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Spatial and temporal environmental effect of lower Meghna River & its estuary on phytoplankton, Bangladesh

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Abstract

The spatial and temporal effects of environmental variables on phytoplankton abundance and distribution of the lower Meghna River Estuary was studied at Sandwip, Hatiya, Bhola, Barisal and Chandpur during monsoon and post-monsoon. A total of 28 phytoplankton genera were identified of which 22 genera occurred during monsoon and 16 genera occurred during post-monsoon season. During the annual cycle *Nitzschia* was common genera at all five sites however *Coscinodiscus*, *Biddulphia*, *Nitzschia*, *Thalassiothrix* and *Triceratium* were dominant genera in the study area. During the study water was slightly acidic in nature with very low salinity in major part of the estuary. Salinity, H₂CO₃, pH, secchi depth, TSS, water temperature and silt were responsible for the variations in phytoplankton community structure but the effect was not significant ($p > 0.05$). During the monsoon season CCA analysis shows, *Euglena* and *Zygnema* showed a positive relation with salinity while *Clostridium*, *Fragilaria* and *Scenedesmus* showed close affinity to water temperature, secchi depth, TSS and pH. Again *Navicula*, *Stauroneis*, *Pediastrum*, *Rhizosolenia*, *Ankistrodesmus* etc. genera exhibited strong affinity to H₂CO₃. On the contrary during the post-monsoon season CCA analysis shows, *Nitzschia*, *Sphaerogoum* and *Melosira* revealed strong relation with H₂CO₃ with the exception of pH, TSS, secchi depth. The dendrogram of the phytoplankton genera, based on phytoplankton abundance pattern with different seasonal parameters showed Sandwip, Hatiya, Bhola and Barisal formed cluster. The phytoplankton diversity (H') did not show much variation (1.18 ± 0.22 and 0.87 ± 0.40 for the monsoon and post-monsoon seasons respectively) temporally. The highest phytoplankton diversity (H') was recorded at Sandwip (1.517) during the monsoon and the lowest value was recorded at Sandwip (0.35) during the post-monsoon. Again, the evenness (J') of phytoplankton showed less variation with seasonal environmental changes (0.80 ± 0.23 and 0.58 ± 0.18 monsoon and post-monsoon). The maximum evenness value was found at Bhola (0.99) during monsoon and it was minimum at Chandpur (0.36) during the post-monsoon season.

Keywords: Phytoplankton, Occurrence, Distribution, Biodiversity, Physico-Chemical Parameters, Meghna River and its Estuary

1. Introduction

The Meghna (joint flow of the Surma- Kushiya) meets its major tributary, the Padma (major flow of the Ganges-Padma and the Jamuna-Brahmaputra river) in Chandpur district and ends in the Bay of Bengal near Bhola district via four principal mouths, named Tetulia (Isha), Shahbazpur, Hatiya, and Bamni. After the Padma joins to the Meghna, it is referred to as the Lower Meghna (http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Meghna_River). The river Meghna forms the largest estuary (about 30km) that fall into the Bay of Bengal. Estuaries are the meeting place of freshwater from rivers and saltwater from the sea; are characterized by large fluctuations in environmental conditions ^[1]. Phytoplankton is the primary producers ^[2] that support fishery as nutrition in food web ^[3]. More preciously, phytoplankton, the important producers of the estuary. Almost all the aquatic fauna directly or indirectly feed on phytoplankton (for their food) at the early stage of their life cycle. They are the best index of the biological productivity and the nature of aquatic habitat ^[4]. The productivity of the water body largely depends on the amount of phytoplankton in particular ^[5]. The boosted productivity improves consumer abundance and attracts higher trophic level animals that help to create biological hotspots in an ecosystem ^[6, 7]. Distribution, abundance and diversity of phytoplankton indicate the nutrient status, more specifically the health condition of the aquatic system ^[8, 9, 10, 11].

Moreover, higher amount of nutrients can yield eutrophication^[12] with its associated problems, such as harmful algal blooms worsening of water quality^[13].

The estuary is mostly turbid with reduced light penetration. It is very imperative to study the occurrence and distribution of phytoplankton in the estuary in relation to physico-chemical factors. Some recent studies on phytoplankton community associated with physico-chemical parameters of rivers as well as estuaries were studied worldwide such as the Chandrabhaga River, India^[14]; Greater Zab River, Iraq^[15]; River Haraz, Iran^[16]; Imo River, Nigeria^[17]; Yamuna River, India^[18]; Ganga River and its tributaries, India^[19]; River Thames, UK^[20]; Sutlej River, India^[21]; Kenti River, Republic of Karelia^[22]; Jhelum River, India^[23] and head water stream of Garhwal Himalayas, India^[24]. In Bangladesh, few research were conducted on distribution and abundance of freshwater, lake and coastal phytoplankton^[3, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30]. But there is no or less information on the distribution, density and

diversity of the phytoplankton of the lower Meghna River Estuary. The main objective of the present research is to understand the spatial and temporal environmental variables (physico-chemical parameters) effect on phytoplankton of the lower Meghna River and its estuary during monsoon and post-monsoon season. This study will also provide information of phytoplankton occurrence and distribution as well as diversity status in the area.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area

The present study was conducted at Chandpur (23°13.768'N, 90°38.58'E), Barishal (22°41.962'N, 90°22.524'E), Bhola (22°37.153'N, 90°44.562'E), Hatiya (22°24.459'N, 91°07.013'E) and Sandwip (22°29.319'N, 91°25.668'E) during monsoon and post-monsoon season. The total length of the investigated 5 selected sites was about 172 miles (Fig. 1).

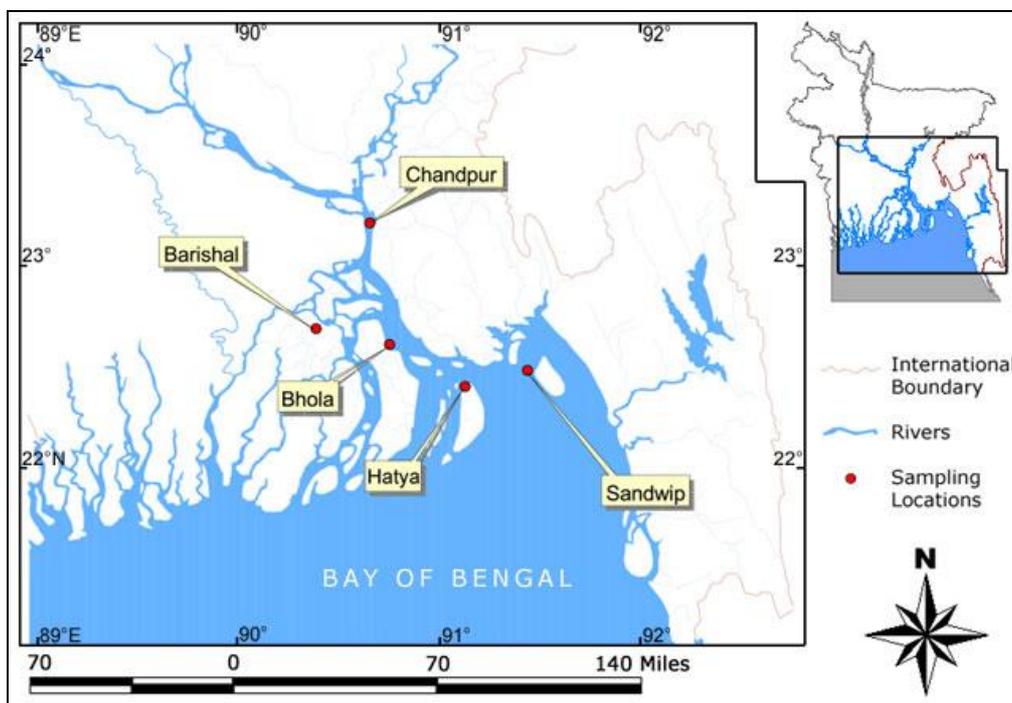


Fig 1: Sampling sites in the Meghna River

2.2 Water Sample Collection and Preservation

The water samples were collected for physico-chemical parameters study from on board passenger ships of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) at each sites during monsoon and post-monsoon seasons. In situ air and water temperature was determined using a Graduated Centigrade Thermometer; water pH was determined using pH paper strips (color pH ast ®, pH, indicator, strips, Cat.9582. Made in Germany); turbidity was determined using a white secchi disc of 30 cm diameter^[31]; water salinity was determined using a hand held refractometer (ATAGO, S/Mill, salinity. 0-100 ‰, Japan.). Dissolved Oxygen (DO) concentration was determined by the Winkler Method (H. O. PUB. No. 607. 1955); Total Suspended Solids (TSS) and Total Organic Matter (TOM) were determined (following^[32]. BOD was determined by light and dark bottle method^[33]. Alkalinity, HCO₃ and CO₂ were determined following^[34].

2.3 Phytoplankton

Phytoplankton samples were collected from surface water of each sites during monsoon and post monsoon seasons. One liter of sample was collected by a Kemmerer water sampler; collected samples were kept in plastic containers, 40 ml of buffered formalin (known as neutral formalin) were added per liter sample, immediately after collection. The container was labelled and transferred to laboratory for study. In the laboratory the samples were transferred to measuring cylinders, the opening was plugged and left over night. The phytoplankton settled, water from the upper layer was removed and the samples were concentrated to 10 ml, and the concentrated samples were kept in marked vials for microscopic examination. The concentrated samples vials were shaken to mix phytoplankton uniformly before microscopic examination. Each time 1 ml of sample was taken into a Sedgewick Rafter Counting cell (S-R cell), cover slip was placed with great care not to incorporate any air bubble. Then it was placed under microscope for

identification and counting. Identification was done following Mizuno [35]; Yamazi [36, 37]; Davis [38]; APHA [34]; Easter [39]; James [40]; Newell and Newell [41, 42]; Islam and Aziz [43]; Islam and Aziz [44]; Haque [45]; Rahman [46]; Chowdhury [47]; Islam [48]; Sarode and Kamat [49]; Subrahmanyam [50]; Hendeley [51]; Russel-Hunter [52]; Wickstead [4]; Suess [53]; Islam [54]. Thus each sample was studied and the records were kept in a note book and results were tabulated.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Post-hoc LSD test) was done to show the influence of environmental physico-chemical variables in the distribution of phytoplankton (SPSS v.22). Canonical Corresponding Analysis (CCA) was performed to display the ecological relationship between physico-chemical parameters and phytoplankton community during monsoon and post-monsoon seasons (PAST v.3.1). Cluster analysis (Dendrogram) was performed to show the similarity among the sites in terms of phytoplankton occurrence using PRIMER (v.6). The phytoplankton diversity was determined following PRIMER (v.6).

3. Results and Discussion

Estuarine environment are exposed to diverse changes in physico-chemical variables due to incessant mixing of fresh water with marine water [55]. Water quality of an ecosystem has great impact on the occurrence of aquatic organisms, so it is very important to estimate [56]. In the present study, surface water was recorded mostly acidic in nature with low salinity in major part of the estuary (during monsoon and post-monsoon). Water temperature, salinity, HCO₃, pH, secchi depth and TSS were responsible for the variations in phytoplankton community structure but the effects were found less significant (p>0.05).

In the present study, highest water temperature (31°C) was recorded at Sandwip and the minimum (28°C) was at Hatiya during monsoon. In post-monsoon, maximum (23°C) was recorded at Sandwip while the minimum (21°C) was at Bhola and Chandpur (Table 1). Surface water temperature was (2-3°C) lower than that of the air temperature. This observation has similarity with the works of Mahmood and Khan [57]; Elias [58]; Mahmood [59]; Zafar [60]; Iqbal [61]; Noori [62]; Martin *et al.* [63] and George *et al.* [55] and Aken [64]. Water temperature, the most important characteristics of an aquatic system, is known as the “master biotic factor” which effect on aquatic organism composition in their environment [65].

Water pH is commonly known as the controlling factor because many aquatic properties, processes and reactions are pH dependent. In estuaries pH shows buffering property [66].

Most estuarine organisms prefer conditions with pH values ranging from about 6.5 to 8.5 [67]. Briola *et al.* [68] reported pH 6.9 to 8 for phytoplankton growth. In the resent study pH was slightly acidic in both season and was recorded 6.4 to 7 (Table 1).

Dissolved oxygen (DO) is important ecological variable that decides environmental health of water bodies and support well-balanced aquatic living organisms [55, 69]. In the present study, the concentration of DO ranged (1.9-5.5 ml/L). During monsoon, the highest DO was recorded (2.8 ml/L) at Chandpur and the lowest was 1.5ml/L at Sandwip. During post-monsoon, maximum DO was recorded (5.5 ml/L) at Chandpur and Barisal and the minimum was 3.7 ml/L at Sandwip. (Table 1). Between the seasons DO concentration was more during post-monsoon than the monsoon. Highest DO concentration was reported during post-monsoon period because of supreme occurrence of the phytoplankton density [70]. DO raised to its peak value with the progression of winter and it might be due to high rate of photosynthesis by phytoplankton that forms the most important source of DO [71]. Maximum value of DO in post-monsoon and minimum in monsoon were recorded in some rivers of the Central Himalayas including the Chan-drabhaga River [14]; Haraz River in Iran [72]; the Tons River [73]; several rivers of Gangetic plain, India [74] and head water stream of Garhwal Himalayas [24].

Salinity is the pointer of freshwater intrusion in the near shore coastal water as well as extrusion of tidal water in estuary [55]. Salinity acts as a limiting parameter that enormously influences the dispersal of plankton community [75]. During monsoon, only (1‰) salinity was recorded at Sandwip, while at all other sites it was almost zero. During post-monsoon maximum salinity was (15‰) at Sandwip and minimum was (8‰) at Hatiya (Table 1) whereas in other sites it was almost zero. Murugan and Ayyakkannu [76] mentioned salinity to be an important controlling factor in determining the species composition and succession in estuary.

Maximum secchi depth (55 cm) was found at Chandpur and the lowermost (4 cm) was recorded at Sandwip during monsoon. Whereas, the highest secchi depth (65 cm) was found at Bhola and the minimum (35 cm) was documented at Sandwip during post-monsoon (Table 1). Ezra [77], Venkateswarlu *et al.* [78] and Haruna *et al.* [79] mentioned that transparency increases the occurrence of phytoplankton.

The Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) was recorded more during monsoon (17ml/L to 38ml/L) than that of post-monsoon (0ml/L to 13ml/L) at all sites during the present study. During the study CO₂, Alkalinity, H⁻CO₃ concentration of investigation sites were comparatively more during monsoon than post-monsoon season.

Table 1: Physical parameters of surface water at five study sites during monsoon (M) and post-monsoon (PM).

Parameters/ Sites	Sandwip		Hatiya		Bhola		Barisal		Chandpur	
	M	PM	M	PM	M	PM	M	PM	M	PM
Air temperature (°C)	33	28	27.2	29	25.5	23	32	28	26	25
Water Temperature (°C)	31	23	28	22.5	28.5	21	29	22	29	21
Secchi Depth (cm)	4	35	7	45	12	65	12	37	55	60
TSS (mg/L)	10.83	1.29	7.69	1.34	3.66	1.307	5.445	1.33	0.3175	1.33
TOM (mg/L)	0.86	0.64	0.80	0.61	0.78	0.54	0.79	0.59	0.48	0.56
pH	6.4	7	6.4	7	6.8	6.5	7	6.6	7	6.5
DO (ml/L)	1.9	3.7	2	3.9	2.5	5.2	2.7	5.5	2.8	5.5
BOD (ml/L)	17	0	21	2	38	13	35	6	34	7
CO ₂ (ml/L)	0.40	0.34	0.40	0.4	0.60	0.5	0.99	0.3	0.99	0.3
Alkalinity (mg/L)	2.1	1.05	1.5	1	1.8	1.05	0.7	1.1	1.00	0.95

HCO ₃ (mg/L)	0.000244	0.000244	0.0004	0.0002	0.0004	0.0004	0.0002	0.0003	0.0001	0.0004
Salinity (‰)	1	15	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0

Phytoplankton

Estuarine phytoplankton populations commonly contribute in primary production and interact between trophic levels^[80]. Phytoplankton composition varies with season and this can be attributed to variation in nutrient access, light and temperature^[81]. They have great importance in the food webs as primary producer and can be useful indicators of water quality^[82]. Geographical areas and variety of habitat types, freshwater influence are known to have massive effects on phytoplankton density, productivity and community structure^[83]. Salinity variation induce short term phytoplankton blooms. Sequential changes of the phytoplankton community are influenced by short term tidal variability, zooplankton grazing and exchange between sediment and water column^[84]. The species density, diversity, relative abundance and distribution of phytoplankton are a manifestation of the ecological health of a particular water body^[85].

Marine tropical areas are known to be less dynamic than in temperate waters in terms of phytoplankton populations with smaller temporal variation in net phytoplankton growth^[86]. In the present study, the abundance and distribution of phytoplankton was observed in the lower Meghna River and its Estuary. A total of 28 phytoplankton genera were

identified during monsoon and post-monsoon season of which 22 genera occurred during monsoon and 16 genera occurred during post-monsoon season (Table 2). Islam and Aziz^[43] listed 29 genera and 76 species of phytoplankton from Northeastern part of the Bay of Bengal. Rahman^[87] identified 25 species of phytoplankton under 22 genera from the Naf river-estuary. Salam^[88] studied the benthic algae and plankton of the Karnafuli river-estuary and recorded 111 species under 57 genera of which Chlorophyta was the dominant group (48.46%) followed by the Bacellariophyta (35.24%). Islam and Aziz^[89] identified 42 species of phytoplankton from the Karnafuli river-estuary belonging to different classes. Islam and Aziz^[44] further reported 20 species of marine diatoms from the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh. Islam^[55] worked in the Mathamuhuri River Estuary and recorded 91 species comprising 44 genera. Zafar^[90] reported 44 genera of phytoplankton from the Matamuhuti river estuary. In the present study maximum 301120 cells/L and 7096 cells/L of phytoplankton were recorded at Chandpur site during both the seasons (monsoon and post-monsoon). Whereas the lowest 360 cells/L and 180 cells/L phytoplankton occurred at Sandwip during monsoon and post-monsoon respectively.

Table 2: Phytoplankton occurred (cells/L) at five study sites during monsoon (M) and post-monsoon (PM).

Sl. no	Name of phytoplankton Genera	Name of study sites and Season									
		Sandwip		Hatiya		Bhola		Barisal		Chandpur	
		M	PM	M	PM	M	PM	M	PM	M	PM
1	<i>Actinellius</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-
2	<i>Anabaena</i>	120	-	90	-	-	-	-	-	-	660
3	<i>Ankistrodesmus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	147	-
4	<i>Bacillaria</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	-
5	<i>Chrysophaerella</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60
6	<i>Clostratum</i>	60	-	-	-	150	-	150	-	-	-
7	<i>Coscinodiscus</i>	60	160	330	540	210	650	210	750	250	1440
8	<i>Desmidium</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	107	-
9	<i>Euglena</i>	30	20	130	90	-	-	-	-	10	-
10	<i>Fragilaria</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	620
11	<i>Keratella</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	40
12	<i>Leptocylindrus</i>	-	-	-	230	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	<i>Melosira</i>	-	-	-	-	-	9270	-	730	4853	197640
14	<i>Micrasterias</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-
15	<i>Navicula</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	37	-
16	<i>Nitzschia</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	220
17	<i>Nostoc</i>	-	-	40	-	-	-	-	-	1110	17940
18	<i>Pediastrum</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-
19	<i>Pleurosigma</i>	-	-	-	60	-	110	-	-	-	-
20	<i>Rhizosolenia</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	-
21	<i>Scenedesmus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	80	-	-	173	280
22	<i>Sphaerogoum</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100
23	<i>Spirogyra</i>	-	-	-	-	-	720	-	3880	-	82120
24	<i>Stauroneis</i>	-	-	-	40	-	-	-	-	13	-
25	<i>Striatella</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	-
26	<i>Symbella</i>	-	-	-	-	150	-	40	-	-	-
27	<i>Thalassiosira</i>	-	-	-	320	-	2100	-	-	-	-
28	<i>Zygnema</i>	90	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	-
	Total	360	180	590	1280	510	12930	400	5360	7096	301120

Between the seasons more phytoplankton occurred (cells/L) during post-monsoon than that of monsoon season. Again between the sites, occurrence and distribution of phytoplankton were the most at Chandpur during the both

seasons. During the annual cycle *Coscinodiscus* was common at all sites and season.

Multivariate Analysis
Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA)

The RDA triplot used to describe the preferred abiotic environmental factors for the characterizing and dominant

phytoplankton genera both in monsoon and post-monsoon seasons and also indicated the influence of parameters (Fig. 2 & 3).

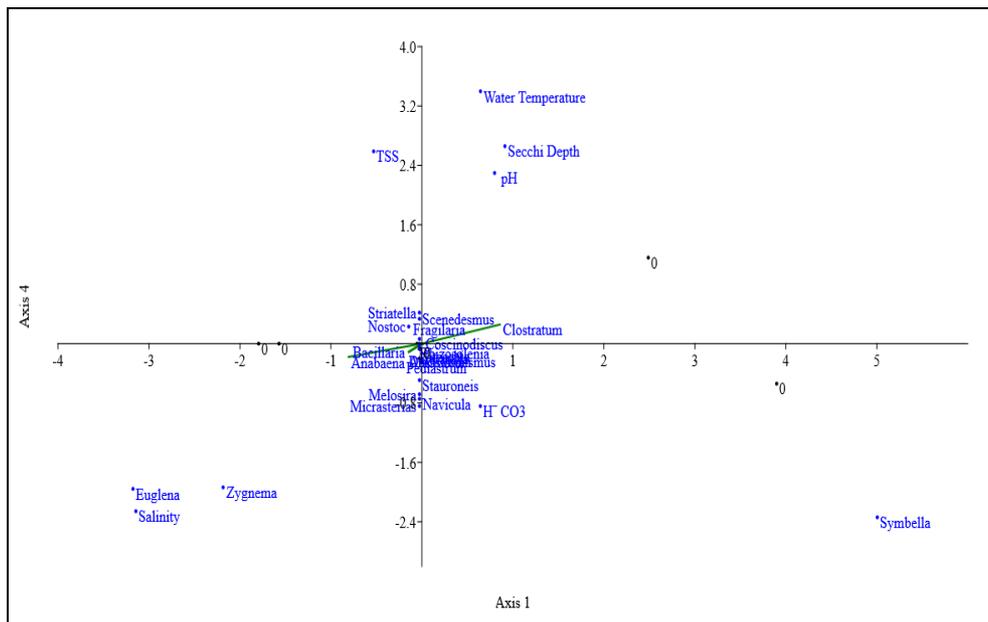


Fig 2: The redundancy analysis triplot displaying the ecological relationship between physico-chemical parameters and phytoplankton during monsoon season

During the monsoon season, when a low-salinity environment existed in major part of the estuary, *Euglena* and *Zygnema* showed a positive relation with salinity while *Clostratum*, *Fragilaria* and *Scenedesmus* showed close affinity to water temperature, secchi depth, TSS and pH. *Navicula*, *Stauroneis*, *Pediastrum*, *Rhizosolenia*, *Ankistrodesmus* etc. genera exhibited strong affinity to HCO₃ but had no proper trend

with salinity (Fig. 2). During the post-monsoon season, *Stauroneis*, *Spirogyra*, *Pleurosigma* and *Sphaerogoum* genera showed neither positive nor negative affinity to salinity (Fig. 3). *Nitzschia*, *Sphaerogoum* and *Melosira* exhibited strong relation with HCO₃ but pH, TSS, secchi depth did not influenced the phytoplankton distribution during post-monsoon (Fig. 3).

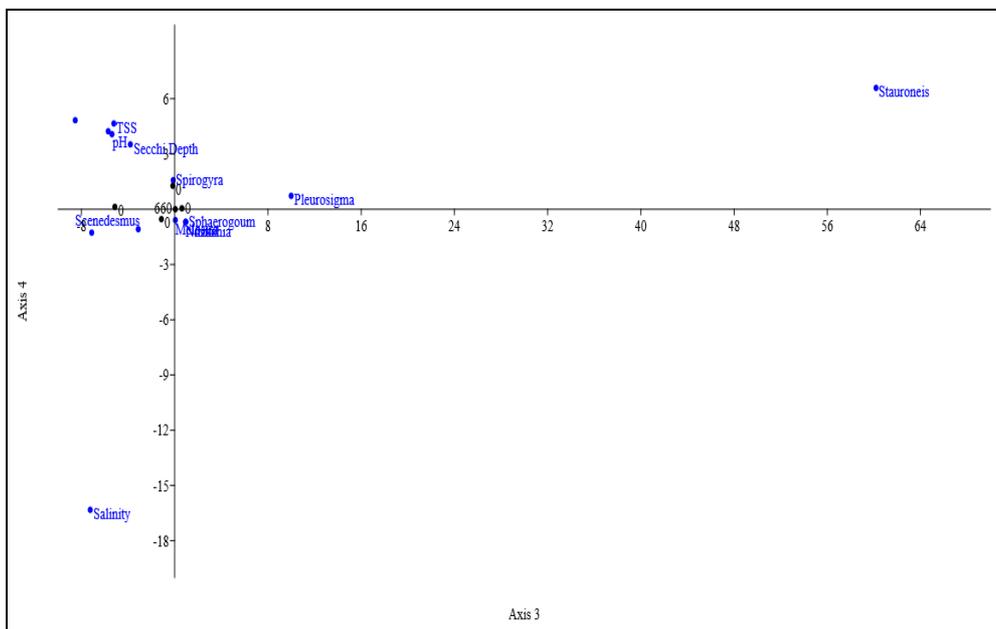


Fig 3: The RDA triplot showing inter-relation between physico-chemical parameters and phytoplankton during post-monsoon season.

Hence, a detailed study on the interrelation among the phytoplankton and environmental factors was performed for each season, and the triplot in the RDA was supportive in both visualizing all the data points plotted in the coordinate

system and identifying the interrelationship among phytoplankton and environmental factors.

Cluster Analysis

Cluster Analyses (CA) was done using square root and Bray Curtis Similarity to find the similarity among the sites in terms of phytoplankton occurrence and distribution. The dendrogram of the study sites, based on the phytoplankton genera abundance pattern along with different seasons, focus widely similarity understanding about the sites of the study

area. In the present study it was observed that during the monsoon and post-monsoon, Hatiya and Sandwip as well as Barisal and Bhola formed cluster (group) that indicates they were almost similar in terms of phytoplankton composition. Chandpur formed a single cluster (Fig. 4a & 4b) that indicate the occurrence and distribution of phytoplankton were unique comparing other sites.

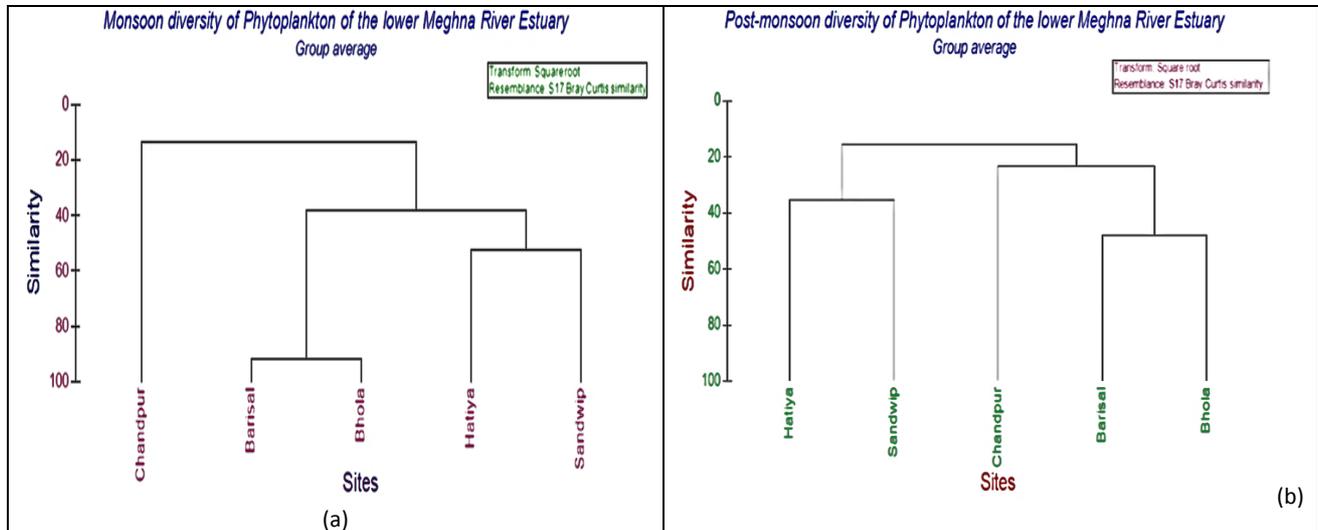


Fig 4: Bray-Curtis similarity-based hierarchical clustering of phytoplankton genera during the (a) monsoon and (b) post-monsoon periods at 5 different sites.

Diversity Index

Commonly, species diversity is a function of species richness and evenness with which the individuals are dispersed in these species [91]. Phytoplankton diversity (H') and evenness (J') varied both spatially and temporally (Fig. 5a & 5b). The phytoplankton diversity (H') did not show much variation (1.18 ± 0.22 and 0.87 ± 0.40 for the monsoon and post-monsoon seasons respectively) temporally. The highest phytoplankton diversity (H') was recorded at Sandwip (1.517) during the

monsoon season. The lowest value of diversity (H') was recorded at Sandwip (0.35) during the post-monsoon season (Fig. 5a). Again, evenness (J') of phytoplankton showed less variation with the seasons (0.80 ± 0.23 and 0.58 ± 0.18 monsoon and post-monsoon seasons) (Fig. 5b). The maximum evenness value was found at Bhola (0.99) during the monsoon season. The minimum evenness value was observed at Chandpur (0.36) during the post-monsoon season (Fig. 5b).

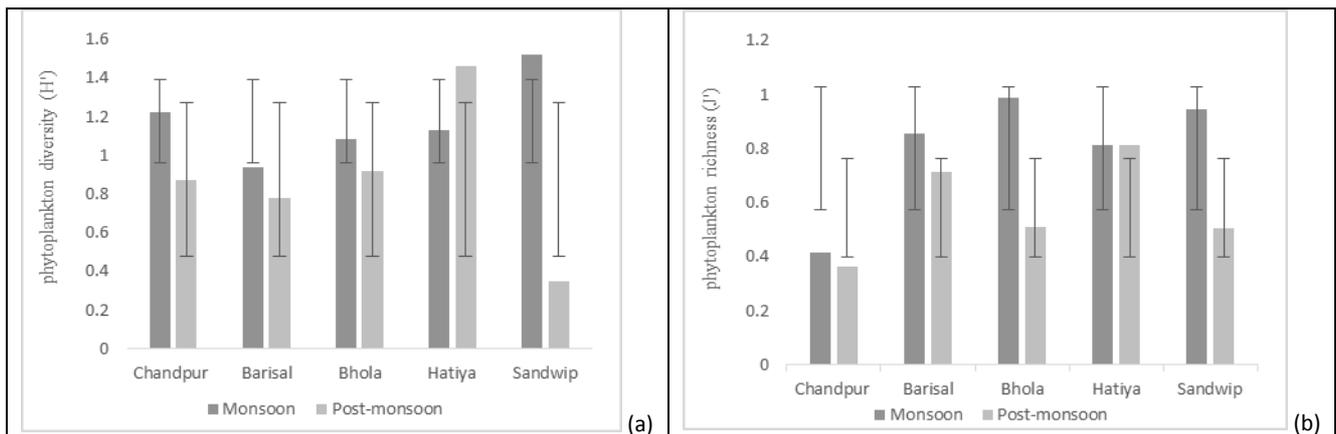


Fig 5: Diversity indices phytoplankton (a) diversity and (b) evenness, along two seasons. The vertical line on the bar diagram indicates the standard deviation.

4. Conclusion

Present study was conducted in the lower Meghna River and its Estuary at Sandwip, Hatiya, Bhola, Barisal and Chandpur during monsoon and post-monsoon season. A total of 28 phytoplankton genera were identified during monsoon and post-monsoon season of which 22 genera occurred during monsoon and 16 genera occurred during post-monsoon

season. Phytoplankton abundance was more during post-monsoon than monsoon in the study sites. During the annual cycle *Nitzschia* was common genera at all five sites however *Coscinodiscus*, *Biddulphia*, *Nitzschia*, *Thalassiothrix* and *Triceratium* were dominant in the study area. During the study water was slightly acidic in nature with very low salinity in major part of the estuary. Salinity, H^+CO_3 , pH,

secchi depth, TSS, water temperature and silt were responsible for the variations in phytoplankton community structure but the effect was not significant ($p > 0.05$). During the monsoon season CCA analysis shows, *Euglena* and *Zygnema* showed a positive relation with salinity while *Clostratum*, *Fragilaria* and *Scenedesmus* showed close affinity to water temperature, secchi depth, TSS and pH. Again *Navicula*, *Stauroneis*, *Pediastrum*, *Rhizosolenia*, *Ankistrodesmus* etc. genera exhibited strong affinity to $H^+CO_3^-$. On the other hand during the post-monsoon season CCA analysis shows, *Nitzschia*, *Sphaerogoum* and *Melosira* exhibited strong relation with $H^+CO_3^-$ but pH, TSS, secchi depth. Cluster Analyses (CA) by root and Bray Curtis Similarity of sites in terms of phytoplankton occurrence showed that during the both season Hatiya and Sandwip as well as Barisal and Bhola formed cluster (group) that indicates they were almost similar in terms of phytoplankton composition. While Chandpur formed a single cluster. The phytoplankton diversity (H') of phytoplankton did not show much variation (1.18 ± 0.22 and 0.87 ± 0.40 for the monsoon and post-monsoon seasons respectively) temporally. The highest phytoplankton diversity (H') was recorded at Sandwip (1.517) during the monsoon season and the lowest value was recorded at same site Sandwip (0.35) during the post-monsoon season. Again, the evenness (J') of phytoplankton showed less variation with seasonal environmental changes (0.80 ± 0.23 and 0.58 ± 0.18 monsoon and post-monsoon seasons). The maximum evenness value was at Bhola (0.99) during monsoon season and it was minimum at Chandpur (0.36) during the post-monsoon season.

Limitation

In the present study the sampling sights covered an area of about 172 km and samples were collected from passenger ship. So it was difficult to take sample at a time from all sites as well as to maintain tidal cycle or tide log. Again as samples were collected from passenger ship on board samples have to collect where the ship anchored for disembarkation of passengers and goods.

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