Original Article

Response to Covid-19 and Political Space at the Local Level

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Abstract:

Considering the widespread concern on political participation and voting rights in Bangladesh, many think the local organizations, civil societies, and NGOs cannot contribute expectedly to favor of mass peoples' needs for over a decade. On the other hand, many explain political context as state policies, elections, political systems, and government perspectives. Given these contexts, we are using the term political space in this article as an analytical method to explore the role of civil societies and local level organizations and institutions in responding to problems that arise due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Using the ethnographic methodology, we have provided empirical data supporting the dynamics of locally led initiatives to respond coronavirus epidemic. The study explores the political space that institutional and informal civil society can create locally and play a role in the welfare of its citizens even when a country or a society is subject to strict control over certain political conventions and activities.

1. Introduction

By the concept of political space, researchers usually mean the opportunity for citizens to express their views, participate in various decision-making processes and implement them. Although the issue of political space is complicated to define in a very simple or unilinear way, it is a contested area (Engberg-Pdersen & Webster, 2002). In the context of Bangladesh, the concept of political space is widely used in different ways in the study of the state, local government system, people's participation and politics (Webster & Engberg-Pdersen, 2002).

The idea that Bangladesh's political space has shrunk over the past decade, or in some cases no political space, is noticeable among researchers, local government experts and civil society representatives. Many scholars want to prove that the political space in Bangladesh has shrunk at both the local and national levels, especially in the wake of a drastic change in the national political context in Bangladesh in 2008. In this context, the main objective of this research paper is to identify the political spaces at the local government level in Bangladesh and explore the issues of how formal and informal civil society can play a role there. One of the main objectives of this study is to review the existing research papers and bring to the fore the political space from the perspective of political sociology in the current socio-economic context, particularly at the local level.

The political system of Bangladesh has been gradually polarizing for more than a decade. All other ideologies, political programs, political participation and initiatives to ensure fundamental rights have not been given equal opportunity outside a particular ideology. Many prominent political parties in Bangladesh did not get equal opportunities to participate in many local and national elections. In some cases, candidates from a particular platform have only competed in elections (Hossain & Habib, 2018). In many of them, there were some rebel candidates on the same platform.

Contrary to this influential platform, other political parties and local civil society have not exercised their political rights and participation properly at the local level. The politics of Bangladesh was utterly one-sided, especially on the question of voting and participation in elections (Hossain & Habib, 2021). Because of this repressive tendency of national politics and strict control system, many people think that the political space of citizens at all levels of Bangladesh has been destroyed.

The concept of political space is not just about elections, involvement in national politics and voting. The idea of political space is more concerned with citizen initiatives, cooperation, interdependence and taking integrated initiatives to deal with any social problem and disaster. Since the beginning of 2020 in Bangladesh, we have seen various social programs to respond to the coronavirus outbreak all over the country. These initiatives address the various social problems caused by the announced lockdown due to the coronavirus epidemic and eliminate the virus infection and its effects. Most of the programs were community-led and very spontaneous, and entirely different from the traditional political practice. That is to say, when a country or a society is subject to strict control over certain political conventions and activities, the research article highlights the political space that institutional and informal civil society can create locally and play a role in the welfare of its citizens.

2. Literature Review and Knowledge Gap

Who governs and how they govern at the local level has been a significant concern for many social scientists? There has been very little research on this aspect in the South. The literature shows that local-level politics in India and Bangladesh have hardly been studied in detail as the social scientists' emphasis has usually been on village studies or national and regional politics. But it is now being increasingly felt that an adequate understanding of local-level political space is necessary for ensuring democracy and good governance in the South.

There are only a few studies made on the local political space and processes in Bangladesh. The empirical studies so far done by the sociologists and social anthropologists are mainly micro-level village studies. These studies have contributed to understanding local politics, though in-depth empirical research data is absent. However, an overview of some important studies conducted has been presented in this section. The objective is to highlight the findings of these studies, which have a bearing on the present study. These studies also provide a guideline for a clear understanding of the problems of the present study. Below are the studies that have been reviewed:

Paul R. Brass (Brass, 1994) conducted his study in the Indian states in the 1980s. He aimed to explore the linkages between national power and local politics. Regarding center-state relations, Brass observed that the offices and institutions of the state government have increasingly been turned into instruments for implementing the will of the central government leadership, especially in the post-Nehru period (p.144). Brass observed similar processes at work in the district and local politics. While discussing the characteristics of local politics, Brass emphasized factional bases of district politics, especially in the Congress-dominated areas. Factionalism involved a pervasive struggle to gain and retain control of the multiple political resources in the district (p. 144).

A.K.M. Aminul Islam's, A Bangladesh Village: Conflict and Cohesion (Islam, 1974) is one of the vital anthropological studies on rural Bangladesh conducted in the late 1950s. He did his fieldwork between 1954-56 in a fictitious village called Badarpur, situated within six miles of port-town Narayanganj, only sixteen miles from Dhaka. Islam aimed to identify changes in the local level of politics. He explored three types of brokers, i.e. the rural leaderships in his study area, who function in Badarpur to link the village with the outside world and bring about change at the local level politics. The first type used kinship as an instrument for access to the power structures. The second category of brokers, village leaders, according to Islam, are the Moulvis/Mollahs (priests and religious scholars). Islam wrote that these leaders were appointed

from the local or neighbouring villages based on their spiritual knowledge. The third type is the political party agents, students from the city, mass organization leaders, etc.

M.A. Mannan's study, Rural Leadership and Its Emerging Pattern in Bangladesh (Mannan, 1972), is primarily based on a literature review of rural leadership in Bangladesh. Some information was also collected by interviewing a few cooperative managers in Comilla. The study attempted to analyze different types of rural leaders. Mannan noted significant changes in the leadership pattern in rural Bangladesh. The traditional leaders were losing ground. New leaders were emerging and taking up many of the functions of the old leaders. The educated young men were taking up new leadership positions. Mannan also found a blend of old and new leadership in the cooperatives.

A.K.H. Zehadul Karim (Karim, 1990) made an anthropological study on rural leadership and power structure. He did his fieldwork in Gopalhati and Dhananjery villages in Puthia Union of Rajshahi district in 1984-1985. Karim found the samaj as the informal village social organization where traditional power is interplayed between pradhans and paramaniks (title of the leaders, also indicates the title of gusties). The pradhan provides the leadership of the samaj, and paramaniks assist them. The leadership of samaj usually comes from demographically more prominent lineage having large landholdings. The real political power of samaj leaders is demonstrated in settling disputes between members of the samaj.

The study of Atiur Rahman titled Rural power structure: A Study of the Local Level Leaders in Bangladesh (Rahman, 1981) is based on a research project of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) conducted in 1978. The principal objective of this research was to understand the socio-economic background of the local level leaders. According to Rahman, these leaders' primary economic strength and social status depend on the extent of land ownership. However, land ownership is not enough to attain UP leadership. Education is also an essential factor for attaining leadership, where education directly correlates with land ownership patterns.

Dalem Ch. Barman's Emerging Leadership Patterns in Rural Bangladesh (Barman, 1988) is a promising study focusing on the changing pattern of rural leadership and processes at the local level. Barman conducted this research as a part of his PhD thesis work. He completed in-depth fieldwork during 1980-81 in a village called Sinba in Dhaka district. Barman located two types of sources of power - internal and external to the village. The internal sources of power include land ownership patterns, traditional institutions (family, lineage, kinship, etc.). External sources include local government bodies, different cooperatives, linkage with police and administration, dealership, service, and branches of national political parties.

Some observations may be spotlighted about Bangladesh's local-level politics and political space in the context of the above-reviewed literature. The above review of the literature reveals that the number of studies on the local level political processes is quite limited. Very few studies have attempted to deal with the topic, "local level politics", especially in Bangladesh. Notwithstanding that, the literature reviewed above sheds some knowledge gaps on the local level political space.

From the above review of the significant empirical studies, those studies have sufficiently dealt with the feature of village politics and factionalism but failed to picture local-level political processes. One important reason for this failure seems to be the selection of villages as study units for the empirical studies. It is argued that as a unit of study, 'the village' is too small to study the political space at the local level. Most of the studies have dealt with the socio-economic background of local-level leaders, sources of power and local power structure. Some studies (for example, Brass's study in the Indian states) dealt with local-centre linkages and termed the 'district' as a unit of study for studying local politics. For practical reasons, the district level is too large as a unit of study for local-level politics. Because of that, Brass's study on local politics did not penetrate the grassroots level politics and thus lacked an exploration of the local level political processes.

A few empirical studies (Islam, 1974; Barman, 1988; Rahman, 1986) have discussed the linkages of local-level leaders with the outside world, i.e. with the state, political parties etc., in Bangladesh. But those empirical studies did not sufficiently discuss the impacts of the linkages in local-level politics. Moreover, the links of local-level leaders with the administrative hierarchies, influential political leaders and external citizens and the consequences of such relations for local-level politics were usually missing in the studies reviewed.

A union (a grass-root level administrative unit comprised of a few villages) could be an ' ideal unit of study' for studying local level political processes, as there exists a formal local government tier known as the Union Parishad. The Union Parishad can be considered a centre for local-level politics and development as it comprises a democratically elected body responsible for local development. And there is no doubt that lots of interactions of the union level leaders with the political leaders, government officials and the outside world could be observed if the Union would be a unit of study for studying local level political processes. There was also missing an examination of the role of the external citizenry and their contributions to local level politics and development. At the same time, those aspects have enormous potentialities in strengthening local-level political processes.

In sum, the literature review provides some understandings of the local level political process but leaves critical gaps and questions to be answered. The present research has drawn the insights generated so far but has sought to go beyond by posing local level politics as its main subject of enquiry. In doing so, it has sought to engage the analysis of informal political and social dynamics in the context of Boringram. Specifically, the primary purpose of this study is to examine how the society itself, various formal and informal organizations of the society and the local civil society actors are active in dealing with social problems in the face of extreme political control, repressive regimes, and the excessive surveillance in the name of epidemic control.

3. Methods and Materials

In 1975/76, Kirsten Westergaard (Westergaard, 1979) undertook a study of the village Boringram (a fictitious name of the village she studied) located in Sherpur thana of Bogra district. It was only a few years after the independence of Bangladesh, and the country had not recovered from the war of liberation in 1971. At the time, the inhabitants of Boringram were facing severe poverty. In the study, they provided a brief description of the power structure and local politics of Boringram. Later in 1995/96, Kirsten Westergaard and Abul Hossain (Westergaard & Hossain, 2005) started first to revisit the Boringram. They continued their fieldwork for next almost four years in the middle of the 1990s. During fieldwork for the re-study, the Union Parishad elections took place in December 1997. Westergard and Hossain studied the Union Parishad election of their study village through an in-depth study that showed the dynamics of local-level politics. They found that the Union Parishad, being the most recurrent local government body, local politics beyond the village level occur. In this study, Westergaard and Hossain argued that the economic and political power of the dominant families was linked to the traditional institution of the samaj. Since then, many economic, social and political changes have taken place at both micro and macro levels all over the country. These processes have generated different approaches in different parts of rural Bangladesh.

When the local election using party symbol started in March 2016 in Bangladesh, we started thinking of second revisiting Boringram. From then on, we started discussing Abul Hossain's previous fieldwork experience at different times. Abul Hossain reshaped his relations with the local people. During this time, we started preparing the field by talking on the phone and with local acquaintances. Our direct fieldwork began in the earlier of 2020. It is an ethnographic study in nature, and this paper is one of the products of this second revisit of Boringram. When the coronavirus outbreak starts, we have some physical distance from the field. When the

Corona epidemic was somewhat under control and the government declared everything normal, we started working in the field anew.

In the second phase of our ethnographic fieldwork, we learn about the diversity of local initiatives to address the various social and economic problems caused by the coronavirus epidemic. Then through interviews and observations with different local individuals, initiatives, local civil society and organizations, we identify the functional dynamic of the society and its ability to create political space to overcome the problems.

4. Results

4.1. Community mobilization in response to Covid-19

As brought out in the ethnographic account, community leaderships can range from primordial institutions, such as samaj and individual leaders, to newer forms of organized capacities captured in the ubiquitous use of the terms committee and Samiti (association). This section focuses on this organized sphere of community capacities, density, nature, and role during the Covid-19 crises.

We have found 145 initiatives in our research area Boringram that are working to address the socio-economic problems caused by the Covid-19. We have divided these 145 committees and initiatives into ten parts. These are Religious, Social and Cultural, NGO, Educational, Entertainment, Sports, Economic, Age-Based, occupation and profession-based, and multi-Purpose. In our research, we have seen that educational committees are more active among the local initiatives and are more in number. Out of 145 committees, we have seen that most of the 25 committees are related to education. Besides, there are 22 religious institutions such as mosques and madrasas-based initiatives. Among other initiatives, 18 social and cultural, four registered NGOs, ten unregistered NGOs, four entertainments related, eight sports-related, four economic, 12 age-based, 22 vocational, and 16 multi-purpose enterprises are actively functioning.

Among these initiatives, the Educational Committee is mainly based on educational institutions and different batches of educational institutions. In other words, many students scattered in the same batch are working together to solve local problems. Religious initiatives are mainly based on madrasas and mosques. Due to the predominance of Muslims in our research area, the number of mosques here is much higher than in other religious institutions. Society has played an essential role in social and cultural initiatives. Committees based on different neighbourhoods or areas (Uttar Para, Dakshin Para, Purba Para, Paschim Para) have

influenced society. The researched village has four registered NGOs established by local initiatives. Ten other NGOs have been working to better the community for a long time but have not yet received or received registration from any government entities. Entertainment groups are different types of music, theatre, or drama groups. Various clubs and organizations based on cricket, football, ha-du-du (kabaddi), and other local sports play a positive role in this transition. Economic groups are very informal who are formed in the light of socio-economic conditions. Professional groups have worked to address the crisis in the light of various professions such as fish traders, shopkeepers, textile traders, tailors, van drivers, rickshaw pullers, drivers, teachers, people in business. Many of the local people are made up of peer groups and friends based on age. Other initiatives work one or more at a time. These are included in the multi-purpose category.

4.2. NGOs and Volunteerism

After one hundred and ninety years of British rule, twenty-four years of Pakistani exploitation and a long nine-month bloody war, the entire infrastructure of Bangladesh after independence had become fragile. Internal communication had become isolated, hunger and wailing had spread all around. The pain of losing relatives and the psychological trauma caused during the war greatly affected the productive capacity of the people of this country. In such a context, the role of NGOs, non-governmental organizations and civic initiatives are undeniable behind the improvement of the social, economic, education, health, family planning, water sanitation system in today's Bangladesh after nearly 50 years. There is no denying that NGOs have played an essential role in the social and economic empowerment of the people of Bangladesh, especially in rural areas, despite differences of opinion on issues such as the type of work of NGOs, priority sectors, coordination with the government, and engagement with the people. Criticism and unacceptability in some areas from academic and development perspectives and non-cooperation from a section of the country's government and policymakers have recently called into question the role of NGOs and civic organizations in the reality of contemporary Bangladesh. Some NGOs have come out of their development roles at various times but have tried to be controversially involved in sensitive issues, including politics, national interests, and internal security. In the last few years, NGOs' appearance, identity, and activities in Bangladesh have not looked exactly like those of the 80s or 90s. Besides, the civic organizations did not seem to be active in various important national issues. The role of civil society, especially rights-based civil society, was called into question in the face of the government's repressive behaviour. Many began to think that perhaps the need for NGOs in

Bangladesh was running out or that NGOs and civil society had failed as a force to defend civil rights. At such a time, the role of NGOs during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has been revived in Bangladesh.

In recent years, the issue of economic viability and social safety-net has been overshadowed by Bangladesh's development (infrastructural) campaigns (Mahmud & Habibullah, 2020). Food insecurity has come to the fore in about one-third of the country's population, with workplaces shutting down and public life stagnating due to the coronavirus (KUL, 2021). About 4 million workers in Bangladesh's garment industry and more than one crore people working in the informal sector are at risk of living daily. Many non-government organizations lay off their employees, many of them cut their salaries. The lives of many farmers are at extreme risk of food shortages due to the cessation of the import and export system. The role of NGOs is being appreciated when the government and government agencies are struggling to take and implement effective initiatives to address this situation.

Many national, regional and local small NGOs have come forward to help people in our study area. NGOs have been seen working shoulder to shoulder to address the crisis. The Bidyanondo Foundation has won the hearts of almost all the people of the country with their work. Seventy-Three voluntary organizations, including Jago Foundation, Mission Save Foundation, Apon Foundation, are helping Bidyanondo Foundation to deliver relief across the country. It may call the beginning of a new possibility in the internal relations of NGOs.

The case of Covid-19 is the first time that a disaster has reduced the reliance of foreign donors on raising funds and increased the dependence on domestic donors. From wealthy businesspeople to individuals and organizations, many poor day labourers are also personally donating to such initiatives. Using mobile banking services, social media, institutional banking, online banking, Bangladeshi nationals residing in the country and abroad contribute money to NGO funds. The service workers working in the NGO are delivering food, medical supplies and cash assistance to the poor, helpless and hungry people with maximum transparency and accountability at the risk of their lives. In most cases, the privacy of an individual's information, identity, and self-esteem have become more important than the publicity and documentation of NGO work. A case of 'Workers Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Fund' in the context of Boringram are given below:

The people of Bangladesh, like the rest of the world, have fallen into a massive crisis in Coronavirus outbreak. Bangladesh is a developing country with a large population. Citizens are severely deprived of state facilities and responsibilities. When the corona

spread across the country, most people, especially the working poor and the middle class, fell into a severe crisis. There is no opportunity to go out, and there is no work; all of them spend their days in extreme misery. Many have been forced to leave the city with their families. The government has failed miserably in vaccinating or treating corona. Many patients are dying due to food crises, lack of proper treatment and even lack of oxygen. In such a critical time, conscious and humane and responsible people stand by the people in many ways. Their sympathy can be seen through various activities all over the country, including Boringram. From the beginning of the Corona infection in 2020, the politically conscious sections of the society and the progressive individuals have been cooperating individually and collectively in various ways, especially with acquaintances, which was less than required.

The situation became critical when the outbreak of corona increased towards May-June 2021. Food and medical crisis are intensifying all around. In such a situation, the 'Workers Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Fund' is formed with politically conscious progressive individuals of Boringram who are responsible to the people. The committee was formed with Harunur Rashid as convener and cultural organizer Mofizur Rahman Laltu as member secretary. People from different walks of life, including students, college and university teachers, cultural workers, workers, people in business, have joined this committee and cooperated in various ways. Many conscious and responsible people living abroad have also been involved in this process - sending financial aid.

The 'Workers Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Fund' initially interacted with many people personally and online, raising funds and planning work. At the individual level, financial assistance ranging from one thousand to ten thousand takas has been received. Some money has also been raised from outside the country. Many did not want to be named. A team of doctors headed by Harunur Rashid started giving treatment through telemedicine, which continues to date.

The 'Workers Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Fund' provides food aid to the poor in the first phase. In addition to food aid, many families and individuals receive cash assistance in various amounts. Many individuals and families forced to flee Dhaka due to the Coronavirus crisis have been contacted and sent for help. If the corona is already in severe shape, there will be an acute oxygen crisis in the hospitals. Many die on the way due to a lack of oxygen. In such cases, the 'Workers Protection and

Humanitarian Assistance Fund' provides services to those sick patients through the supply of oxygen cylinders and food aid.

The primary way to prevent Covid-19 is to get vaccinated. In addition, it is essential to wear a mask, wash your hands frequently with soapy water, and maintain social distance. There is a lack of awareness among the people about these issues. Many are reluctant to get vaccinated. Registering online for vaccination is also beyond the reach of the average person. In such a situation, the 'Workers Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Fund' has undertaken a wide range of awareness programs in many places of this area, including encouraging people to get vaccinated, registering and distributing masks. In this case, the students and youths have played the most pioneering and courageous role with them. Mask distribution and health awareness programs are still going on. The current educational institution has opened. Some educational institutions are in the process of running this program. On Durga Puja, the distribution of masks and health awareness programs are going on in some pujas.

4.3. Community Initiatives

During this catastrophe caused by the coronavirus, many new civic initiatives have been created outside civil society's well-known individuals and organizations. Social responsibility has created many new organizations and platforms. Although there is no opportunity to register in case of emergency, they participate in social development work. Civil society and civil society based on different areas and regions are being formed. Social and civic initiatives are becoming acceptable to the people, going beyond the existing political structure and shrinking democratic and civil space. In the local power structure, such civic initiatives seem to be coming back to life. People from different walks of life are coming together to build new platforms. For example, *there is an initiative called Navik (Citizen Development and Welfare). Within just three weeks of its establishment under the leadership of a Supreme Court lawyer, their work on various issues, including providing financial assistance to helpless and disadvantaged people and rational proposals to reduce house rents, has already garnered praise from many quarters. Many take financial help from the affluent and reach out to the indigent under this platform, even using personal and social identities.*

NGOs and civic initiatives each usually play a role in certain specialized areas. But during the Covid-19 situation, most organizations went out of their way to help the people affected by the coronavirus. For example, *an NGO called Apon Foundation works to meet disadvantaged*

children's education and basic needs. But in the Covid-19 situation, they are collecting zakat in addition to receiving personal and institutional donations. The collected money is reaching out to needy people of different levels and identities.

There have been many negative things about young people in the recent past. Many considered the youth of this period to be person-centred, self-centred, and anti-people. Youth participation in social initiatives could not be noticed without any particular political identity and the opportunity of political self-interest. Ever since the coronavirus outbreak started in Bangladesh, various youth initiatives have been in the spotlight. In Boringram, in some cases, the initiative of the youth was more laudable than the government, law enforcement, renowned government and non-government organizations and institutions. Since the beginning of the lockdown announced by the government, young people have come forward as volunteers in almost all areas to ensure social distance. Except for some exaggerations, this youth initiative has been appreciated in almost all quarters of the study area. Friends of the area, batches of SSC or HSC examinations, students of different schools, colleges, madrasas and university alumni associations, students of various departments and universities and the youth have united in a new way based on such identities. In this case, the young people are standing by the side of the needy, diseased and hungry people with the help of others and their ability by hiding the discriminatory social identity like a university student or political ideology etc. In our study area, doctors are divided into small groups, standing next to various social initiatives and providing teleservices to patients. Teachers are encouraging students in numerous ways, standing by their awareness and public service work. People of different professions are standing by the helpless people in small initiatives

Migrant workers have always played a role of blessing for Bangladesh. We all know their contribution to keeping the country's economy afloat. The current disaster has also brought uncertainty to the expatriate Bangladeshi brothers and sisters around the world. Even then, whenever they hear calls for cooperation, in most cases, they stand for help to the best of their ability. Expatriate students in the financial crisis have also formed small groups to raise money and have sent various initiatives to address the Covid-19 problem.

Government and NGO assistance came into play mainly in the pandemic or disaster aftermath. But for the Covid-19, society itself was essentially having to cope on its own. And it did not manage through a planned and co- ordinated programme but the spontaneous initiatives of a multitude of local individuals and groups acting on their own. Our study identified numerous instances of such initiatives. A selected sample of such cases is described below:

Sumon Bepari (48) is a businessman. He traded in cloth in Dhaka. During this coronavirus epidemic, he distributed food and daily necessities to forty families here on his initiative. Fifteen hundred takas goods were included in the package for each family.

Haji Abdus Salam (62) is a retired government official. One of his sons lives in Italy. With the money from his son, he has assisted in about 1 lakh 40 thousand takas.

Rakibul Islam (34) is an expatriate in Australia. He has given more than one lakh taka to the villagers through his younger brother during this time of the epidemic.

Anisuzzaman Limon (45) involve in a corporate job in Dhaka. He has raised about three lakh takas from his friends, colleagues and relatives to help the poor and helpless people. Later, through a youth organization in the area, the money was spent on food and medical assistance to the local people.

The name of a local sports club is Sabuj Sangha. Under the banner of this organization, the club members have collected and distributed cash, food items, medical supplies, hygiene kits and so on for the poor and disadvantaged people from various affluent people in and out of the area.

5. Discussion

From time immemorial, firm social and family ties, mutual communication, cooperation and mutual alliances have been active in the social system of Bangladesh (Habib & Siddiq, 2019). The state, politics and society were in harmony, and this is supposed to be the model of the ideal social system (Siddiq & Habib, 2017). But over time, in the last few decades, these powerful practices have almost disappeared from the social life of Bangladesh. The proliferation of information technology, the indiscriminate use of social media, and the dependence on the Internet and the virtual world made social people self-centred (Habib, Hossain, Ferdous, & Bayezid, 2018). Friendly relations between the state and society became replicas of repressive relations. Political divisions, repressive regimes, centralized control weakened social bonds internally. Social organizations and institutions collapsed. At that time, many people thought that there was no political space left. But because of the socio-economic and political stagnation caused by the spread of coronavirus in Bangladesh, positive changes in the practice of social relations in social life began. Despite the extreme health and economic risks, many individuals, social groups, organizations and institutions have started to work to address the crisis caused by the coronavirus. People are coming forward in cooperation with

people irrespective of party, opinion, ideology, religion, caste, gender and political identity. Individual, family and collective initiatives are a platform for cooperation in tackling the coronavirus and a new horizon in the reproduction and formation of social relationships.

Society has always been a positive institution. The role of society has never been negativing in the history of human civilization, nor will it be in the future. The state, politics, capitalism sit on the society and sometimes stagnate the normal pace of the society. But whenever society retires a little, it starts to play a positive role. That is why we should all allow society to run at its normal pace. We have seen a lot of conflict in the last one or two decades, we have seen a lot of non-cooperation among people, we have seen the highest level of division between people in society based on ideological and political identities, we have seen many types of discrimination based on education, jobs, money and different identities. But when the coronavirus makes us all face uncertainty, we forget everything and see the ideal pattern of human-to-human relationships and communication. With the exception of a section of the upper class of the society and a couple of isolated incidents across the country, this overall humanitarian practice of almost all human beings will be exemplified in the future in this catastrophe of the coronavirus.

Above all, we can see the society of Bangladesh in terms of the disaster caused by the coronavirus. We can see how political space works at the local level, even in adverse environments and situations. Society teaches individuals to live in groups. Society teaches to take and implement collective initiatives to deal with any disaster and problem. The society itself is not tangible or visible. But. a society becomes visible to us through the behaviour, functions, and interrelationships of the members of the society.

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