didn't acknowledge the barriers of political participation. But from their speech and expression, it is thought that maximum number of women is directed by their husband and young guys are controlled by their gurdian.

Voting behavior

Voting behavior is a form of electoral behavior. Understanding voters' behavior can explain how and why decisions were made either by public decision-makers, which has been a central concern for political scientists, or by the underlineelectorate [4]. To interpret voting behavior both political science and psychology expertises were necessary and therefore the field of political psychology emerged. Political psychology researchers study ways in which affective influence may help voters make more informed voting choices, with some proposing that affect may explain how the electorate makes informed political choices in spite of low overall levels of political attentiveness and sophistication.

To make inferences and predictions about behavior concerning a voting decision, certain factors such as gender, race, culture or religion must be considered. Moreover, key public influences include the role of emotions, political socialization, tolerance of diversity of political views and the media. The effect of these influences on voting behavior is best understood through theories on the formation of attitudes, beliefs, schema, knowledge structures and the practice of information processing. For example, surveys from different countries indicate that people are generally happier in individualistic cultures where they have rights such as the right to vote. [5] Additionally, social influence and peer effects, as originating from family and friends, also play an important role in elections and voting behavior. [6] An important question in this context is how to disentangle the social contagion by peers from external influences. [7] The degree to which voting decision is affected by internal processes and external influences alters the quality of making truly democratic decisions.

Political Ambitions

Political ambition is the inner force which instigates the people to participate in politics .From the realistic view, people, mainly leaders participate in politics for the practicing power. Although the true purpose of leading or participating in politics is to serve the people or to enjoy the political rights. Most of the people of this char are reluctant to involve in politics at the party level. Their thinking is that there is no possibility of gaining material benefits but they keep little communication with local level political leaders(like UP chairmen and the members) just to get assistance at the time of maintaining business ,gaining government reliefs or in other visible fields. Their expectations from politics revolve with their personal and local interest .It can be said that their demand does not reflect the national expectations. Mostly they think themselves as the ignoring part of the country.

Table 3: Motive and reasons lying behind of political participation

Motive and reasons	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Ideology of the party	19	38%
Material benefits	4	8%
Hunger for power	6	12%
Influence of others	16	32%

This table indicates that political participation of char people is influenced by some tangible and intangible factors. Here it is seen that 38% people participate in politics for their weakness to the ideology of the definite political party. Here,8%people participate in politics for getting material benefits, 12%people hunger for power and 32% feel interest and get in touch of politics being influenced by others.

Political Knowledge of the char people

Political knowledge is the important trait of political culture. Political knowledge of char people is very poor. The level of their political knowledge is not parallel to the other segment of rural people's political knowledge on the basis of following items, their knowledge score has been tried to determine/calculate.

- Who is the present prime minister of Bangladesh?
- Do you know the name of the MP (Member of Parliament, elected representative of people in parliamentary democracy) of your area?

Table 4: Agents of acquiring political knowledge and socialization

Agents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Political activities of local leaders	3	6%
Familial discussion	18	36%
Newspaper	4	8%
Electronic media(T.V)	14	28%
No response	11	22%

This table shows that people of Char Khanpur acquire the political knowledge and become politically socialized by some key agents and instigators. From the table it is seen that 6% people get political knowledge and become socialized by political activities of local leaders .36% people by familial discussion,8% by newspapers ,28% by electronic media(TV) and 22% didn't give any response .From the table it is understood that newspaper is not available and political activities of local leader is very poor .Most of the people take political decision by discussing with their family members .

2. Conclusion

The objective of this study is to find and get the clear idea of political culture of Char Khanpur. Although it is not possible to depict the whole picture of political culture of Char Khanpur from only a case study. After all, It has been determined that political culture of Khanpur is parochial and non participatory and their socio-economic condition is not good enough. But notable thing is that people of Char Khanpur has good relation with their local leaders but not with national level leaders. Their political knowledge is very poor and even they are very callous to participate in political activities. Most of the women take their political decision like supporting candidate and giving vote in the election under the pressure and guidance of male members of family basically of husband. By asking the people of char Khanpur it is found that city and national level local leaders are also responsible for this worst condition of Char Khanpur. Because leaders do not keep relation with char people after election. These people also have no political ambition but just have little consciousness about local politics where their interest is directly involved. Finally this study does not refer the whole picture of political culture of rural areas in Bangladesh but depicts the partial view.

References

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