An Ethnographic Account on the Local Politics in Rural Bangladesh: A Case from Bogra District

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study intends to understand the local level politics in terms of changing political belief among the participants in the larger context of politics in Bogra, Bangladesh. In particular, the research tries to investigate the voting behaviour during the national election of 2008 in Bogra, a northern district of Bangladesh. Though there are some studies about the national level politics but still there is a dearth of researchers in understanding the local political dynamics. The study of a local-level election helps us engaging with different stakeholders and local agencies. In this research, I tried to examine the attitudes, opinions, voting behaviour and the political environment of the locality in reference to the parliamentary election of 2008 in Bogra district, Bangladesh. The Awami League (AL) government’s political rivalry with the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) reaches new heights, so has its repression.¹ The contemporary Bangladeshi politics is taking place through conflicts and corruption.

Bangladesh has a multiparty parliamentary democracy, in which elections are carried out by secret ballot. The people of Bangladesh have an elected democratic system, but, it has been always under scrutiny because of the problem in practice of the ideals of democracy. The idea of good governance has been interrupted by changing alliances of power with the political parties. By and large, since 1991, the multi-party system has been institutionalized in Bangladesh. However, each time the defeated party creates some kinds of disputes related to the election process, as there are many incidences when the party who lost the election claimed of unfair voting and alleged incredulous voting statistics, and thus trying to prove the votes were forged. According to the election commission of Bangladesh, there are more than forty political parties in Bangladesh.² Out of those, there are two major political parties which are ‘Bangladesh Awami League’ (AL) and ‘Bangladesh Nationalist Party’ (BNP) are interchangeably holding power at the center since 1991. Given the predominant nature of these two major political parties, other parties find it impossible to break the shield of political power that these parties have created for keeping themselves intact.


The main aspiration of the rural people in Bangladesh is to fulfill their basic daily needs and live their life happily. There are promises by the candidates during the election, but after post-election periods the rarely look at the development in the rural area, therefore, people of the rural area are not that much interested in the elections (Jahan, 2000). During the time of elections, various strategies are used by different political parties to get the votes from the rural people. These kinds of strategies involve the people during the election times. To understand this political process in detail I wanted to conduct this research. I was interested to know about the local level politics hence conducted an in-depth study following the ethnographic method in Bogra district in Bangladesh.

Since 1991, when democracy returned in Bangladesh, Bogra district has its own significance, as it is the birth place of the founder of BNP and the former president Ziaur Rahman. In the 1991 election, BNP won 6 seats out of seven seats of Bogra district. Since then the tradition of winning all 7 seats by BNP in Bogra district continued till 2001 elections results. BNP was in power on all seats of Bogra till 2006. In the elections of 2008, for the first time, BNP lost two seats from Bogra district, which became a shock because these were supposedly sure seats for BNP. To understand the complexity of this electoral politics happening in Bogra, I was trying to investigate the notion of electoral politics of the country taking two particular village within a single
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constituency and Bogra district in general as the representative sample in terms of people’s notion of how they have changed their political loyalty in choosing their representatives in the election.

Bogra has been historically a major stronghold for BNP. On the other hand, it is also a great challenge for Bangladesh Awami League as they were not able to win any single constituency on their hold. That is why Bangladesh Awami League (current ruling Party) always has made an effort to capture Bogra’s constituencies. There are seven constituencies which contribute towards candidates for the parliament election. These constituencies prove to be very influential in the national electoral politics of the country. In every parliamentary election, BNP always wins seats in Bogra; however, in December 2008 election there was a marked change. Two seats out of the seven were seized by AL in that election. The research thus, takes the central stage at this juncture, in the change of choice. I was trying to understand that why people change their political behaviour/ beliefs or voting behaviour during 2008 parliamentary election in Bogra district, Bangladesh.

The research has focused on the political perceptions of voters who choose their political representatives by means of universal adult franchise. An attempt has been made to understand the factors behind the changing of people’s political behavior as well as the political situation during the election of 2008, at Sonatola Upazila in Bogra district, Bangladesh. The research work is aimed to develop an understanding of the social aspects that led to change in the political consciousness of the people of Bogra District. In the context of Bangladesh, there are a lot of studies related to the local level politics but are being conducted statistically. Though number can tell about the belief system of the majority, but cannot provide the detailed versions. Through this study which was qualitatively conducted, I have tried to provide a better picture of prevailing mentalities and ground reality of rural Bangladesh, especially in Bogra.

The following are the questions which are helpful for me to have a better understanding about the local level politics-

- What were the reasons that lead the voters of Bogra district to choose Awami League party in 2008 parliamentary election, Bangladesh?
- What strategies were carried out by the successful candidates in those particular constituencies?

My research objective is to understand the people’s voting behaviour during 2008 national election of Bogra’s constituencies where BNP lost their two traditional home seats, with the specific focus of changing perspectives of the voter’s outlook. Through this research, I am trying to give an ethnographic and descriptive overview from the local level politics within the specific case in Bogra. In addition to my case study I am trying to illustrate the basic notions of political culture in terms of people’s participation, political party’s activities and the role of different agencies in electoral politics during a local election in Bogra district. The predominant nature of two major political parties and the mass people’s conception would come under investigation in this research.

A Democratic country like Bangladesh local level politics is very crucial. Local level politics has a great emphasis on national politics. Since ‘the restoration of democracy in 1991, political activities have spread from the capital to local level’ (Wohab and Akhter, 2004). The local level politics can be a great platform to practice for national level politics.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ahmed (2004) “Political scientists opine that voting behaviour is influenced by social class plus one or more other factors, such as regions, ethnic group, religion and urban-rural differences”. Similarly, Hossain, Aktar and Islam (2017) argue about the voting behaviour and public decisions said that “Understanding voters’ behaviour can explain how and why decisions were made either by public decision-makers, which has been a central concern for political scientists”. The changing voting pattern and voting behaviour can be affected by both political and non-political as well. Socio-economic aspects can also be responsible for changing the political beliefs and voting behavior in arural election such as age, education, gender, and occupation and so on. On the contrary, there can be some socio-politico and economic issues like, political ideology, party affiliation, candidates ‘qualification, family background and son on that have strong influence on changing the voting behaviour, this research particularly explored the changing of voting behavior with its socio-politico and economic determinants, during the parliamentary election in 2008 in Bogra.

According to Hazarika (2015) “Voting behaviour is a field of study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in a public election and the reasons why they vote as they do.” The term voting behaviour can refer to the meaning and it has taken as one massive and broad area of study included within the major title of political behaviour. It engages a practice of human political behaviour regarding the voting pattern in elections. Voting behaviours examine the open windows on the mindset of the people who are engaged in the political system as voters. The behaviour of voter might be affected by some issues like religion, caste,
community, language, money, policy or ideology, the purpose of the polls, the extent of the franchise, political wave etc. The local political party leaders and its supporters try to make use of these to win in the battle of the ballot box.

Voting behaviour attempts to look up narrating the matters accountable for individual’s functions or showing behaviour in elections and why people change behave the way they do politically. It might be various from money politics and vote-buying not only that they grab same natures and characteristics. Social, psychological and individual perspectives are involved in voting behaviour during the election period. Individual outlook like an evaluation of the personal nature and features of the candidates, assessment of government functions and performance of certain policy problems, party identifications and ideology are few of the definitive matters in building choice of candidates and their different political parties. According to Adamu, Ocheni and Ibrahim (2016) “for social factor, race, religion, region and social class are all factors contributing to voting behaviour Psychological factors are based on emotion”.

Political power might be understood in very different ways. Especially, the loss of political power is characterized by Shaw (2008) said that ‘Weber’s primary concern in his later political writings seems to be less with the distribution of power in modern states than with the amount of power they can support. He worries that there is not enough political power, in the sense of intentional control of political life’. I have researched as an effort to the voters from the research area. Since it’s an ethnographic work, I was to go to the field to interact with the respondents to grab the required data to explore my research.

According to Banerjee, (2007) an election is one big ritual serving a single function in the society. The political leaders try to pay close attention to the voters by this ritual approach. Political leaders try to be like a God to fill up the all required demands of the voters during the election. I have tried to find whether the AL political leaders acted to motivate people here or not to get their vote by following this kind of activity during election Sonatola Upazila under Bogra district. Because at Sonatola, Sariyakandi constituency under Bogra district where AL candidate won in the 2008 parliamentary election might motivate the voters by paying his good attitude which has been questioned to the interviewers during the investigation.

An article by Wohab and Akhter (2004) focuses on local level politics of Kushtia district, Bangladesh is important to understand the local politics in the rural area. It also tries to explain how the rural politics influences on nation politics because of the population of voters. However, it has been mentioned by the authors that since the last two regimes when a party comes into power, they ignore the people’s demand in local levels. This can only happen by using strategies during the time of election as they are not working for the poor, during the rule. So to gain the trust of people various kinds of strategies are used in the election to get votes. All these strategies will be identified by doing the ethnography in the research site.

Moreover, studying the political phenomenon of elections demands a methodological framework which is sound as well value-free. The methodological framework applied by the authors in the book lays stress on the study of small communities. This is done through extensive fieldwork and interviews with local respondents of the area. In the words of Yadav (2007), this is referred to as the worm-eyed view of society, in contrast to the bird’s eye view offered by other methods of research. Ethnographic fieldwork would be the guiding light of the research. In doing so, I seek to, self-consciously, transgress methodological boundaries and seek to employ methodological pluralism. In doing so, I take special care in affecting a meaningful dialogue of simplistic and complex methods of data collection. Secondly, as the research conducted by the authors in the book shows that there existed a causal link between the national politics and local politics. Similarly, in Bogra, national level politics provides the edifice upon which local issues and politics are formed. Consent of the voters is not a bottom up but rather a top-down phenomenon. In other words, national politics trumps local politics in my research.

III. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

My research area is Bogra district in general and particularly in Sonatola Upazila, Mohichoron and Telihata villages. The research has planned in two villages of Sonatola Upazila for collecting the required data. There were two villages that have visited of Sonatola upazila namely Telihata and Mohichoron where Hindu and Muslims population are dwelling together. It was not that much easy for me to do the ethnography because I belong to another Upazila and nobody would know me there. Even though, while collecting data I was to face some problems. Initially, some of the respondents were not willing to talk to me but I made them understand. I was trying to build a very good rapport with my respondents during my field work.

The research is conducted in Sonatola Upazela Bogra-I constituency where BNP lost their traditional seat. According to the population census of 2011, Sonatala Upazila is under Bogra district in the Rajshahi division, Bangladesh. Initially, it was declared as a Thana in 1981 and later on was converted into an Upazila in 1984. The total area of Sonatala Upazila is 156.75 square kilometres, land area is 145.14 square km and the riverine area is 11.61 square km. There is 1 municipality, 7 unions, 94 mauza, 16 mahallas and 125 villages in Sonatola Upazila.
I have visited twice in my research site two villages of Sonatola Upazila namely ‘Telihata’ and ‘Mohichoron’ from where I have collected my data to explore the research. In those two villages of Sonatola upazila, Hindu and Muslims people are living together. On the other hand, most of the local political leader of BNP, AL, Jamat-E-Islam, Jatiya Party are also there. Besides BNP and AL there are other minor political parties leaders, namely Liberal Democratic Party, Krishak Sramik Janata league, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Jatiyo Samaj Tantrik Dal (JSD) living.

3.1 At a Glance of Bogra district
Bogra is located in the northern district under Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh (Census 2011). Initially, Bogra was part of ‘Pundravardhana’ region and it was the capital of ‘Pundravardhana’ in the ancient time which is now known as ‘Mahashthangarh’. Bogra is really well known for its historical norms and values with ‘Mahashthangarh’ as former capital, which is now declared as the SAARC Cultural capital for 2016-17. However, it is often heard from the people that Bogra district was named by Sultan Mohammad Nasir uddin Bughra Khan who was an independent Ruler of Bengal during 1279 - 1282 A.D.

Greater Bogra was established as a Zila in 1821 under British rule. In 1983 greater Bogra was divided into two districts namely Bogra and Joypurhat District. For making governance easier Bogra was further divided into 12 Upazila (Districts) and 7 constituencies in Bogra district. The Upazila’s are Adamdighi, BograSadar, Dhunat, Dupchanchia, Gabtali, Khaledoo, Nandigram, sherpur, Shibgang, Shaighanpur, Sariakandi and SonatolaUpazila. The constituencies are Bogra-1 Sonatola-Sariakandi, Bogra-2 Shibgang, Bogra-3 Adamdighi-Dupchanchia, Bogra-4 Khaledoo-Nandigram, Bogra-5 Sherpur-Dhunat, Bogra-6 Bogra Sadar and Bogra-7 Gabtali-Shajahanpur. There are 108 unions, 1672 mauzas, 2618 villages, 11 pauras, 111 wards and 360 mahallas in Bogra district. During the British rule, Bogra municipality was established in 1884. But later on, Bogra Municipality got renamed as Bogra Paurashava in 1977. Bogra Paurashava was made of 21 wards and 111 mahallas. In 2008 general election Bogra-1 Sonatola-Sariakandi and Bogra-5 Sherpur-Dhunat BNP lost their two traditional seats, which is my research site.

Bogra is famous as an industrial hub of North Bengal. Due to the constructions of the Bangabandhu Jamuna multipurpose Bridge, all kinds of opportunities regarding trade and commerce have increased, not only in Bogra but also in other parts of north Bengal. Bogra district is also tremendously popular for its festivals and cultural tradition. By and large, Bogra plays an important role in the politics of Bangladesh. Due to it’s strategically position in northern part of the country, Bogra is called the gateway to North Bengal.

3.3 Economic Status of Bogra
According to population census of 2011, Bogra has been allotted jobs in agriculture (29.95%), agricultural manufacturing (12.53%), general commerce (18.11%), customer service (15.62%), transportation (6.66%), wage labour (2.2%), and other industries (14.93%). According to the statistical report, most of the people of Bogra district are engaged in agricultural work because the main source of income is agriculture. That is why; agriculture sector plays a pivotal role in the economy of this district. As agricultural crops,Aush, Aman, Boro Paddy, Jute, Wheat, Potato, Mustard, Pepper, Vegetables, Banana, Sugarcane and Betel leaf are the main crops of this district. Agro-industrial activities were to support farm production which has enlarged rapidly in the last one decade in Bogra region. In the Daily Star (the national English newspaper in Bangladesh) reported that ‘Bogra has emerged as a hub for making farm machinery’.

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3.4 The history of liberation war in Bogra

The liberation war of 1971 is the source of inspiration for the Bengali nation. With that stream of inspiration, we were able to ensure such an incident which is hard to gain. The initiation of the protest and resistance against the west Pakistani politician begins from the rejection of the poll of 1970. Entire country blasted with strong protest because of such activities. From the root level of the upper-class society of the Bengali nation all attached on the bases of historic 6 points and 11 points and it’s a stepping stone of the liberation war for the entire nation. The contribution of Bogra on that historic event was inconsiderable. People of Bogra came together to make revenge against the Pakistanis. An educated person especially the student made student movement committee and the main tusk of the committee was to protect the country from the Pakistani enemies. Every day there was a call for the March and rally from the committee. Local public and students blasted with bitter slogans against the Pakistanis like – Either confirm the meeting of the 3rd March or give the freedom to Bangla; yours and my destination is Padma, Meghna, Jamuna. At that point of time, the condition of Bogra was same as the entire country. The local political parties of the Bogra made their own action committee. On the course of time, Bangabandhu Shekh Mujibur Rahman gave his historic speech on 7th March. It was such a motivational and heart touching speech that touches the entire Bengalis minds especially the people of Bogra. This is the starting point of the boycott against the Pakistanis. The speech of 7th march inspires the motivation and it opens a new horizon in mind of people of Bogra. They started dreaming of freedom. The whole march had gone through with this movement and agitation. The 71 had dared enough to the youth mind that didn’t afraid to break any obstacles. On the course of time, it brought the darkest 25th march night. Pakistani armed forces show their cruelty to the sleeping civilian.

3.5 During Liberation war in Bogra

I mentioned earlier that because of geographical strategy Bogra is very famous for politics, economics, cottage industries, tourism, educations and communication as well. It was also a most important site for pitched battles during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. Bogra was covered in fighting between the allied soldiers of Mukti bahini (Bangladeshi Freedom Fighters) and Indian Army (Combined) who defeated the Pak Army during the liberation war. From the history, we can know that the mass people and students of Bogra killed around 23 Pakistani troops and smashed 3 military vehicles in during liberation war in Bogra (Ganapathy, 2015). To manage the liberation war expense the freedom fighters looted almost 4 core Money from the State Bank of Pakistan in Bogra branch. When the dwellers of Bogra got to know that a group of Pakistani Army was coming from Rangpur Cantonment, the freedom fighters, the mass people, the general students of Bogra put up their resistance against of Pak army at Bogra Sadar Upazila. At one point the fighting began between freedom fighters, students and Pak army. In that resistance movement around 20 Pakistani armies, more than 50 civilians were killed on 23 April 1971. Later on the Pakistani army attacks, various places of Bogra and they killed around 14 freedom fighters at Bibir Pukur area of Bogra district and buried them in a mass grave on the bank of the river Karatoya (ibid, 2015). It was also a most important site for pitched battles during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. Bogra was covered in fighting between the allied soldiers of Mukti bahini (Bangladeshi Freedom Fighters) and Indian Army (Combined) who defeated the Pak Army during the liberation war. From the history, we can know that the mass people and students of Bogra killed around 23 Pakistani troops and smashed 3 military vehicles in during liberation war in Bogra (Ganapathy, 2015). To manage the liberation war expense the freedom fighters looted almost 4 core Money from the State Bank of Pakistan in Bogra branch. When the dwellers of Bogra got to know that a group of Pakistani Army was coming from Rangpur Cantonment, the freedom fighters, the mass people, the general students of Bogra put up their resistance against of Pak army at Bogra Sadar Upazila. At one point the fighting began between freedom fighters, students and Pak army. In that resistance movement around 20 Pakistani armies, more than 50 civilians were killed on 23 April 1971. Later on the Pakistani army attacks, various places of Bogra and they killed around 14 freedom fighters at Bibir Pukur area of Bogra district and buried them in a mass grave on the bank of the river Karatoya (ibid, 2015).

3.6 Resistance in the war on 25 March in Bogra

On March 25 black nights the Pakistani soldiers are ready to run to Bogra from Rangpur Cantonment to attack. The officer of Bogra police station got to know that, a group of Pakistani soldiers have been left out of Rangpur. All the people will be killed of Bogra over the night. The blue design has been created to massacre. The operation would be conducted together with all districts in Bangladesh. Within very short time this news went out in whole Bogra. The police officer proclaimed this imminent threat with shouting ‘Bograabi (Residence of Bogra) wake up wake up’, The Pakistani army already left from Rangpur to Bogra, ‘Put barricades in the road to prevent’, ‘JagoJago’. The officer of the

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Bogra police station proclaimed about the Pakistani army in all villages of Bogra. Later on, he met with Momtaz Uddin\(^{15}\) (Now the AL president of Bogra district) Haider Ali, AK Mujibur Rahman, Mosharraf Horessin Mondal, Tapan, Swapan, and Dr. Zahidur (all were the local elite of Bogra during liberation war) and talked about all the facts.

### 3.7 Battle of Bogra

Bogra was a crucial communication zone to connect with the whole north-west and western sectors through the Hardinge Bridge\(^{16}\) (A railway bridge in Pabna district made by the British government) over the Padma. The ultimate target of Pakistani army was to capture Bogra to control the whole northern and western area from Bogra. At one point on 14 December in 1971 Bogra was attacked by Pakistani army from the south and the north sites. When I was talking with some of my respondents I was trying to know a little bit history of Bogra during liberation war in 1971. Some of my seniors’ respondents (by age) said me that on 14 December in 1971 in Bogra after fighting long 13 hours with the Pakistani army all areas of Bogra such as Bogra railway station, Bogra Sadar Thana, Mukti Bahini Camp, Food warehouse, fire station, Bogra Circuit House and some importance places has been cleared from Pakistani army. According to their words, the battle raged on an entire day. Ultimately, the willpower and the sincere leaders of Mukti Bahini and India army were what laid the foundation for this outstanding action and paved the way for the divisional advance and the subsequent capture of Bogra (ibid, 2015).

### 3.7.1: Background of Bogra’s politics

Since very ancient time Bogra was a remarkable region for politics. The Bogra district holds a crucial land in the famous and the earlier historical story of Bengal. Bogra is situated at the bank of Korotoya River. The third prime minister of undivided Pakistan Mohammad Ali Bogra was from Bogra.\(^{17}\) He was born in Barisal district during British India on 19th October in 1909 but he grew up in Bogra. He started his study in Calcutta at ‘Hasting House’. After that Mohammad Ali Bogra attended at ‘Presidency College’ of Calcutta University. Then he was living in Bogra until being the chairman of Bogra Municipality. Later on, Mohammad was being elected as a chairman of the District Board of Bogra. Then he started his politics in 1937 having been elected to the legislature of undivided Bengal in Calcutta from the Muslim League Assembly (MLA). When Nazimuddin was elected as the new governor of Pakistan July in 1949, Mohammed Ali Bogra was sent as the first high commissioner of Pakistan to Canada. Then he was made as an ambassador of Pakistan to the United States in 1952. In 1953 he was appointed as the prime minister of Pakistan. During his period there were many achievements done. Just after three days of his working, the president of the United States’ Eisenhower sent thousands of tonnes of wheat to Pakistan to aid the new country. In 1953 while taking charge as the prime minister of Pakistan he outlined his ‘Bogra Formula’ which would have made as a bicameral legislature. Mohammad Ali Bogra announced that his ultimate aim is to formulate of Pakistan constitution following the ‘Bogra Formula’. Then he presented his ‘Bogra Formula’ before the Constituency Assembly of Pakistan on 7 October in 1953. Mohammad Ali’s ‘Bogra Formula’ was being applauded by various parts of the society in Pakistan.\(^{18}\) Mohammad Ali Bogra formula had given the concept of parity whereas East Bengal’s population was larger than West Pakistan’s region. Mohammad Ali Bogra said while giving details of the formula, “We then proceeded to make special provision that neither of the two parts of Pakistan may apprehend domination by the other.”\(^{19}\)

On 23 January in 1963, Mohammad Ali Bogra, died in Dhaka and he was buried in Bogra district on the grounds of the Bogra Nawab Palace.\(^{20}\) Like Mohammad Ali Bogra, there are many famous politicians are also from Bogra district such as former Bangladeshi president Ziaur Rahman, first female prime minister of Bangladesh Begum Khalida Zia\(^{21}\) senior Vice-Chairman of BNP Tareq Rahman,\(^{22}\) former organizational secretary of Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and first elected AL MP from Bogra Md Abdul Mannan and famous national cricketers Musfikur Rahim, Shafiuil Islam. Because of various reasons Bogra keeps a very crucial role in Bangladesh politics.

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\(^{15}\)http://www.bogra.gov.bd/node/ (Last Accessed on 18 February 2017)

\(^{16}\)http://www.bangladesh.com/blog/history-of-hardinge-bridge (Last accessed on 18 February 2017)

\(^{17}\)
3.7.2: Practice of Local Politics in Bogra

Due to geographical area, Bogra is very important in the national level politics. Bogra district is having a Muslims majority area. Since the partition, the political history of Bogra


is taking place the enormous contributions of various political personnel. The political figures of Bogra present their performance during the election. During my field work in December, one respondent said me the political conditions of Bogra are not good since very long as we local people want. After partition in 1947, the local people of Bogra struggled to gain their basic demands and rights. When Ziaur Rahman became president of Bangladesh the required demands and rights were being filled to mass people up by him. On the other hand he gradually became the symbol of hopes and ambition of the persecuted people of Bogra. Being president of Bangladesh Ziaur Rahman tried to be popular by doing many welfare works for the mass people of Bangladesh. Not only had that he brought in a new idea in the constitution that he styled as Bangladesh Nationalism. He strongly believed that in over populated country like Bangladesh in where masses are from various diverse ethnicities and they assume various norms, values, faiths have a different culture, fashions, nationalism should be better thought in terms of territory rather than culture. Bangladeshi nationalism keeps influence on national unity and integration for all people of Bangladesh irrespective of religion, caste, creed, gender, culture, and ethnicity. This popularity assisted BNP to win all seats from Bogra in the parliamentary election from 1991 to 2001. According to Bangladesh Election Commission report, BNP got almost 90% votes in all national level election.

Basically, Ziaur Rahman was given the mandate of the people to make a constitution for the improvement and prosperity of the persecute people not only in Bogra but also in whole Bangladesh. Since long independence, there were many political parties practicing their politics and Bogra was their choice place in whole north Bengal for politics. Subsequently, just after independence when Sheik Mujibur Rahman was in power he rushed to Bogra in public meeting. The main motto of Mujibur Rahman was to grab and create a good image about AL to people not only in Bogra but also in whole north Bengal respondent said me. During Mujib regime, Bangladesh Awami League was the one and only largest political party in Bogra, Bangladesh but BNP was not formed that time. However, when Ziaur Rahman came to power and formed a new political party to spread its ideology in Bangladesh, the people of not only Bogra but also whole keep trusting faith on this newly formed political party. Since that time BNP has become the largest political party in Bogra, Bangladesh. As the AL was the largest political party in Bogra that is why the existence of AL is still there but not that much popular as BNP is.


Besides AL and BNP there are many minor political parties in Bangladesh which also practicing their politics in Bogra such as Jamat-E-Islami, Jatiya Party (JP), Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), communist Party of Bangladesh, National Awami Party, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Islamic Front Bangladesh, Islami Oikya Jote, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, and Islamic Andolon Bangladesh and so on.

According to some messes, however, as a leftist and minor party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) played a great emphasis on local politics in Bogra especially at Gabtali, Sonatola and some nearest places of Bogra district. The Bogra district president of JSD Rezaul Karim Tansen was very much discussed and criticised in Bogra politics. He is always against of Islamic politics. Once in a ‘Regional dialogue at Bogra’ on 26 August in 2006 organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) which was addressed on national election in that seminar Rezaul Karim Tansen demanded prohibition of politics based on religion. “No reforms no elections,” he said adding that bringing reforms in the electoral system is necessary to avoid conflict. At the
same seminar, on the other hand, the district Awami League President Alhaj Momtaz Uddin categorically addressed that his party would not participate in the next parliamentary election if not its demands is met. He alleged, “Politics have been corrupted by people who came from the cantonment”.25

Like this way Jatiya Party’s (Ershad) local leaders of Bogra Shariful Islam Jinnah the Bogra district president of JP, Nurul Islam Omar current MP of Bogra from Jatiya Party and Jamat-E-Islam leaders of Bogra such as Bogra district Jamaat Ameer Shahab Uddin, active and veteran leader of Jamat-E-Islam Nazir Ahmmed, and Principal Rostom Ali were also active practicing and participating in all sorts of political activities in local as well in national level politics. For the second time just before the 9th parliamentary election as a partner alliance of BNP demanded two seats for nomination in Bogra but they were not given because it was said that the seven seats of Bogra are always reserved for BNP. But according to Bogra district, Jamat Ameer Shahab Uddin was talking to the Daily Star on December 01, 2008 that “at least 65,000 Jamaat voters were listed in the last enrolment in Bogra -4 and another over 70,000 in Bogra-5. More than 34,000 people in Bogra-4 cast their votes in favor of Jamaat leader Nazir Ahmeeed in 1996”. He also said that “We requested BNP central leadership through proper channel to reconsider their decision regarding selection of Jamaat-e-Islami candidates Nazir Ahmmed for Bogra-4 and Principal Rostom Ali for Bogra-5”.26

2.7.3 The role of local Political Parties in Bogra

The political parties can keep an importance influence at the local level politics. According to the local BNP leaders, there is no existence of political parties in Bogra district other than BNP. On the other hand, the AL leaders informed me that within the next national election AL will be the largest local political party in Bogra. The existence of BNP will be disappearing. But the real scenario is that in AL there are two groups are visible in Bogra politics. One is Momtaz Uddin group (Bogra AL president) and another is Monjurul Alam Mohon group (Joint general secretary of Bogra AL). Momtaj Uddin is the leader of one group and Mohon is the leader of another group but Momtaj group is very strong in Bogra politics. Montaj group leads from the district level to grassroots level in Bogra district. On the contrary, according to joint secretary of Bogra BNP, there is no internal clash and conflicts in Bogra BNP. The BNP has a very crucial influence on local level politics in Bogra. However, during BNP government it was engaged with maximum development activities in Bogra. The BNP political leaders assume that the main force of BNP is the people of Bogra. BNP central leaders also pay a strong attention to Bogra. The political situation of Jatiya Party (Ershad) was not very good in Bogra during 2008 parliamentary election. But in 2014 parliamentary election Jatiya Party was able to get four seats from Bogra because of the absence of BNP. Among 4 seats from one seat the Presidium member of JP and Bogra district president Md. Shariful Alam Jinnah from Bogra. Being elected he offered many social works for his constituency’s people. Moreover, having got 4 seats from Bogra the MPs are active to make their party strong. That is why they are frequently organizing some political programs as it were the inactive supporters and workers become active. Meanwhile, the party chairman Hussain Mohammad Ershad used to visit in some political program in Bogra to encourage its supports, local leaders and activists. But problem is that JP political activities are limited in those areas where they have been elected. Its activities is not that much visible in such area like Sonatola-Sariakandi, Sherpur-Dhunat constituency in where AL won in 2008 national election and Bogra Sadar Upazila. In these places, AL is very strong. I heard from my interviewers that the AL MP Md Abdul Mannna is working very hard to implement his political manifestos for the well-being of people in Sonatola-

26http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-65708 (last accessed on 11February 2017)

Sariyakandi constituency. The Same thing is happening in Sherpur-Dhunat constituency. That is why; the popularity of AL in these grassroots level is being increased than before. And in Bogra Sadar Upazila level the Bogra AL president Momtaj Uddin is controlling the whole political situation by his own hand.
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3.7.4 Early elections of Bogra

Bangladesh Election Commission conducted the 8th Parliamentary election 1991, 96 and 2001. It is usual to circulate a report about the election to meet the information need and curiosity of different quarters both at home and abroad.


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<th>Area Name</th>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bogra-1</td>
<td>BAL</td>
<td>BNP</td>
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Bangladesh Awami League (BAL)

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

The above table provides the information about the last three years election report of Bogra’s constituencies’ result of Bangladesh Awami league and Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP). From the above table, we can easily understand that Bogra was the stronghold for BNP and it was also a challenge for AL to get a single seat from Bogra. But what actually did happen in 2008 parliamentary election that AL was able to seize two seats for the first time from Bogra which will be elaborately discussed below.

\(^{27}\)http://www.ec.org.bd/English/MenuTemplate2.php?Parameter_MenuID=39&ByDate=0&Year (last accessed on 14 February 2017)

Elected MP (s) in 2008 parliamentary election\(^{28}\)

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<th>Area Name</th>
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<th>Political party</th>
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<td>Abdul Mannan</td>
<td>Bangladesh Awami League</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bogra-2</td>
<td>A.K. M Hafijur Rahman</td>
<td>Bangladesh Nationalist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogra-3</td>
<td>Abdul Momen Tahkder</td>
<td>Bangladesh Nationalist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogra-4</td>
<td>Z.L.M. Mostofa Ali</td>
<td>Bangladesh Nationalist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogra-5</td>
<td>Md. Habibur Rahman</td>
<td>Bangladesh Awami League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogra-6</td>
<td>Begum Khaleda Zia</td>
<td>Bangladesh Nationalist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogra-7</td>
<td>Begum Khaleda Zia</td>
<td>Bangladesh Nationalist Party</td>
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</table>
It is important to discuss something about the political situation of Bogra since 2001 to 2006. For the 2nd time when BNP came to power through Free, fair and neutral election took some steps to develop Bogra as their election manifestos. Subsequently, the son of Begum Khaleda Zia Tarique Rahman was appointed as the Senior Joint General Secretary of BNP in June 2002. Just after being selected Tarique Rahman commenced his program namely ‘Grassroots Level Conference’ from Bogra. Through the program he tried to encourage the impoverished people to be self-dependant by various ways having established poultry, dairy and fish farm. Gradually he would become very popular throughout the country by these kinds of activities. As a politician, he tried to begin ‘Bogra Model’ to change the whole country’s economy. This time the other local political leaders of BNP maintained good relation with him. Subsequently, he was the popular leader of BNP in Bogra, constructed many things for the wellbeing of Bogra’s people such as international cricket Stadium, Medical college, supplied gas line, Gabtali Model Thana, fire station, reconstruction of many schools, colleges, religious institutions, infrastructure development, proposed TV centre and domestics airport and so on would be set up in Bogra and also acquired lands for this purpose. He did more priority to introduce agro-based industry to develop a communication system to improve the society through its work. Later on his ‘Bogra Model’ was going to be appreciated by many foreign experts. Within this period the PM and BNP Chairperson Begum Khalida Zia used to visit Bogra and shared views with various classes of people. For these reasons, the common people of Bogra were devoted to activities. But these development activities were stopped when the government was changed. On the other hand, it is often heard that besides Tareq Rahman’s welfare activities were badly engaged with corruption during BNP period.

On the contrary within this period, the opposition parties AL, JP and other minor parties tried to mobilize people towards their own party. The Awami league leaders Md. Abdul Manna and Momtaz Uddin tried to motivate people by saying that BNP and Jamat are not in favour of the independence of Bangladesh. But they could not convince the people so properly. The processes of the practice of AL’s activities in Bogra were not that much appear during BNP period. The Awami leaders Momtaz Uddin used to take care of the sub unit leaders, Thana, union, and ward level (ibid: 2004).

At the end of the period of BNP government in 2006, they were supposed to hand over the power to Care Taker Government (CTG). But whom BNP appointed as a caretaker government AL did not accept. Since that time the political impasse was begun. The chief adviser and the president of Bangladesh Iajuddin Ahmed tried to initiate a dialogue with the two major political alliances led by Awami League (AL) and BNP. After dialogue, AL decided to participate in the election but later on, they raised another issue about reforming the election commission. During the 2001-2006 in BNP regime what election commission was formed that was the political controversy especially in 2005 and 2006 (Moniruzzaman, 2009). Then AL refused to participate in the election under this controversial election commissioner and demanded his removal. But BNP government was not agreeing to entertain the demand. On the other hand, AL became violent on the matter when BNP handed over power to Caretaker government in October 2006. AL called countrywide strikes and street violence.

During Dr. Fakhruddin Ahammed (CTG) period most of the political leaders got arrested from both parties due to their corruption such as BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia, Tarique Rahman and AL leaders Sheikh Hasin and her others leaders. This time from Bogra most of the local political leaders of both parties also got arrested. Especially BNP local leaders like Rezaul Karim Badsha President of Bogra BNP, VP Saiful Islam General Secretary of Bogra BNP, Shokh Rana MP Candidate of BNP Sonatola constituency and others
former MP of Bogra BNP got arrested and sent them to jail. On the contrary, district AL president Momtaz Uddin, Secretary General Mujibur Rahman Mojnu and others local leaders also got arrested from Bogra. During this caretaker government, all political activities were banned before the election to control the political situation. That is why the local political leaders were not active to engage in political activities during this period. But just before the 9th parliamentary election the political condition become in favour to practice.


IV. POST-ELECTION ETHNOGRAPHY

4.1 Methodology
The research is based on people’s views, thought and choosing the political representative by means of universal adult franchise. The thesis has explored the common perception on the political circumstance in the election according to gender, age group, urban-rural and different constitutional setting, socio-economic and geographic divisions.35

The research focuses on the people’s belief regarding choosing their political representative during the election. On the other hand, there might be some issues like organizational strength, internal and external conflicts. ‘When politicians want to take part in the election, they involve in conflicts’ (ibid, 2004). But broadly speaking the political leaders try to show themselves as good to people. Usually, they surreptitiously organize conflicts with the opposition political parties for their personal and political interest.

I have used in-depth interviews with a questionnaire so that the research succeeds in throwing light on the main research question. The interviews have been conducted with some local voters especially those who have changed their political allegiance from BNP to AL, AL to BNP and there are few people those who are still in AL and BNP. On the other hand, I have had a chance to carry out interviews with the candidate of BNP who lost in 2008 election from Sonatola Upazila and also interacted with few Bogra local political leaders of both parties. There are many approaches employed in qualitative data analysis. During my data collection from the interviewees, I have faced some issues but I emphasised upon respondents to understand that this information is for the purpose of my research work to which they conceded to give me the required data.

4.2 Interview Analysis and Discussion

Before going to the field I confirmed my appointment by talking with a local Union Parishad Chairman over the phone. He is name is Ali Toyob Shamim, an AL supporter and activist. He got the nomination from AL for his Union Parishad election. On 23 December 2016, it was a Friday just after offering Jumma Namaz, having had lunch I rushed to his office at Mohichoron village. Having gone there I notice that there were many people waiting for something. I became wonder I asked myself ‘I have to know why people are gathering here’. Already I got to know that the Chairman is on the way to office from his house. There was tea stall just beside the Union Parishad. Going there I ordered a cup of tea while having tea I asked the tea stall owner that ‘what will happen today? Why too many people are here’? The tea stall owner replied me today ‘our Chairman will distribute the blankets among the impoverished people’. Already Chairman has come and started distributing the blankets among the waiting poor people. Having received blanket one old woman was telling that ‘this time the quality of the blanket is very good, may God bless to this chairman for this’. Another old man was telling among them that ‘this is the contribution of our MP Md. Abdul Mannan, we gave the vote to him that is why he served us’.

Already the distribution got over I was also lurking to meet him. When I got to know that now he is free then I talked to his personal secretary for permission. After that, by offering ‘Salam’ I entered into his office. He requested me to sit beside him. He wanted to know about the purpose of my interview I also
elucidated to him properly. Then we commenced our interview. Initially, I told him that you distributed many blankets to the poor people and they are also happy having got it. He said ‘yes this time we received a good amount of blankets for the poor people from the government and this has been possible for our honourable MP Md. Abdul Mannan’. Then I also tried to know about his political life. According to his words, he is now around 50 years old. He has joined in AL in 1991 but actively worked since 2008. And this time he got the nomination from AL for a local election. Basically, he is a businessman beside his business he evolves with politics. The ultimate goal of doing politics is to serve the people he said. At this stage, I asked him that as my interview questions did you vote for the national election 2008? He spontaneously answered me ‘yes I voted for the AL in 2008 national election and my candidate won in that election’. I then tried to know the reason from him that is why, and I was telling him that in previous elections AL was not able to capture not a single constituency from Bogra but in 2008 parliamentary election AL won two seats in Bogra. What was the actual reason to get won seats from Bogra I asked him? He was telling me that ‘my party won because people of this constituency wanted to see the change. Not only that the AL candidate became failed for two times from the same constituency but he never been frustrated even though during AL government there were many developments which have been done by this candidate that time he was not an elected MP from this constituency. On the other hand, the candidate of BNP in 2008 election from this constituency was a local goon. He did not have any good communication, especially with Hindus community. Even though, he did not have any time to interact with the common people before the election in 2008. From my point of view, because of this reason AL candidate won in 2008 parliamentary election from Bogra’. Again, after this, I told him that only because of BNP candidate was a local goon they lost in the election or was there any other lacking BNP during the election? He was saying that ‘actually the local political leaders of this constituency did not work for BNP candidate during the election in 2008 parliamentary election because as a person the BNP candidate was not good for the politics. He is a new face in the politics. In his personal life, he was engaged with many bad activities and there was factionalism in Bogra BNP, corruption, no development happened during BNP period in Bogra, people got to know these things. According to my view, these may be the reasons for BNP to lose in the election in 2008 from Bogra-1’. I told him that Bogra was/is tremendous popularity for BNP. Most of the people are the supporters and activists of BNP. They basically do not consider the candidate in the election just they only see whether it is ‘Sheaf of Paddy’ (symbol of BNP) or not especially in Bogra during the election. If it is ‘Sheaf of Paddy’ (symbol of BNP) no matter candidate whoever they vote for this. But in 2008, most of the people who normally like BNP and voted for this party for several years previously, changed their minds and voted for AL? What do you think about this? Then he was replying me that ‘actually in the 1996 and 2001 parliamentary elections the BNP candidate was very people loving and peaceful. He was very well-known political leader in Bogra. That is why people used to give thevote to him as a BNP candidate. But in 2008 parliamentary election the BNP candidate was anawcomer in the politics and terrorist. For these reasons people wanted him not to be elected’.

Moreover, I then asked him to talk about the political manifestos. I wanted to know from him that what kinds of political manifestos offered to the masses from the AL in 2008 parliamentary election to this constituency. He said me that ‘this is AL which always thinks about the wellbeing of people. Subsequently, in 2008 parliamentary election AL offered political manifestos for the well-being and development of the people such as job facilities for all qualified candidates, health facilities for all, digital Bangladesh, rice would be sold in the public market by 10 taka per KG, electricity facilities, infrastructure development and etc’. After that, I told him that in every election the candidates are supposed to give their too many promises to the masses during the election but just after getting selected they forget what they gave promise to people. Then I wanted to know that after winning this seat by AL leader in 2008 election what did you see? Did AL leader keep his promises which he has given before national election 2008? He replied me ‘Yes, according to the 2008 political manifestos by AL almost 80% was being implemented like the reconstruction of infrastructure, provided health facilities to all, provided free IT training to the young people in every Union Parishad, free education to all and so on’. Then I told him that let go to talk about BNP. I asked him that if BNP wants to get back their traditional all seven seats of Bogra district again in the next national election, what will you recommend for that? He informed me that ‘the selection of a candidate for nomination should be in a right way in the election. Those who are dedicated, dynamic, well educated in politics, well-known in the locality they should be given the nomination for the election. Then it might be possible to get back their losing seats from Bogra’. I wanted to know about AL, what are your recommendations for AL to retain their seats or to get all seats from Bogra district? He let me know that ‘right candidate selection should be followed for nomination in the election, those who are newly joined in AL they should be evaluated, during election all AL local leaders, activists, supporters should work united for AL. like this way AL will be able to grab all seven seats from Bogra in the next elections’. On the other hand, money and muscle are being affected during the election in the context of Bangladesh. I asked him regarding this that how money and muscles does affect our politics? What is your personal opinion for this? His answer is ‘money can affect a bad image on our politics. But the muscles power
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was not that much visible during election especially it completely not appeared in 2008 parliamentary election in Bogra’. By talking we are in the last moment in our discussion. Last but not the least I again asked him we know, every election, political parties or candidates in Bangladesh spend a huge amount of money to win. What do you think about this? He told me that “actually for the election campaigning money is needed such as for making posters, banners, festoon and so on. For these kinds of purposes, political leaders spend money”.

Similarly, my second respondent was a local BNP activist. Before going to meet him I take permission orally from the Bogra BNP party office. I got to know that every day after 5 pm he used to come to BNP party office in Bogra. I was waiting for him in the Bogra BNP party office suddenly he came and I introduced with him. Before going to describe I need to say a little bit about him. His name is Alimur Raji. Basically, he works at a local college as a teacher. Besides his personal activities, he is engaged in politics for 25 years. He got selected as a Joint secretary of Bogra town BNP. He wanted to know my motive about the interview. I described to him about my dissertation purpose. Then we started our conversation. I was asking him very normal questions about his personal link with the BNP and his initial days as a member of the party youth committee. At this stage, I wanted to know about the role of BNP in Bogra. He told me that ‘the founder chairman of BNP was from Bogra. During BNP rule, there was a remarkable development of Bogra in terms of infrastructure development, viz: people were provided gas line, low-cost health services for poor patients in the hospital, employment for educated and eligible candidates to different government posts had increased, the quality of education for all was uplifted, including the people’s welfare projects like development of sports facilities, especially the international standard cricket stadium has been a huge success’. Again, I proceeded to ask him why then has BNP lost in the election in Bogra? He said that ‘the party was mistaken to select the candidate in 2008 national election. Besides, the local political leaders of the constituency did not work actively for that candidate during an election. He also said that ‘there was vote snatching, or purchasing vote from Hindu community. Due to these kinds of activities, BNP candidate lost out in that election’.

On the other hand, I interacted with another voter named Fazlul Haque. He is a clothes businessman. He has changed his political affiliation in 2008 parliamentary election. Before 2008 parliamentary election he used to support BNP but in 2008 parliamentary election he voted for Bangladesh Awami League. I wanted to know why you had voted for AL, he replied that ‘the AL candidate has some good qualities where BNP candidate does not have any such as the AL candidate is well educated, well experienced in politics, good leadership, helpful for poor people, always visits his election constituency to looks after its people but the BNP candidate does not have any of these’. According to him, ‘this time we wanted to see the change by supporting the AL candidate in Bogra politics’. Again he informed me that ‘BNP did mistake by giving nomination such a local goon for parliamentary election’. The respondents also told me that ‘AL candidate is like a charismatic leader’ who can easily be a good friend of common people. In “Politics as a Vocation” Weber defines the characteristics of a charismatic leader and the type of people who are called to the profession of politics (Weber, 1968).

However, I have also focused on the people’s voting choice as ‘the social aspects of the voting process may affect how people think about voting’. We can define social aspects as an income, religion, social status, and allied factors which determine the voting behaviour. That is why; I was trying to find a respondent who is also thinking about his social aspect through political activities. Finally, I found that guy named Md. Gaziul Islam about 47 years old. By profession, he is a petty businessman and illiterate. Till 2008 parliamentary election he used to give his vote to BNP but after 2008 election he has changed his mind set. Now he is a supporter of AL. When I went to talk to him, he was not agreed to interact with me. He was telling me that ‘I do not want to talk about the politics because nowadays the political circumstances is not good, if someone talks against the government (AL) they are arrested by police as militant people, on the contrary, if someone talks against BNP they are harassed by its local goon’. But I tried my level best to make a good rapport with the respondent. Eventually, the respondent was agreed to talk to me.

Then our conversation was started with the question that, did you vote for the national election 2008? He answered me that ‘yes I voted for BNP candidate in 2008 parliamentary election but the candidate could not be won’. I asked him to know the reason for not winning the election from theBogra-1 constituency. He replied me that; ‘because the BNP candidate was not popular in his constituency, he is a new face in the Bogra politics and his supporters did not work properly during the election for him, these may the reasons for not winning in the election of BNP candidate in Sonatola Upazila’. I again told him that now which political party you support. Without thinking in a word he replied me “Awami League”. Why I asked again ‘because the AL MP is a people loving and peacefull person, he visits every week in our locality and listens to the problems of common people which did not happen by BNP leaders in the past in our locality’ he replied. He also told me that ‘there are many people who change their political mindset after 2008 parliamentary election in Bogra, especially the poor people, because in the AL election manifesto they provided huge subsidies on items of daily use viz: ‘10 taka (Bangladesh Currency) per kilo rice would be sold through public distribution system’. This, as I found, was a large reason to vote for AL because most of the low-income people tried to get some facilities from the political.
My next interviewer was a High school teacher of ‘Mohichoron High School’. I found him in his school office just end of the office hours. His name is Kajol Kumar about 40 years old. I got to know that he was also a BNP supporter before 2008 parliamentary election but since 2008 election he has changed his political behave. Now he is an active supporter and ward member of AL in his locality. I asked him that why you have changed your political behave to choose the party representative in the election. He let me know that ‘before 2008 election the candidate of BNP was comparatively fine and did much social developments for the mass people but in 2008 parliamentary election the BNP candidate was not good for people, because he was the new face of Bogra politics not only that in his personal life he was a terrorist, corrupted person everybody knows that, even though he was sent to prison many times before election due to his bad activities. In a word, he had enormous bad images in not only in his locality but also in whole Bogra’. On the contrary ‘the AL candidate Md. Abdul Manann is well mannered, well educated, active to social work for the mass people and well learned in Politics’. Considering the overall direction I have changed my political view from BNP to AL.

While doing interviews with another respondent, who only supports Awami League named Md. Badsha about 32 years old. By profession, he is a farmer. I tried to know the people’s view regarding the feature of nomination as a comparison between the candidate of AL and BNP. The respondent told me, ‘AL always evaluate the qualified, experienced, morally sound and dedicated person for nomination in the election but BNP does not do anything of that sort’. According to him ‘BNP candidate was not highly qualified, sincere, honest, dedicated, people loving and experienced person like AL candidate’. Again I asked him which party’s manifesto was more meaningful for the wellbeing of the people. The respondent replied to me that though Awami League now is in power as the MP for the constituency is very helpful and tries his level best to implement the offered manifesto than previous governments. Beyond mere promises by candidates, my survey was trying to look at the voter’s perception about the implementation of manifesto goals of the political parties. Having interviewed with the common voters it was clear to me that most of the people want honest and capable representative for their own benefit. Among some of my respondents said they would look for dedicated party candidates to vote.

The financial wellbeing can be a crucial determinant for political evaluation and vote choice. This influence might be unnoticed for the people as a whole by the measurement of mass voter turnout for which financial benefit has little-assumed link to politics. The common behaviour of the voters regarding the politics might install a sense of order in an otherwise baffling political fact.

At this stage, I found an old respondent named Abdul Kuddus, about 63 years old businessman. While conducting an interview with this common voter once I asked him how you choose your political party during the election for vote. By smiling a bit he told me that “choosing a political party which has the few common views to me such as political parties should think deeply for the common people when they are in power. We believe that the elected government is to offer the better education for all citizens, provide our basic rights, develop a safe nation with strong and enlarge our economy’. Not only to maintain peace and order in the country, eradicated the violence, protect the democracy, that the party would like to do this, I'd vote for him”.

On the other hand, I was conducting with another voter named Md. Rezaul Karim was an activist of BNP before 2008 parliamentary election but since that election, he changed his political belief. Now he is a supporter of AL. I wanted to know the reason for changing apolitical party. He was telling me that ‘Bangladesh Awami League is committed to promoting our standard of life in each and every corner of the country’. He also told me that Bangladesh Awami League had played a major role in the political liberation war and the party took measures to accomplish its declaration and program such as ‘to uphold the ideal of independence and the spirit as well as values of Liberation war’. On the contrary, ‘Jamat-E-Islam is the opposed group of war of Liberation and BNP did make a big mistake to make an alliance with Jamat’ he said. According to the Democracy International, ‘Bangladesh Awami League is the most popular party in Bangladesh’.

DOI: 10.9790/0837-2212036179 www.iojsrjournals.org 74 | Page
Eventually, I do a plan to meet with the BNP candidate who lost in the 2008 Parliamentary election in Sonatola Upazila, Bogra. His name is Mohammad Shok Rana about 66 years old. Basically, he is a businessman beside roles as an Adviser of BNP in Bogra. He joined with BNP in 1999 as a member of Bogra BNP. He has a 5-star hotel in Bogra where he has a personal office as well. I went to his office to meet but unfortunately, he was outside of the office. I was to wait there until he came to office. After waiting for about 30 minutes finally he came. I was given permission to enter into his office. Offering ‘Salam’ I entered into his office, he asked me to sit. Then he wanted to know about my purpose of the interview. I narrated to him but he was not agreed to talk to me. He was saying that ‘it is prohibited to talk about the politics without permission from the party’. But I made him understand then he was telling me that, ‘ok I can give you only 30 minutes not more than that’. I asked him that how do you consider about your personality as a local political leader of BNP? He was answering me that ‘I am a freedom fighter, from student life I am engaged with politics, my grandfather was an MLA of undivided Pakistan, and I am very helpful for the poor people of my locality’.

Then I again asked despite having such good qualities why people did not vote for you in 2008 parliamentary election. He replied me that ‘the election was very controversial not only in my constituency but also in whole Bangladesh because before the election the AL party made a latent connection with the caretaker government and during the election the AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan spent a huge amount of money to purchase votes from the masses, and on the election day from few centre there was vote snatching, vote ragging by AL local goons. In a word the election of 2008 was not free, fair and credible, it was an election to make AL party happy by the caretaker government’. I wanted to know the political manifestos of BNP. He told me that ‘infrastructures development, job for all qualified candidates, health facilities for all, free education, electricity supply, free distribution of agricultural seeds and fertilizers among all poor farmers and so on’. Then I told him, what are your recommendations to regain this seat in the next election? He said me that “BNP is the largest political party in Bangladesh, the party chairman was from Bogra, during BNP period there were many developments in Bogra, people are happy to BNP but during election in 2008 for having vote purchasing, vote snatching AL was able to get the seat from Bogra but if the free, fair and credible election is held in the next election BNP will be able to get all the seats from Bogra including this one”. According to him ‘there is no factionalism, terrorism, corruption and illegal activities in Bogra BNP but AL has so it will be difficult for AL to be won in the election in Bogra because people now understands their bad activities’.

V. CRITICAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Political belief/Voting Behaviour in Bogra in 2008 election: Determinants

Election indicates a system of taking part in which all the people reveal their choice to select political representative by using a secret ballot. The behaviour of voter is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, purpose of the polls, extent of the franchise, political wave etc” (ibid: 2015). The all political parties and groups try to utilize these to be won in the election. During the time of voting, the voter’s interest and behaviour may be emphasised by the nature of the election. The role of all these matters can be scrutinized in the study of Bogra’s political behaviour in 2008 election. There can be some issues responsible for changing the voting belief during the in 2008 parliamentary election in Bogra. This research highlighted several determinants of Bogra’s voters particularly at Sonatola Upazila. In Bogra the following core political and socio-economic issues which play as determinates of voting belief/behaviours in our voting system;

(1) Charisma: Charisma is one of the important factors to change the voting behaviour in the election. It means extraordinary virtue of a political leader that can be an origin of attraction and trust for the voters in the election; on the opposite site, it also means that an origin of fear and panic that intimidates the voters and nothing to say against the wishes of the powerful leader. Luckily, in Bogra district particularly in Sonatola Upazila the AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan was a charismatic leader according to my respondents which let people changes their political or voting behaviour during the election in 2008. On the contrary, BNP candidate did not occupy such this quality to attract the people attention during the election which can be a reason to lose BNP in the election in Bogra.

(2) Religion: Religion can play a pivotal role to change the people’s political behaviour during the election. Since the establishment of a secular state” by AL in Bangladesh, therefore, most of the Hindu community people had strong trust to AL candidate in 2008 parliamentary election in Bogra. In my research area, almost half of the people
are Hindu. While informally talking to them most of the Hindu people let me know that “BNP and Jamat-e-Islami are the alliance, coming to power they will be more fundamentalist”. Subsequently in Bogra during the election the two party’s candidates tried to achieve the voter’s mind from both religions. According to most of my respondents, the Awami league candidate had a good relation with both Hindus and Muslims people but BNP candidate could not maintain this. Therefore, the AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan was able to secure the seat from Bogra. Like this way, people might be changed their political behaviour in 2008 parliamentary election in Bogra politics.

(3) Election campaign and Manifestos: For the objective of the research is to analysis about the election campaign and its political manifestos from both parties. As a part of the election campaign, canvassing and campaigning commenced early in the election in Bogra, generally soon after the candidates had announced their candidature. Subsequently, party workers and supporters and activists began moving around through the election area by distributing pamphlets, posters and handbills. Sometimes, the supporters and workers also went from each voter door to door and tried to convince the head of the household. According to the Awami League supporters, the election campaign of AL during the election was as honest, hardworking and united. The AL candidate Md. Abdul Mannan is an agronomist, therefore, he was able to motivate the farmer’s voters by offering some agricultural facilities among the farmers as election manifestos which were not done by BNP candidate. Sometimes, especially in the rural area the AL candidate Md. Mannan and BNP candidate Md. Shokh Rana himself used to come and spoke with the local people as an election campaign during the 2008 parliamentary election in Sonatola Upazila, Bogra district.

On the other hand, the election manifestos can play a crucial role to change people’s political view during the election, and having come into power, every voter expects to fulfill its promises given there in. ‘Good or bad performance of the ruling party, just on the basis of the election promises made and promises actually fulfilled influence the basis behaviour of the people in a big way’ (ibid, 2015). People experienced that from 2001 to 2006 in Bangladesh when Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) came to power for the 2nd time could not win in the very next election held in 2008 mainly because of its failure to perform successfully during its time period. In 2008 parliamentary election the BNP and its alliance become failed to get power because of their failures to exercise power and maintain its political stabilities during their time period.

(4) Factionalism: The local political scenario of Bogra, Bangladesh, from the rural level to the national level, in characterized by factionalism in both parties BNP and AL. Since I observed that no political party, nor even BNP and the two communist parties are free from factionalism other than Jamat-e-Islami in Bogra. According to the respondents, there is a strong factionalism in Bogra BNP. Because of factionalism in Bogra BNP, during 2008 election, the BNP supports, workers did not work properly. On the other hand, despite having factionalism in Bogra AL, during election, all supporters and activists worked together for AL candidate. From the analysing of interviewed data it can be said that because of factionalism of Bogra BNP, the party leaders and local workers were not able to retain its supporter’s political behaviour during 2008 parliamentary election.

(5) Party’s Accomplishment in Power: On the basis of election manifestos each and every political party compete election and having come to power, it is longed to perform the promises that made before the election as manifestos. People of Bogra experienced from 1996 to 2001 by AL that candidate despite being failed in the election he did many social works for the wellbeing of the people and maintain their political stabilities because during this time AL was in power. From my field work, on the other hand, it is assumed that during the BNP since 2001 to 2006 the promises that made before the election did not follow properly by BNP in Bogra because of this some voters changed their political behaviour from BNP to AL in 2008 national election. This was the good performance done by AL candidate during 1996 to 2001 of AL period in Bogra which led people to change their political behaviour in 2008 national election. Not only that, on the other hand, on the basis of the bad performance by BNP from 2001 to 2006 in Bogra, many people literally changed their political party from BNP to AL which has been reflected by my field work.
VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that this research has tried to explore how local political leaders, as well as mass people, change their political views during 2008 national election at Bogra, Bangladesh. The aptitudes of the local political environment of Gabtali, Shibgang, Bogra Sadar, Kahalu, Nanadigram, Adhomdighi, Dhupchachiya are mostly same but there are some differences in Sonatola-Sariyakandi and Sherpur-Dhonot constituencies. The BNP and AL local politics have been actively practicing in Bogra Sadar Upazila to prevail their dominance. Moreover, some of my respondents let me know that during AL government the local political leadership has become rich with the national level leaders. Basically my research has highlighted in various local political parties and their activities that perform in Bogra district, Bangladesh. Respondents have informed me that the AL, which has been able to come to power after a long time in 2008 through the free and fair election, people became very disappointed to this government because the way that government is following to govern the people is not participatory. It has found that after coming to power, the AL government was trying to control over the political situation and not to allow the others political parties to practice their political rights in not only Bogra but also in whole Bangladesh. Though there are many political parties in Bogra, they are not allowed to practice their local politics freely. But In 2001 when BNP won all seven constituencies from Bogra district, the others political parties would practise their politics in Bogra freely. Therefore, some of my respondents said to me that ‘it’s a political game by AL to dominate the political situation in Bogra into order to grab all seats from Bogra in the next elections’. On the other hand, just after coming to the power AL commenced to use law enforcing agency to arrest the opposition’s political leaders especially BNP leaders from Bogra. On the contrary being an AL MP of Sonatola constituency Md. Abdul Manan kept visiting his whole election constituency to become more popular as well as to grab BNP’s popularity. But the Sonatola Upazila Chairman (Present BNP Candidate) and other local BNP leaders also trying to keep organising their party programs in order to people are engaged with BNP politics.

Moreover, during AL government Jatiya Party (Ershad) is also not that much active in Bogra politics though it’s an alliance of AL and some JP leaders Bogra such as Presidium Member and district president of Bogra Md. Shariful Alam Jinnah and another Presidium Member and current MP of JP in Bogra Md. Nurul Islam Umar are also from Bogra. For not having the party program and have internal party conflicts some of the JP local leaders, activists and supporters have moved to others parties such as AL, BNP in Bogra. On the other hand, the organizational strength and process are very strong in Jamat-E-Islami but the supporters are not more because the government is strict on Jamat’s activities. The political parties try to maximise their strength through the organisational structure which is hidden from the mass of the population. But, there is interesting thing is that there are some people who keep trust on Jammat because they think that it’s not involved with outlaws party in Bogra. All the people of Bogra district want to have a very good life where peace and tranquillity are prevalent in the finest form. But it’s a matter of fact that in this circumstance the popularity of BNP gradually was decreasing in compare with another party.

It is needed to be said that the both largest political parties AL and BNP try to draw their power from the charisma of their two leaders—Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia (ibid, 2004). In Bogra, if BNP and AL want to retain their power over the election system, and want to skip extreme mutual hatred, these two major parties competitive process might be institutionalized with the expectancy for a durable democracy. By investigating the whole political and its surrounding circumstances, the local level politics in Bogra is being bit by bit transcript with the national politics in Bangladesh. Besides that, the exchange of political views between local and national level are also being developed. It is often too heard to say by the local people that if the national level political leaders of AL do not keep communication to the local area in Bogra, their acquired popularity will be diminished and they will not be able to capture any single constituency from Bogra. Subsequently, the PM Sheikh Hasina visited once in Bogra in 2015 to encourage its supports, activists, and local leaders. On the other hand, the BNP party chairperson Begum Khalida Zia and its other central leaders keep coming to visit to encourage its supporters, activists and local leaders to seize their all constituencies including two losing as well in Bogra district.

DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is dedicated to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents whose words are always encouragement for me. This paper is also dedicated to the pure and authentic friendship and memory of Khatim Jan. She was also a fellow MA candidate at South Asian University who has always encouraged me throughout the process.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Anuj Bhuwania, Assistant Professor of Department of Sociology at South Asian University, for his kind support, expert guidance, understanding and encouragement throughout my study and research. Without his guidance and persistent help, this research
would not have implemented. In addition, I also love to express my appreciation to my honourable external Dr. Chudamani Basnet sir who also supports me always by providing good advice to produce a very good work. I would also like to thank the other faculty members of Department of Sociology, South Asian University for their kind support and guidance with matters of research.

I am indebted to all my respondents of both political parties, Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in Bogra district. I particularly thank Mr. Ali Toyob Shamim, Chairman of Dighdair Union Parishad, Sonatola, Bogra and Mr. Shok Rana, candidate of BNP of 2008 national election at Sonatola Upazila, Bogra for giving me very vital information regarding my research work.

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