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Exploring Silent Negligence of Jute - The Golden Fiber of Bangladesh: A Historical Perspective

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Abstract

The present study investigated development and structure of jute sector before and after independence of Bangladesh. The paper also examined the overall situation, major changes, policies of jute history and exploring its potentiality. This research conducted content analysis of historical information, few key informants interviews as well as evaluation of scholar's opinions. Besides these, a wide array of sources were also reviewed such as government performance reports, documents, records, books and articles published by government, report of donor agencies and international organizations such as International Jute Study Group (IJSJ), World Bank (WB), as well as research findings of individual researchers. As jute is a pro-environmental, reusable and biodegradable products, its demand is increasing and getting popularity day by day to the environmental concern customers, policy makers, researcher and eco-entrepreneurs. To conclude, diversified jute products and jute based SMEs might be a way out to revive the golden fiber sector in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Jute, Golden fiber, British-India, Pakistan, Bangladesh

Introduction

Bangladesh is an agriculture based economy, and a large number of people formally and informally depend on this sector. Agro-based enterprises may have a brighter prospect in Bangladesh if the country can avail opportunities. Diversification of agro-based enterprises is required to overcome all these challenges. For overcoming unemployment challenges, the country needs employment-intensive growth strategies, which leads employees to productive entrepreneurs. It is also recommended that increased productivity in wage and self-employment, specially-designed employment opportunities for underprivileged and disadvantaged groups (those who live in extreme poverty) and also focus on employment security issues such as minimum wages, regulations of work and work environment, be the goals of such a strategy.

What is required is resources conversion into economic productivity with efficiency and effectiveness. According to Popenoe (1970), "[Economic development] requires leadership, primarily in the economic and political spheres. The 'ideal type' leader in the economic field is the 'entrepreneur.' He also claims that "the

progress of the developing nations will be enhanced if they are able to produce more and better entrepreneurs.” For this reasons, entrepreneurship development is one of the critical factor in economic development.

Robinson *et al.* (2004) and several other social researchers strongly believe that assisting entrepreneurship development within the local community is a sustainable strategy for alleviating poverty and other challenges. The World Bank (2015) has stated that, for women’s employment and sources of economic growth, the policy response has to emphasize on anti-poverty activities such as safety nets, social protection initiatives, small livelihood programs (income generating activities), micro credit and so on. All the above challenges lead policy makers and governments to make economic and industrial policy and poverty reduction strategy at the macro-level.

On the other hand, at micro-level, potential entrepreneurs need to be able to develop their businesses by using local resources. So we can conclude that diversification of income generating activities is the most- effective way to solve the above-listed challenges. It means entrepreneurship development, particularly local resource based enterprises, can be a method for upgrading socio-economic conditions and economic growth. To achieve the desired growth of GDP, the required manufacturing sector has to be developed, with vibrant sustainable economic growth and contribution to GDP. The most effective way to achieve this would be micro-enterprises development.

In addition, to cope with the global warming situation, renewable and local resources based on agro-enterprises are needed in Bangladesh. Locally available raw materials or environmentally-friendly raw material-based entrepreneurship development could be an effective adaptation strategy for all challenges such as environmental challenges, economic challenges and social challenges, which would ensure sustainable development. Development is not beneficial if it destroys the environment and natural resources; so green enterprises development issues and policies should get highest priority in this process.

According to the Bangladesh Government’s Industry Policy 1999 & 2010, jute goods or jute diversification is one of the thrust sectors in Bangladesh. Every industrial plan has focused on agro-based goods and agro-processing products but never has created jute based enterprises for diversified products for implementation of the plan goals. Jute is a plentiful natural resource of which Bangladesh has good quality. But historically this sector silently ignored. They are thus one answer to the challenges in the context of historical assessment is absent to find out the appropriate and sustainable way out for this sector that Bangladesh faces, as described above.

This study investigated development and structure of jute industry before and after Independence of Bangladesh. This research conducted historical content analysis, few key informants and expert opinions of jute industry. The development of Jute sector can be divided into three historical periods/ regimes from 1850 to until today such as British India Regime, East Pakistan Period, and Bangladesh from Independence to Today. This paper basically explored ups and downs of jute sector throughout these three periods and found a sustainable way out to rejuvenate the development of jute sector in Bangladesh.

Background of Jute Industry

Jute, “the golden fiber” is a historical cash crop in Bangladesh. It is also the oldest industry in Bangladesh traditionally being for packaging materials. Particularly, jute fabrics- gunnies, hessian, burlap were the premier packaging materials in the global trade. Historically, Jute sacks were used to pack grains, cotton, sugar, coffee, cement, guano and even bacon around the world. Jute has the contribution in the economic development of Bangladesh. In British India, Bengal economy was depended on jute. That’s why Jute was acclaimed as the “golden fiber” of Bangladesh which earned huge amount of foreign currency through the export of raw jute and jute goods (Levi-Strauss, 1952). Ranjan (1973) said [*“Golden fiber” as aptly called has bought gold to us in the past; it is bringing gold to us in the present and undoubtedly it will bring gold to us in the days to come as well*]. Farmers always fulfilled their dreams through jute. Small farmers in the Bengal delta cultivated jute on their own land or hired/rented land (Bengali: *Patton*) using a combination of households and hired labor, saved or

borrowed capital. Bangladesh was the main supplier of jute in British India. While the jute circulated around the globe, the production of fiber was concentrated in a particular area- the Bengal delta, an alluvial tract formed out of the silt deposits of the river system the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna. Two varieties have been produced in Bangladesh. Namely- one is deshi jute and another is tossa. The native source of deshi jute was Southeast Asia and tossa jute from Africa. Gradually, due to favorable conditions, it was very popular in agriculture. Jute was used as vegetable, medicine, and garments since ancient times.

Jute

Jute is one kind of long, soft, shiny vegetable fiber that can be spun into coarse, strong threads. Shortly Code is C46. H6.O48, That means CARBON-46; Hydrozen-6; OXYZEN-48 (Huque, 1999). The origin of the term "Jute" referred to Sanskrit word "Juta," Jhout or Jhot. Moreover, Jhout was the word used for jute plants by Orissan gardeners in the Royal Botanical Garden, Calcutta. In 1928, jute was used for the first time the export return documents from Calcutta to Europe (Alim, 1978; Hussain, 2013). Still today in Bangladesh this fiber is called jute, PAT, NALITA, KOSTA *etc.* In China, jute is familiar as 黄麻 (Huángmá). India; जूट joot, It is also popular as Melochia to Arab people.

Jute was historically the only cash crop in Bengal other than rice. It is the only fiber produce crop in Bangladesh. Ranjan (1973) argued that cellulosic fibers are mainly three types: a) stem or bast fiber b) leaf fiber and c) seeds & fruits fiber. The jute fibers are derived from first group (the bast or phloem or skin fiber) which is the top one. The length of jute plant be as high as 16 feet or more and diameter of the stalk is around 3/4" to 1". About 100 varieties of jute have been identified by researchers. Among them, two varieties are very much popular in the commercial sense. Jute belongs to the genus *Corchorus* under family *Tiliaceae* (Recently *Malvaceae*). The scientific name is *Corchorous Capsularis* and *Corchorous Olitarious*. One is famous as deshi or, white, it tastes a little sour (Bengali; *teeta*) and other one is tossa (local name bogi). Its taste is sweet (Bengali; *misti*). Jute was also popular in ancient Europe. Royal (1855) said one kind of plant was considered as a vegetable in ancient Greek and was named *Korkhoros* (the origin of jute's scientific name *Corchorus* (Roul, 2009)

Evolution of Jute Industry in Bangladesh

I will try to evaluate the historical evolution of jute industry in Bangladesh and Indian subcontinent area in the following three major political regimes i.e. British India regime, Pakistan regime (East Pakistan/East Bangla) and Independent Bangladesh.

British India Regime

Bengal was the oldest British possession in the Indian subcontinent which was commercially and economically suitable. Jute was used during the ancient period in Indian subcontinent. People were looking for plants they could use for clothing. Among 600 fiber plants, they only succeeded for their uses of them it is mentionable here that firstly cotton and later on jute used for commercial production. If we analyze the history of jute, we find it is used about 800 BC as "*PATTA*." That time one kind of cloth was popular and it is presumed that this is was jute. Later, in 300 BC, in the time of wearing new clothes and giving gifts they used words like patjam and kitjam: this was also used in the famous Hindu book *Mahabharatha*. Used as patjam this means "cover." Kitjam is one kind of cotton (in Bengali *rashm*) and ancient Bengalis produced one kind of cotton from it Hussain(2014).

In the ancient Sanskrit literature, many people used jute as *nalita*. It is found from different literature like Sri Krishna Kiron Kabo (*ancient middle Gitikabo*) according to Dr Mohammad Shahidllah (1340-1440) Bongshi Part 22 (hagh pash.1374) wrote "Srikina used jute jewelry at flute." From this information, we have realized the popularity in rural areas. In Monamoti gan, it is clear that even slaves also wore jute shari (local women dress). In Bengal, for different ceremonies women also wore jute dress (local women dress: *Shari*). According to poet Mikondo, "chandi mangal" also used the term jute dress. Alim (1978) noted that jute business expanded in the Mogul period, it is very clear "AINI-AKBARI (1590)" used "chat" one kind of sack cloth. It is also found in east

Bengal (Bangladesh). In Rangpur many jute dresses were traded at that time. Another Bengali poem also called konkon chadi also used the term nalita (jute) (Islam, 2010). Bengali poets wrote several words on jute which was the cultural reflection of that rural society.

So it is realized that jute was famous as a cottage industry at that time. Various people and families depended on jute as their primary income. Many literature and poems also had found that it was very popular among rural people across the region. Historians have not clearly recognized that cottage industry is an integral part of Bengali economic history and culture. These were the first micro enterprises.

Omar (2012) has written in his research:

“Kaminikumar Chakrabaty, an employee of landlord (zamindari) estate in sherpur (At present one district of Bangladesh), described [Bengalis’] relationship with the jute in an agricultural magazine published in that town in 1882: ‘These days there is a lot of affection (ador) toward jute in this country. For this reason, cultivators planted an excessive (odhik) quantity of jute. The romantic (shuromik) cultivators love (bhalobasha) jute so much that they sing song like “there is no crop like jute” while working the fields. [Chakrabaty, Kaminikumar, Krishak, sherpur, Published by Sree Tamijuddin Ahamed, 1893, p.38]”

Ali (1998; p-15) pointed out from Kerr’s Report (1877) the early uses of jute:- the leaves were as vegetables, the jute sticks were used as materials for erecting fences, corn fields and for making animal sheds and even humans’ houses, the Bengali women used it as fuel, extracted oil from jute seed and the refuse being made into cakes for livestock foods and even root was used for preparing paper. People of Bengal were very much interested in cultivating jute for their prosperity in addition to rice. Jute gives them cash money which was helpful for their prosperity. It indicates that they wanted to explore jute uses and jute market for improving livelihoods. It is the secret reflection of all most of the rural people.

One sub-inspector of madrassas in sirajgonj, mokter ahammed siddiki, wrote about sirajgong subdivision in 1914, *“the trade of jute has improved the status of general people so much that there is no poverty in this region. In every village and in every neighborhood we see tin houses (better houses than ordinary house)-only because of jute”*¹ In the 16th and 17th century, poets also used jute issues in their writing. Imperial Gazette of India 3(1908) pp 410 *“During the 16th centuries the poor in eastern and northern Bengal were mainly if not entirely, clad in sack cloth of jute. Forboss Royal (1855) many women wear dress from corchorus plant and their livelihoods”* in the eastern border. Ramesh Dutto (1908) when he was writing the history of Dinajpur district found 13,000 acres of land in jute cultivation. Most families had “tat” weaving and women worked on this in their leisure time. Cultural reflection proved from the poet words.

So it is clear that jute cottage industry (micro-enterprises) were very popular historically. It is also found that 1805 lac (180,500,000) amount of jute goods (cottage products) to export in the 19th century and some handmade jute products were exported. However, for some reason, jute purchases declined after that. Due to flax-based products, Bengali handicrafts had a lot of competition in the European market. On the other hand, Bengal jute enjoyed a monopoly in the rest of the world. Roy (2010) The Scottish spinners (in Dundee) used flax as Russian raw material. The American Civil War (1861-1865) and The Crimean War (1854-56) stopped the supply of raw materials for the British textile mills. British mills faced a raw material crisis and high price challenges. The high price of flax led them to search for an alternative cheap fiber. Finally, they got it: jute from Bengal. Thereafter, the Dundee jute industry grew remarkably. It expanded to other countries like India, USA, Germany, Belgium, and Italy. During that time, Bengal achieved the capacity for low cost production over Dundee and other competitors. (Ali, 1998). In 1879, the jute factories of Bengal had only 4,946 looms: this expanded remarkably, up to 39,000 looms, 812,421 spindles and 254,000 people working in the jute sector in 1920.

¹ Shiddiqi, Moulovi Moktar Ahamed, Shirajgonj Itihas (History of shirajgonj), 1916, p.53

The noticeable growth continued during the First World War. This is the reason Wallace wrote in his famous book *The Romance of Jute* "What a beautiful decade it was." Roy (2010). Finally, jute grew into large-scale industrial production instead of a cottage industry.

In the nineteenth century, the revolution had been occurred in Industrial and transport sector which expanded the world trade across the globe. The western world required raw materials for their factory production and collected cheap raw materials from less developed country. For this reason jute of bangle used as industrial raw materials at large scale. Bengal jute based agriculture became increasingly commercialized and economy was shifted toward world trade integration (Ali, 1998; p-1). Cox (2013) explored that jute was a key industry in the British Empire for economic and political change due to cheapness compare to other fibers like flax, hemp, cotton, coir, henequen, and so on.

East Pakistan Period

During 1947, the India subcontinent divided into two countries India and Pakistan. Pakistan has two part one is east and West Pakistan. Hussain, (2014, p-14) East Pakistan was the major jute supplier where 80% jute supply from (Bangladesh) Bangle. The business expanded in west bangle of India. In 1855 at Rishroy on the bank of hugly river established first jute mills. Subsequently, 104 mills were developed, that time 57% of waving (tat) and 70% production capacity of jute goods were India. TATA and BIRLA started business and they established different businesses. On the other hand, East Pakistan was main production area but no jute mills were established in the main production area. In East Pakistan (Bangladesh), first jute mill "Bowani" was established in 1951 (18 May), it was private ownership and owner was "The Bowa group" of West Pakistan. The capacity of the mill was 10 hessians, and 125 sacks weave. In addition, "Adomjee Jute Mill" was established with capacity 1700 hessian and .1 million sacking loom and 300 acre of land on the 12 December. That time .25 million people were workers at that jute mills. Average production was 288 MT and average income was 60 crore (BD TAKA). Due to the absolute production capacity of jute, jute industry was developed and it was main earning source of Pakistan during that time and getting and popular acclaimed named as "golden fiber." Later on 1951 to 1971 established 77 jute mills and. All the owner leading businessman was Pakistani (Shadi, 2007: p-20). During 1947-1948 East Pakistan (Bangladesh) enjoyed monopoly market and export market share was 80% (Alim, 1978). It is very surprising that jute mills owner west Pakistani, only sacks produced at these jute mills. They had no effort for diversification use actually they only control the market. But farmers did not receive the fair price and alternative market, No diversification effort at that time. If diversification was available then farmers got the fair price because of the alternative buyer. Actually, business was controlled by one class people.

Bangladesh from Independence to Today

Jute sector was the lifeblood of Bangladesh economy and it is also the same significance in today's rural economy. Moreover, Bangladesh is separated from West Pakistan and became an independent country after nine months war. It is assumed that major earnings from jute export were one of the prime factors in pursuing the independence movement for autonomy and separation from West Pakistan (Muhammad, 2007). Seventy-seven (77) jute mills were established during 1947 to 1971. After liberation war, in 26 march of 1972 all mills that had been under EPIDC² declared nationalized by one ordinance and formed BJMC³ as a corporate body. It can be noted here that the government adopted nationalization policy for all major industries after independence as a socialistic view. All viable, vibrant, financially sound industries had started operation by mid-level manpower. It is noted here before independence top levels positions and key positions were occupied by west Pakistani officers and owners. For this reasons, maximum skilled manpower leaves West Pakistan (Pakistan) and other places. From the begging jute sector started through mismanagement after independence such as financial crisis, lack of skilled manpower including jute researchers, jute textile engineers. After independence the earning volume from this sector was 89.86 % of the country's total income, moreover, the most of the raw jute rather than jute goods (Hossain, 2014). During the 1960s to 1970, about 30 million people were involved directly or indirectly in this industry. Approximately \$ 195 million dollar was earned by exporting four hundred and fifty

² East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation

³ Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC)

thousand metric tons jute goods in 1972-1973. After eleven years of operations of the mills under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), incurring huge losses and crippling the sector, the government of Bangladesh adopted “privatization policy” and loss-making mills were denationalized in the year of 1982-83. By following this process, forty-three (43) Jute mills were denationalized to the private sector during 1977-86. Adviser of the caretaker government Mirza Aziz said governments provided around BDT 7500 crore subsidy since 1991 to run state-run jute mills. Subsequently, 58 jute mills were denationalized until 2007 and 7 mills were closed in 2007 under caretaker government (CG). Recent surveyed claimed that the total number of jute mill 200 and under BJMA 110 jute mills (Jute Chtro, 2010-12). Rahman (2007) pointed that government was forced the present jute mills owner to take all liabilities. This resulted of huge debt burden produces continued losses of jute mills. During this time market and products categories were limited. In response to this situation, the World Bank came to forward for with \$ 250 million JSAC (Jute sector Adjustment Credit) to assist Jute sector reform Program (JSRP) in 1992-93. The objectives of this program were to transfer loss-making jute mills to vibrant jute industry run by predominantly by the private sector. For achieving this goal government and the World Bank agreed for capacity rationalization, un-sustainability of past debts, interim loss finance, and privatization. The government of Bangladesh was obliged under that program: close nine public jute mills, Downsize two large public sector mills, write off one-third of all past bank loans as of June 30, 1992, and privatize eighteen public sectors mills. The government only was able to with \$50 million out of \$250 to reform the jute sector. But the project did not implement unexplored causes. It leads privatization process and debt burdening share improper and unfairly. These activities reflect true scenario of the jute sector of Bangladesh. Simultaneously, India was established new jute mills and modernizes with the help of the World Bank.

Status of Jute Agriculture in Bangladesh

The land of Bangladesh is suitable for jute production. Islam et al. (2015) noted that it produces around 30% of the total production of global jute production and export about 40% of its total production as raw jute to India, China, Pakistan, and others. In 2004- 2005 the jute cultivation are in Bangladesh was (465 400 Ha) which increased to 4 85 600 Ha, 533400 Ha during 2005-6, 2006-2007 respectively. Recently, Bangladesh government has developed “Mandatory Jute Packaging Act 2010” and “Mandatory Jute Packaging Rules 2013.” Furthermore, demands of jute products have increased significantly at home and abroad. But raw jute production is not satisfactory at farm levels. Farmers are reluctant to cultivate jute due to obstacles at different phases of the cultivation. The statistics show that jute cultivation area has been declined gradually from 7.09 lakh hectares in 2011 to 6.66 lakh hectares in 2014. On the other hand, jute production has been reduced from 84 lakh bale to 74.36 lakh bale during the last four years (figure-1).

More than 80% of world jute grows in the Ganges delta of Bangladesh which has been categorized into three areas such as- Jat area (*Brahmaputra Alluvium*), the Northern area (*Teesta Silt*) and the Districts area (*Ganges Alluvium*). The Jat area covers the greater Dhaka, Comilla and Mymensingh districts. The Northern area comprises greater Rangpur, Dinajpur, Bogra, and Rajshahi district. The District areas are composed of greater Faridpur, Jessore, Pabna and Kustia. Jat area contributes to 41.69% of total raw jute production whereas Northern and Districts area contributes 30.08% and 28.23% respectively. But the picture has been changed over the decades. District area accounted for 63.72% of total jute cultivation area where as Jat area contributed only 17.87% during 2009-10 (Molla 2014)

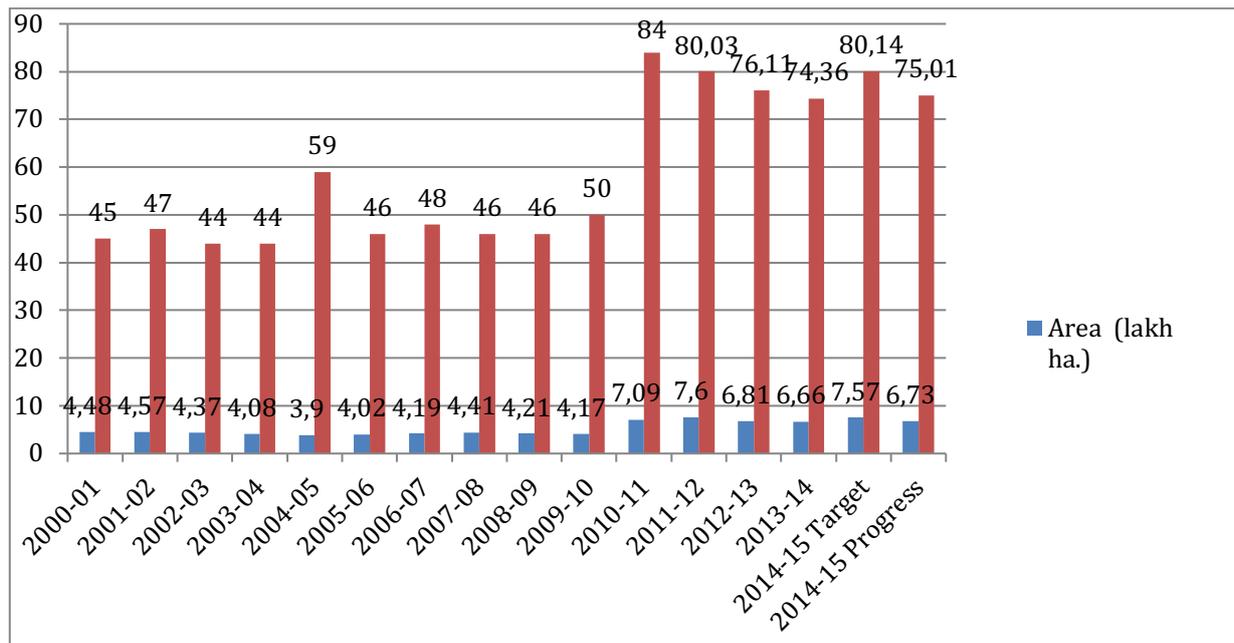


Figure -1 Jute Production in Bangladesh

Source: IJSG (2012) and DAE (2015)

Despite a leading environment for jute cultivation, the size of jute cultivation is not satisfactory over the last few years. The government and policy makers needs to be well informed about the status of jute cultivation as well as causes of deviation that undermine jute production and livelihoods of the farmers. If farmers get the motivation and benefits, they will cultivate jute (Islam et al. 2015).

Jute Products and Producers

Generally, jute goods are two types such as traditional and diversified jute products. The last couple of decades, Bangladesh dominated and earned foreign exchange by producing traditional goods such as hessian cloth and bags/ sacks, twine, yarn, and carpet backing cloth (CBC). When synthetic and plastic came to the market jute traditional products lost their market position. But a lack of proper initiatives in both policy and research jute cannot be revived its position. Some scholars have tried to use jute in different ways with their own initiatives, besides Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI) and Jute Diversification Promotion Centre (JDPC) are working on jute diversification. Kathuria & Malouche (2016) noted that jute and jute goods accounted 39% of total agricultural exports in Bangladesh and in 2014 it was 2.7% of total country's export. By considering overall jute sector, about 99 % exports come from low value added and traditional products; hence, diversified jute products currently represent less than 1% percent of jute sector export.

Basically, jute diversified products indicate "value added products" or "innovative products." These products are aesthetic and very exceptional than traditional jute products. Vries (2007) "*The use of jute in new, alternative and non-traditional ways that add value to final product are generally termed jute diversified products (JDPs)*" We mean simply products that claim to offer an environmental benefit." (Terra Choice, 2010). Molla et al. (2014) mentioned in their research "*Products other than traditional one having high-value addition can be defined as DJPs Abdullah (2008),*" and they also agreed diversified jute products means new products of jute which is an alternative and non-traditional use of jute. Diversified jute products are used for multipurpose. Value added products are three categories such as fiber based, yarn based and fabric-based products. Almost jute diversified products are manufactured by Micro, small and medium enterprises in Bangladesh (Booklet, JDPC)

Table-1: Comparative Picture of Jute Products and Producers

Producer	Nature of Products
Jute mills	Traditional Products: Hessian cloth and bags/ sacks, twine, yarn and carpet backing cloth
Jute Micro-enterprises	Jute Diversified Products: ladies bag, summer/beach bag, fancy bag, executive bag, school bags, purse, pouch, wallet, file, decorative products, shatarangi, wall/floor mats, table mats, runner, place mat, sikka, wall hanging, toys, grocery bags /souvenir, seminar bags, notebook, pen stand, paper & pulp (jute paper, jute –silk blended paper, jute board, garments tag, visiting card, greetings card & note book), jewellery and jewellery box and office items etc

Source: JDPC and IJSG (MSMEs: Micro Small and Medium Enterprises)

Moreover, Lei-dlo (n,d pp-76) pointed (FAO report “problems and prospects for diversified jute products 1990”) diversified product category: jute textile; all jute pile carpets and tapestries; paper and paper pulp; decorative fabrics including wall coverings, garments and apparel cloth; blanket and bed linen made of jute yarn and blends; colored/printed shopping bags; rigid luggage; soft luggage; handicraft; shoes and shoe uppers; non-woven products including automobiles panels and jute composites but diversified products does not include traditional products like CBC. Apart from the traditional products as whole jute has redefined the way does business by creating new products and opening new possibilities for jute sector. There are three items are identified such as Geo–textile, Soil savers and decorative items. Jute Micro-enterprises produce several types of decorative items. However, resettling only becomes coming to light now as the world looks for the natural options to save the environment. The time has come for the natural fiber to take over ideal solutions, conserving soil, environment, applications like civil engineering which are extremely important for human civilization.

Jute Organizations in Bangladesh

Jute sector is the largest sector still at present. This sector has public and private participation (figure-2). Jute sector has divided jute agriculture and manufacturing and both runs respectively Ministry of Agricultural and Ministry of Textiles and Jute in Bangladesh.

Public Organisation: The Ministry of Textiles & Jute plays vital roles to formulate policy for the jute and textile sector and implementing all activities through Jute Diversification Promotion Centre (JDPC), Bangladesh jute Mills Corporation (BJMC), and Department of jute. On the other hand, jute agriculture and research works perform by Ministry of Agriculture. Implementing departments under this ministry are Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI), Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), and Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) etc.

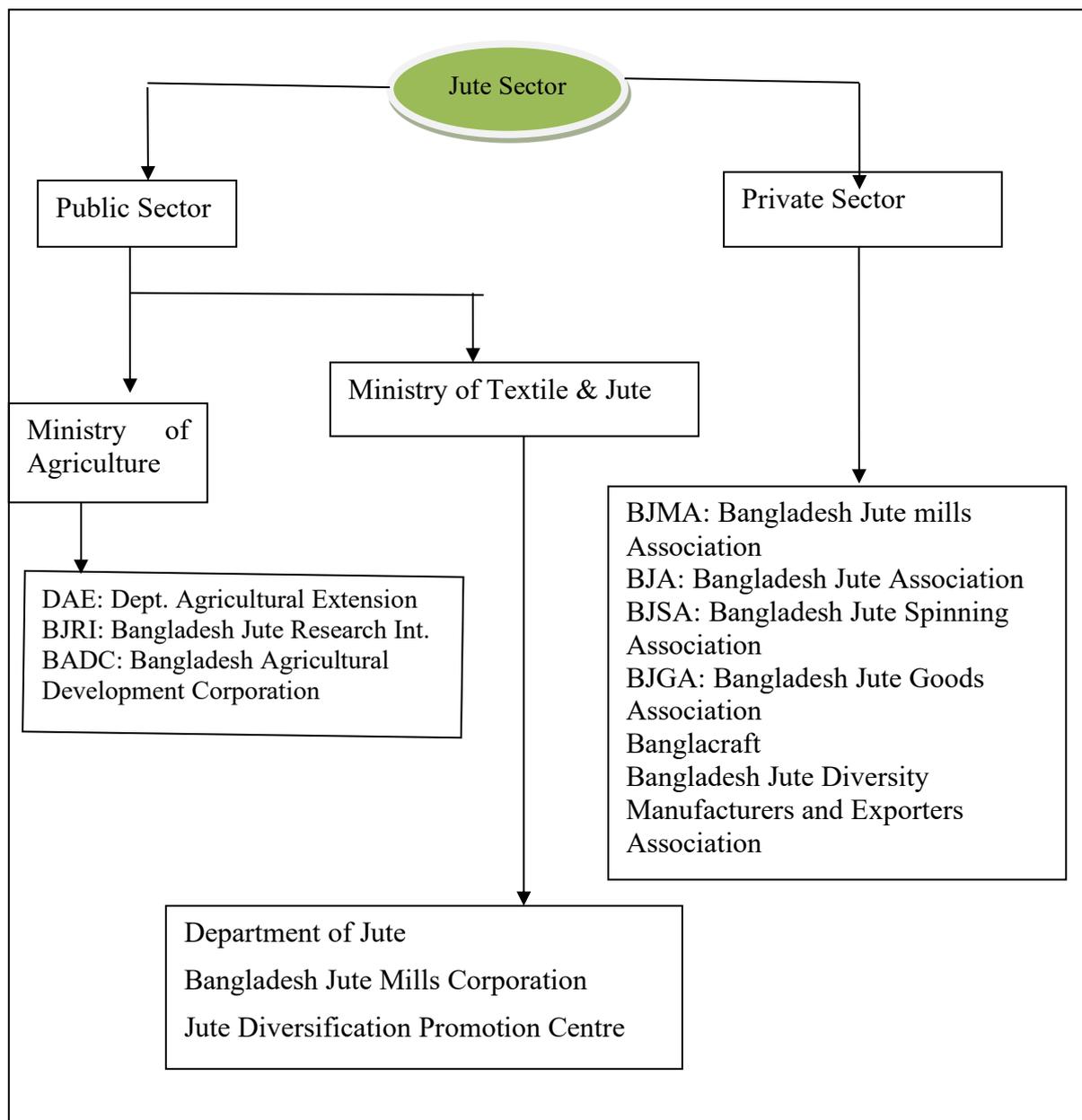


Figure-2: Jute Sector in Bangladesh. Developed by Author

Private Organization: Micro, Small, Medium Jute enterprises (MSMEs) are producing jute value-added products. Most of them are micro and cottage nature. Private Mills produce traditional products but few mills are producing diversified fabrics and goods. Their association name is Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA), currently, 41 ordinary and 88 associate mills are members of this association. Besides, the total numbers of 86 mills are under Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association (BJS) in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna Zone. (BJGA, 2014). 500 raw jute exporter are involved in Bangladesh Jute Association (BJA)⁴ which was established 1949. They export raw jute about 35 countries in the world. About 262 members of Bangladesh Jute Goods Association (BJGA)⁵ also involve in jute and jute goods trading and exporting.

The following organization is working only to promote and develop jute enterprises for producing value added products or market driven jute products to regain the sector in Bangladesh.

⁴ <http://www.bja.com.bd/>

⁵ <http://asiajute.com/bangladesh-jute-goods-association/>

Jute Diversification Promotion Centre (JDPC): JDPC is only absolute government body which helps jute diversification entrepreneurs. It was established 31st October 2002 under Ministry of Textile and Jute by the assistance of International Jute Organisation, UNDP, EU and Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It is working on to make intradepartmental and coordination relating to SMEs Development, Commercial Banks, and R&D institutions to enhance and expand activities gradually to rural areas of Bangladesh. *“The JDPC has been created with the vision of improving jute scenario, sustained development of jute economy and reviving the past glory of jute as “Golden Fiber” through extension of uses and production of jute products and jute diversified products of high value addition, in particular and thereby improving socio-economic conditions of farmers and other sections of people involved directly and indirectly with the sector”* (JDPC, 2007). The objectives of the centre are to:

- Accelerate economic growth through jute diversified SMEs, Cottage and Micro enterprises.
- Raise productivity and capacity building of the JDPs enterprises
- Provide package of promotional and extensive services to private sector entrepreneurs to facilitate the sub-sector growing steadily all over the country
- Ensure development and upgrading of skill and design capability of entrepreneurs of this jute sub-sector
- Create and develop marketing facilities and assist in marketing of three products both at domestic and global markets
- Generate income and gainful employment, empowerment of women through involvement of JD-SMEs, micro, cottage, handlooms and handicrafts all over the country
- Provide innovative technologies for new products and enhance the usage of jute diversified products in new areas of applications
- Create an enabling environment for investment and persistent growth of SMEs of JDPs.

Evaluation by the Expert Opinion:

In the early regime of jute industry, this sector only raised on the based on supplies of the colonial government and the farmer's jute price was determined by the colonial jute mills. Farmer's production was unplanned which creates ample economic losses due to unplanned production. One scholar said *“Jute Price was determined by the colonial government (master), farmer's production was huge that time there were no diversified crop production. Due to economic losses, they fall economy crises and psycho patient and even many farmer attempted at suicidal death were seen”*. It was also justified by the local government decision where jute production was control during 1940. Subsequently, it has been seen that in the British period the jute sector was focused on supply as a raw materials of colonial jute mills and cottage enterprises only limited for household uses. Such as rope, sikka (Hanger of deferent house hold stuffs), fancy, jute stick as fuel in the rural villages. Scholar said *“In our childhood we have seen jute production, jute retting, fiber extractions were festival in our village; our mother, ant and grandmother used jute to make sikka and other uses. These scenarios are clearly seen in the British and Pakistan regimes. In Pakistan regimes the jute sector was popular as industrial product. Many jute mills were established in the east Kolkata and East Pakistan. Still the productions were limited for few products such as hossain, yarn and sacks. After independence of Bangladesh jute mills were collapsed due to lack of poor management of jute mills, lack of managers crises and no diversification of uses of jute and jute products, no modernization of jute mills, lack of research.*

Few scholars coined the real picture of jute sector such as Jute mills

Most of the scholar agreed that it has another chance to reignite For enhancing competitiveness, enterprises need to focus on business practices which ensure high quality and agility (Christopher and Towill, 2002). Hence, effective strategies or business practices require according to customer's expectations to become a success. This depends on the ability of entrepreneurs to quickly adjust. *Traditional large enterprise only focuses on production according to their buyer's demand. If they lose buyer's order, they close the production and this is particularly common in government mills. They have no diversification strategies and practices. Even maximum power looms and machineries are of 60 to 70 years old. These mills are running although with limited production. Few*

private mills have produced world standard fabrics and value added jute products. (Key Informant- E1 Research participants argued that demand condition of jute products is increasing in local and overseas market. Customers were buying and using jute products than the recent past. Particularly, the sells records of jute diversified products had been increasing in few years. Due to fashionable and stylish products customers were willing to buy jute products. Jute producers were selling their products to local fairs, national and different showrooms. It was observed that number of customers was increasing on the domestic market. Producers were expanding their market niches in such a way that when the producers sell their product at a local fair, successful sales enable them to progress by trying to participate in regional or district level trade fairs. This process is repeated by as they try to participate to national trade fair and overseas international trade fair of they are successful from the previous lower level markets. At every trade fair or exhibition, producers receive orders of jute value added products from customers.

Increasing Demand for Eco-friendly Jute Diversified Products as Fashionable Goods: Customers always prefer fashionable products. Recently, green consumers have emerged. They want to buy less environment polluted products. This trend gives to green producer's competitive advantage. One key informant said *"Nowadays customers are willing to pay eco-products jute alternative of plastic and synthetic products. You see today, many people use jute products. Even I have been using jute bags last few years. Because, it looks very nice. I have interviewed at street "I have seen many customer want to buy jute product, they replied the designs are good. We are very astonished... is it possible to make these types of nice products from jute." Women are buying ladies bags, home furnishes, jewelry items, organizations places order for seminar bag, workshop bag or files. School, college, University students buy jute student bag. Really it is good trend and good hope for our jute sector"* (Key Informant- C1).

Bangladesh government passed mandatory use of jute in packaging industry which is "Mandatory Jute packaging Act 2010". Last few years, government has succeed in implementing mandatory jute packaging law for six essential items such as paddy, rice, wheat, maize, fertilizer, sugar etc. Bangladesh Bank is also helping to implement this law. This initiative created local demand of 840 million jute bags for agricultural and non-agricultural products. (The Daily Star, 13 October 2015). Ahammed and Kader (2014) pointed out that a number of shopping malls, agro-shops, and chain shops have increased in Bangladesh last few years and they need secondary packaging material such as shopping bags, promotional bags and sacks etc. One survey explored that 10 million plastic bags were used every day in Bangladesh. It is estimated that about 14.1 billion bags were used annually at household level in Bangladesh. He assumed that it can be expanded 10 million pieces per day if jute bags are supplied at cheap rate. On the other hand, in the global packaging market stood \$812 billion in 2014 and will be reached \$975 billion by 2018 and \$ 997 by 2020 survey conducted by smither Pira Market Report⁶. According to International Jute Study Group (IJSG) the global demand of shopping bags is estimated to be 500 billion pieces, worth approximately \$ 500 billion a year (IJSG, 2012). Need based products create ample opportunities for jute micro-enterprises such as shopping bags, jute ladies bags, seminar, laptop, jute ornaments, pencil stands etc. In this regard, product & design innovation along with push and pull market strategy could make more demand of jute products in the environmentally conscious domestic and world markets.

Increasing Demand for Jute Goods due to Global Warming: The artificial fiber based products are being considered as the root causes of many problems while the natural fiber based products are proven to be absolutely harmless for the environment (Environment, 2011). Ahammed and Kader (2014) argued that the artificial synthetic packaging materials contain non-biodegradable and hazardous ingredients for the environment including high density polyethylene (HDPE) bags with prodegradant additive, Low-density polythene (LDPE) and Non-woven polypropylene (PP). Glazner (2015) mentioned *"Burning of fossil fuels produces majority emission for energy. A smaller amount roughly a third, come from leaks from natural gas and petroleum systems, the use of fuels in production (petroleum products used to make artificial plastics) and chemical reactions during the production of chemicals, iron and steel and cement."* Furthermore, a research report mentioned that one (1) kilogram (kg) of synthetic or plastics produces about six (6) kilogram CO₂ during

⁶ <http://www.smitherspira.com/industry-market-reports/packaging/the-future-of-global-packaging-markets-to-2020>

the lifetime of the product.⁷ Recently, climate changes have influenced customer's buying behavior turn to green and biodegradable products in the last few years. In this regard, green entrepreneurship tries to ensure enterprises economic benefits, environmental protection, effective resource utilization and biological balance. As a result, it is giving chance for the jute products as a competitive advantage. *One of the respondent explained "the demand of our product has increased in local trade fairs, Government offices, Non-government offices, university areas. Many orders have been received in overseas exhibitions. I have received orders from EU countries like Germany (Frankfurt). Currently, customers want to buy jute shopping bags thereby ignoring plastic bags" (Key Informant-M).* In addition, association leader explained that *"Plastic bags have been banded in several countries-from the US to Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia, and it offers a new opportunity to export value added jute products"*⁸

As a Green Brand: A good brand always helps to produce competitive advantage. The world is not only moving towards green technology, green products and services but also green economy. International Jute Study Group (IJSG, at present closed) encouraged *"wipe your carbon footprint with Jute"* However, producers are still struggling to develop good quality products at a relatively cheaper cost, good quality and attractive designs. Other substitute products like synthetic based products have occupied a major share of the market. Some designers are trying to develop very attractive jute based products for green customers. *"You see still it is not famous brand."* *Bangladesh has a chance to develop jute value added products as a brand in the world. This is why because Bangladesh has suffered a lot from climate change related effects the last few decades. Even who are poor, they are producing value added products. So Bangladesh can develop these products for earning foreign currency and a "golden fiber" state in the world. Jute farmers will get higher prices if the market expands."*

Concluding Remarks:

Evolution of this golden fiber in Bangladesh over the past decades has experienced many ups and downs. The results demonstrate that insufficient initiatives and actions have been generated to lead the creation of sustainable jute sector. As a rapidly developing country, Bangladesh faces many economic, social and environmental challenges. These challenges are obstacle to the shiny future of 180 million citizens of this country. Still one fifth of populations are directly and indirectly involved with jute industry. Moreover, Bangladesh requires more local resource based industry for sustainable economic solution of this densely populated country. In this context, eco-friendly jute diversified products through SMEs might be a potential sector. Market driven new jute policies must be formulated and implemented to revive the golden fiber of its own shine.

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⁷ <http://timeforchange.org/plastic-bags-and-plastic-bottles-CO2-emissions>

⁸.⁹ http://jute.org/worldnews_details01102013.htm

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