

Obstacles to Womens' Participation in the Politics of Bangladesh

**(This dissertation has been prepared for the fulfillment of the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Political science)**

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is prepared to submit to the Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh to fulfill the condition of the Masters of Philosophy (M Phil) program. The material embodied in this thesis is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other Diploma or Degree of this or any other University or Institution.

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CERTIFICATE

It is my pleasure to introduce Most. an M Phil research fellow of the Department of Political science, University of Dhaka has prepared her M Phil dissertation on “Obstacles to women’s participation in the politics of Bangladesh” under my supervision.

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) in Political Science, the University of Dhaka, during the session 2008-2009.

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Dedicated...

**To
My beloved Husband**

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Abstract

There is emergent recognition that constant peace and national cornucopia can only be achieved when institutions are democratic and representative of all groups of society. Hence, a truly democratic and representative government cannot be established without women's participation in the political processes. In a democracy, women should enjoy equal rights of political participation and exercise their rights fully. By ensuring men and women empowerment holistically, effective democratic society could be established and political empowerment is the main prerequisite of women empowerment. Women political participation, leadership and fundamental contribution to society mainly relied upon establishment of accessibility to political party's constitution, manifesto, and state policy structure and to establish equal participation in every sphere of society. Though, women highest leadership to state power in Bangladesh has got enormous appraisal around the world, but in reality in Bangladesh women generally remain in parliament, local government body and entire political domain insignificant. Women highest position in state along with opposition does not denote gender sensitive political system, then it as form of family inheritance endeavor to patriarchal link of father, husband or brother. In this study, majority of respondent expressed their perception on party system of Bangladesh is not women friendly. However, moderate percent of respondent prefers current level of women participation in politics as fairly satisfactory where few respondents staying on lowers satisfactory. In Bangladesh, participation of women in parliament have ensured by constitutional obligation and in local government body by legal obligation but this commitment of quota system does not ensure spontaneity of women participation in the whole from local to policy level. Patriarchal societal system, religious value and culture of society rather act as obstacle to women participation in politics. This study reveals in this context, majority of respondent prefer social cultural factor as main obstacle. On the other hand, women dual role, religion base politics, prohibition of women leadership in Islam, absent of women friendly electoral system as well as present negative women psychology of political culture also work as obstacle. According to findings, it has seen that respondent acknowledge politics as dirty influencing women disagrees to join politics and dislike politics as career. Besides that, present environment of politics has been accounted to women as violence against women. Patriarchy system of society influenced social cultural environment in society and polity designed to political party's principles and programme as men dominant and this mainly influenced women negative psychology to politics. Women cannot play role on decision making into their environment and scope due to being outsider of this patriarchal power domain. Furthermore, generally women are being victim of traditional value as to be men dominant. To influence women political participation in this type of socio economic and political circumstance, quota system could be effective for shorter period of time but as longer effectiveness more conducive programme need to ensure women real political participant. To this aim, increasing women contribution in mainstream party politics and participation in policy structure of political parties, enhancing more women nomination to general seat, controlling muscle power and black money and creating women friendly electoral environment are necessary on this context. Above all, empowering women as socially and economically alongside changing attitude of men toward women and a cross-cutting strategy towards gender equality in all political decisions, in institutional structures and in the allocation of resources could acquire this equal participation to democratic development.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The possibility for all citizens to participate in the management of public affairs is at the very heart of democracy. In the majority of countries, however, the political arena remains largely dominated by men, and is even an exclusively male bastion in some countries. In Bangladesh Polity, it seems parliamentary democracy has been practiced during two decades while five national parliament election confirmed democratic government. In all those government as well as opposition party being headed by women which arises immense interest among political scientist, feminist, women activist, researcher along with people aspire to democracy and women empowerment cause a concomitant inter dependence relation has existed within women empowerment, women political participation and democracy. Womens' participation in politics can be measured at two folds: in national legislature and in local government. Earlier they can play a role as law and policy makers and later in development related implementation roles. The Constitution of Bangladesh, assure women reserve seat¹ in parliament and in the local government tiers a fixed proportion is allocated for women to ensure their representation in governance². It can be denoted a positive initiative. Nevertheless, experience on national legislature reveals different, the percentage of elected women parliament members has been lower than five over the last twenty years, which denied the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action's goal of adequate representation of women in all decision making bodies and the recommendation of creating a "gender balance" in political decision making.

¹ '...there shall be reserved fifty seats exclusively for women members and they will be elected by the aforesaid members in accordance with law on the basis of procedure of proportional representation in the Parliament through single transferable vote', Article 65 (3), The Constitution of the People Republic of Bangladesh, October 2011.

² Three seats reserved for female councilors by direct election in all Union Parishad, Poura Shava and City Corporations; likewise, One Vice Chairman of Upazilla for the same.

Gender mainstreaming is a challenging phenomenon in Bangladesh where Womens' involvement in formal political system remains insignificant. In reality women suffer from legal, political, economic, religious and social discrimination in all walks of life. However, in Bangladesh women remain half in the proportion of population. Remaining patriarchy culture is almost influence women toward backward in time of political and societal decision making. Patriarchy characterizes South Asian countries where women are dominated by a kin-ordered social structure (Fathema, 1998; Caldwell, 1982). Very often, it is argued that the overall decision making process can be enriched if Womens' insights and values of governance are reflected in these processes. But if the equal political participation becomes key pillar of governance as existing factor of democracy, by participating in vote women consider having sense of political participation. Despite the extensive sense of political participation, Womens' access to politics and role playing in decision making are still insignificant owing to various socio-cultural and ethnic forces, a diversity of religious faiths, obscure legal frameworks, and complex economic and political forces.

Following the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action, there are only twelve countries where women hold 33% or more parliamentary seats (UNDP, 2005). In Bangladesh national election of 2014, women hold only 19 seats in the parliament out of 300 seats. Though to ensure women participant in politics, the constitution of the country proclaim 50 reserved seats for women in parliament and local government act confirmed women quota in local government body, but women participation in election, political activities, party politics and elected women legislature remain insignificant. This context piercing me as a student of political science toward the question that, why the women participation of politics in every sphere remain trivial? While the highest position in politics government and opposition as well as

parliament acquired by women, along with constitutional and legal obligation in parliament and local governance effort remains to enlarge women political participation. So of that this current study would attempt to explore/ identify the internal and external circumstances and factors that facilitate or obstruct the creation of an enabling environment for Womens' political participation in Bangladesh polity.

1.2 Rationality of the study

Why do women show lower levels of political participation than men? Women have been depicted as politically ineffective, unmotivated, naive, invisible and dependent upon the wisdom of men (Baxter and Lansing, 1980). Additionally Almond and Powell (1966:) point out that universally 'Political leaders are drawn disproportionately from upper-status occupations and privileged family back grounds'. Indeed, many grounds have set aside the political position of women low globally. One major cause is Womens' fragile access to political institutions whether due to formal or informal practices those refute women equal opportunity. Further, women face impediments in reconciling their family and public life. In addition, women often experience education that is inadequate in preparing women to engage in politics as a career. In most perspective, there is a culture that enforces on women a role different from the one that is kept for men. Last but not the least, women often faces a lack of party support including financial support, which fails to facilitate Womens' participation in the decision-making process.

A UN study observed that the level of development of a country as demonstrated by its demographic and social indicators limit the participation of women in politics. In those countries where female illiteracy is overwhelmingly substantial along with low living

standards and high fertility rates, the prospect of Womens' participation is far less (UN, 1992).

This is partly true. Despite higher literacy rate and living standards and phenomenal development, women representatives in the Japan's Diet are low compared to India, Uganda and Tanzania. Therefore, the study seems to have disregarded religious factors and social biases that limit Womens' participation in politics in both Muslim and non-Muslim societies around the world. Scholars such as McGlen and O'Connor, Steuernagel and Ahern, and Fowler have advanced different theoretical approaches- legal/institutional, sociological, psychological, and rational choice - to explain the patterns of participation and non-participation in various types of political activities (Kamal, year not mentioned). Sociological theory stresses cultural reasons for the low proportion of public offices occupied by women. Conway argues that combined with social norms, limited educational and occupational opportunities have denied most women from achieving skills and resources essential to contest successfully for public office (Margaret, 1999).

Five years after the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), IPU conducted a research report title on 'Participation of Women in political Life' (Geneviève, 1999) have identified the persistence of psychological and material obstacles on Womens' participation in politics are- Prejudices and stereotypes, Difficulties encountered in everyday life, Lack of time and family responsibilities, Lack of motivation and the bad image of politics, Lack of resources, Lack of self-confidence, Obstacles within parties and Lack of solidarity among women.

Andrea Cornwall and Anne marie Goetz (2005) in their study 'Democratizing Democracy: Feminist Perspectives', examines factors that constrain and enable Womens' political

effectiveness in different democratic arenas. They suggest that ‘engendering democracy’ by adding women or multiplying democratic spaces is necessary but not sufficient to address historically and culturally embedded forms of disadvantage that have been the focus for feminist politics. They suggest that an important, but neglected, determinant of political effectiveness is Womens’ political apprenticeship – their experiences in political parties, civil society associations and the informal arenas in which political skills are learned and constituencies built. Enhancing the democratizing potential of Womens’ political participation calls, They argue, for democratizing democracy itself: building new pathways into politics, fostering political learning and creating new forms of articulation across and beyond existing democratic spaces.

In *Crazy for Democrac* by Temma Kaplan (1997), argues that traditional conceptions of politics fail to pay attention to the significance of grass roots community mobilization in the United States and South Africa as sites for Womens’ political participation – just as those who participate in these activities may resist regarding what they do as ‘politics’, and their own politics as ‘feminist’. Instead, women often mobilize at the grass-roots around identifications that appear at first sight to reinforce sex stereotypes: as mothers, and guardians of community welfare.

Well-built socio cultural supportive environment, sustainable legal and institutional structure needed to ensure right in reality, but it must adopt from grass root level. Present circumstance in Bangladesh where access and role playing for mass (female) in politics are still in dilemma even, Bangladesh has been adopted notable acts to ensure positions for females constitutionally in both central and local government like other South Asian countries. Then the question arises whether these posts are treated as embellished/ornamental in many cases

and the growth rate of active female participation in politics is very negligible. The development context of Womens' political participation at the community and national levels will be reviewed for nuanced understanding of the nature of Womens' participation and their share in development processes and outcomes. Then it may appropriate in concept that social and political relations in a society being influenced the structural and functional constraints faced by women. Thus it confirm those common patterns of Womens' political exclusion stem from (a) social and political discourses (b) political structures and institutions (c) the socio - cultural and functional constraints that put limits on Womens' individual and collective agency. In this regard assuming that we need to strive for a deeper understanding of the structural imperatives of a society in which Womens' political participation is instituted. So, it is the most important issue in this field to identify and to analyze the basic hindrances to the active participation of women. And there is no doubt that, problem finding finally will help to depict the way out from the hindrances.

This study try to analyze the conceptual and material bases of Womens' historic exclusion from the formal arena of politics; analyze strategies around the national and international arena to uphold Womens' political participation/representation; reveal the factors that interference the Womens' political participation; and finally represent policy recommendations for the national and international actors. On this aspect, necessity for this research is to be making the way to out from this inherent social political dimension creating hazy democracy without women political participation.

1.3 Objective of the study

The broad objective of this study is to identify the internal and external conditions and factors that impede or hinder the creation of an enabling environment for Womens' participation in politics of Bangladesh. The answer will be sought to the following questions-

- a) What is the current status of female participation in politics of Bangladesh?
- b) What are the major obstacles of their participation?
- c) What are the natures and forms of this obstacles and how those are effecting women participation in politics?
- d) What kind of relations can be strained between Womens' demographic and socio-economic characteristics and their political attitudes and behaviors?
- f) And finally identify ways to overcome existent barriers to Womens' participation.

1.4 Methodology of the study

In the study both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have used. Data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. The quantitative data collected from first hand interview and qualitative data accomplished by Key Informant Interview (KII) and secondary sources ie., books, articles, government gazette, ordinance, news paper clipping, national and international treaty, UN convention and other print and electronic sources.

Considering the population density, socio-economic and poverty situation, urban and rural composition and women mobility intensive interview has been conducted purposively in four old districts of Bangladesh - Dhaka, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Khulna. Primary data have collected through first hand interview of 100 interviewee's by a semi-structured and open-ended questionnaire from randomly selected four districts of Bangladesh including capital city Dhaka and some KII of expert persons has been conducted in national level for interpret and collect their opinions.

Information are come from deference conscious strata of women, suchws representatives from a variety of women group and networks, civil society organizations (CSOs), international non-governmental organization (INGOs), activists of political parties, politicians, feminist, social and political scientists, female students, house wife's, community activists and also some male politician. In total 100 interviews has been taken where 25 from each districts.

Owing to the sensitivity and research ethics, the interviews were not recorded, but the researcher took extensive notes during and after the interviews. The names and the affiliations of the informants have been omitted throughout the report.

1.5 Limitation of the study

Any research work on women involved political parties complicated and multidimensional for many reasons. The methodology for data collection in the present study is based on sample and direct interview on a structured schedule. Researches on such a problem usually need a long time. In addition the data was collected from different division around the country, in the time of data collection a devastating political turmoil has been set and the situation was great impede to collect data rigorously. Most of the women leader was involved in busy political schedule where it was great challenge for researcher to communicate them. In spite of all sincere efforts there were some unavoidable situations that need special mention. The interview with the respondents took place in the office room, party office or their own home. But several places were full of other presence. In presence of the other women were being hesitate to take discuss about various issues confidently.

Budgetary limitations were also a factor in the study. With such a small budget it was also difficult to look into the problem more closely by arranging professional human power with

better incentives. Supplementary views that could be available through this means were not possible. Anyway, the schedule for interview prepared was very much pre-tested and over & again checked with the practical realities. As far as possible and practicable, the data were processed in scientific manner for developing a better output.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

This study has been divided into six chapters. The first chapter focuses on the study introduction, background, objective and put forward the rationality of the research. The limitations of the research have discussed in introduction as well as explain the methodology and the process of the data collection and analysis. The second chapter present a theoretical framework designed to link with the politics, political participation and Womens' political participation and Womens' empowerment and relate to the different theories of Womens' political participation. It therefore discusses the concept of the political participation. In chapter three identifies the obstacles of Womens' participation in politics in both developed and developing countries, focusing the major obstacles such as socio-cultural, eco-political, religious and ideological point of view. The chapter fourth title on the status of Womens' politics and political participation in Bangladesh, discusses the historical experience of women political movement and their rule in Bangladesh polity from British- India, Pakistan and present Bangladesh. The fifth chapter analyses the primary data and identifies the obstacles of Womens' political participation in Bangladesh context on basis of the field note and survey. It also triangulates the survey results and key informant opinions. The sixth chapter draws conclusion on the basis of the research objectives and findings.

Chapter Two

The Linkage among Politics, Political participation and Womens' Empowerment

Introduction

Political participation in each political system cannot be understood in segregation from its context. Rather cultural, historical and socio-economic factors are some of the variables to define the outline of what is understood. These factors have given rise to debates and discussions on traditional or formal areas for political participation and their forms; gender perspective has added doubts and has shown their limitations and incoherence, putting into question the alleged neutrality of gender in the systems, power institutions and the nature of power. For example, in a pyramidal political system with a single party, political participation in the course of the right to vote has clearly not got the same connotation as a multi-party parliamentary system, with proportional representation. From the gender perspective point of view, Womens' contribution to society can be seen as higher than that of men due to their dual roles, in the economy in terms of production and in the family in terms of reproduction, but their participation in every aspect of political systems and processes is insufficient.

According to Inter parliamentary Union (IPU, June, 2013), the proportion of women representatives in the political arena worldwide is only 20.9 per cent. Even with commitment pursue from high levels to gender equality on the part of international agencies in the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), expected rates and desired changes hadn't reach in considerable aspiration.

Table-2.1

Women Representation in Parliament in Global setting

Region	Average Women representation (Single and or Both Houses combined)
Nordic countries	42.0%
United State of America	24.9%
Europe - OSCE member countries including Nordic countries	23.9%
Europe - OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	22.6%
Sub-Saharan Africa	20.8%
Asia	18.5
Arab states	13.5%
Pacific	15

Source: Website of Inter parliamentary Union, [www. ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org), accessed on 20 June, 2013

In the evaluation of gender inequality Womens' political participation considered as most important indicator. In this context there are two basic arguments: *intrinsic* and *instrumentalist*. As discussed by Bari (2005), the intrinsic argument refers to human rights in terms of democracy and the proportion of the female population, which is half that of the total world. On the other hand, the instrumentalist argument mostly focuses on the differences between men and women. Since women hold different values and views regarding politics, they bring special and unique implications for politics. In this chapter, at first we try to analysis the different theories of Womens' development and participation in politics in gender perspective and then identify the main concepts serving as the basis for this thesis, - 'Participation', 'Political Participation', 'women political participation' and 'Obstacles'.

2.1 Different Theories of Womens' Political Participation

Born out of the struggles of the feminist movements of the 20th century, feminist political theory is characterized by its commitment to expanding the boundaries of the political. Feminism, as a political movement, works to fight inequality and the social, cultural, economic, and political subordination of women. The goal of feminist politics is to end the domination of women through critiquing and transforming institutions and theories that support Womens' subordination. Feminist political theorists employ characteristic strategies, methods, values, and concerns. There is a normative and methodological core to feminist political theory, consisting of one of more things- Openness to question the power relations embedded seemingly natural institutions or seemingly natural objects, such as the self, the family, the existing modes of political discussion and debate, whether these are gendered, physical, racial, class-based, or cultural; Critique of the history of political philosophy and feminist political theory and its norms and theoretical exclusions from mainstream political theory; constructing theories that are inclusive and "rejection of essentialism"³; Focus on experience or critical understanding of individual experience.

A further norm of feminist theory and practice is the notion of reflexivity⁴. The famed slogan of this notion is, "the personal is political," where politics are to be unearthed — in the personal, in the private, in Womens' everyday experiences of subordination and inequality.

³ Rejection of essentialism is the notion that social categories are unchangeable with essences that map onto given characteristics and inequalities. Although some feminist political philosophers, often called 'difference feminists', have taken up the idea that there is a feminine essence, even these feminists argue that the patriarchal or sexist concept of 'woman' is not the 'essence' of women. On the other side of this debate are those that argue that all social identities are constructed. Others propose that we cannot know what 'women' are or whether there is an essence of women until we remove the barriers to women's empowerment.

⁴ Reflexivity is a methodological norm that requires that one's theory should be applicable to one's own experience.

On the other hand, **Liberal feminism** is an individualistic form of feminist theory, which primarily focuses on Womens' ability to show and maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Liberal feminists argue that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men; thus it tends to discriminate against women in the academy, the forum, power structure and the marketplace. Liberal feminists believe that "female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks Womens' entrance to and success in the so-called public world", and they work hard to emphasize the equality of men and women through political and legal reform (Tong, 1989). Their faith that Womens' interests would best be served by women lawmakers has been confirmed time and time again, as women in Congress, state legislatures and city halls across the country have introduced, fought for and won legislation to eliminate sex discrimination and meet Womens' changing needs.⁵

But, critics of liberal feminism argue that its individualist assumptions make it difficult to see the ways in which underlying social structures and values of disadvantage women. These critics believe that institutional changes like the introduction of Womens' suffrage are insufficient to emancipate women (Bryson, 1999). Other critics such as black feminist and postcolonial feminist assert that mainstream liberal feminism reflects only the values of middle-class white women and has largely ignored women of different races, cultures or classes (Mills, 1998).

However, **Radical feminism** is a perspective within feminism that focuses on the hypothesis of patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion that male supremacy oppresses women. Radical feminism aims to

⁵ <http://www.nwpc.org/history>, accessed on 26 January 2014.

challenge and overthrow patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and oppression of women and calls for a radical reordering of society⁶. Radical feminists locate the root cause of Women's oppression in patriarchal gender relations, as opposed to legal systems (as in liberal feminism) or class conflict (as in socialist feminism and Marxist feminism).

Some strains of radical feminism have been compared to Marxism in that they describe a "great struggle of history" between two opposed forces. Much like the Marxist struggle between classes (the proletariat and bourgeoisie), radical feminism describes a historical struggle between "women" and "men".

In **Marxist** point of view, we see that Marx had little to say directly about the system of gender domination prevalent in his own time, and he was not publicly associated with the contemporary movement for the emancipation of women—contrast his silence with the writings of John Stuart Mill, for example (Mill 1970 [1869]) . Nonetheless, the foundations of Marx's critique of bourgeois society provide a foundation for a socialist feminism, and these themes had great influence on communist political programmes and societies in the twentieth century.

Today's feminists often refer to themselves as belonging to the "Second Wave"⁷. "Second Wave" feminism is often dated from the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan's 1963, which contrasted the ideology of "femininity" with the reality of Women's lives.

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org>, accessed on 26 January, 2014.

⁷ "First Wave" feminists were those who fought for access to higher education, equal property rights and the vote prior to the First World War.

After the cold war, Gender studies and gender perspectives have been recently introduced into the development cooperation world. In the Seventies, Esther Boserup (2007) proved that development strategies, focused on Western and male-centered models, had not considered the role and situation of women within their societies. Instead of improving their situation, this planning error had contributed to further deterioration of Womens' rights and status. Boserup's theories materialized in "Women in Development" (WID) approaches, later becoming the "Gender and Development" (GAD) approach. The first approach focused on the exclusion of women, with an emphasis on Womens' activities and roles in order to promote their rights increase their participation in development and their economic empowerment. This approach evolved towards the second view, GAD, which believes that social reality is more complex, revealing that Womens' exclusion has its cause and effect on inequalities in gender relations and in the roles these relations assign to women and men (Lopez and Sierra, 2000).

Nazmunnessa (2007) denoted four dimensions of women empowerment broadly as- cognitive empowerment, psychological empowerment, economic empowerment and political empowerment. Where, Political empowerment has to do with the ability to analyze one's world and to organize and mobilize for social change. It involves access to decision-making process involving the state, and including local government, voting, collective action and other means of having one's voice heard (Nazmunnessa, 2007). In this study I would like to work with this concluding approach. This approach emphasizes at find out the reasons of inequalities between women and men within their perspective and at pointing more sustainable ways of eradicating the obstacles avoidance Womens' participation and their representation in decision-making. The relation between political participation, gender equality and the democratic process is inter-reliant, since the implementation of each of these

concepts depends on the implementation of the others and vice versa. Hence, it is subject to a necessary and unavoidable relationship.

2.2 Conceptual Analysis

Now we try to analysis the different concepts such as politics, participation, political participation, and Womens' participation in politics, different factors (social, political, economic, psychological and cultural) which affected Womens' limited participation in politics.

2.2.1 Politics

Politics (from Greek: politikos, meaning "of, for, or relating to citizens") is the practice and theory of influencing other people on a civic or individual level. More narrowly, it refers to achieving and exercising positions of governance- organized control over a human community, particularly a state. A variety of methods are employed in politics, which include promoting one's own political views among people, negotiation with other political subjects, making laws, and exercising force, including warfare against adversaries.

The most widely known and used definition of politics was provided by Easton (1965) in his identification of the political system with the "authoritative allocation of values for a society." American political scientist Lasswell (1936) defined politics as "who gets what when and how."

The most general definition of politics is that "politics is the form of inter relationship among classes, social groups and nations a from directly or indirectly connected with the manifestation and implementation of power" (Burlatsky 1978:16).

2.2.2 Participation

The word “participation” derives from the word “participate” which means to take part or become involved in an activity. Regarding that participation is the state of taking part or involvement in an activity. It admits in social sciences participation refers to different mechanisms for the public to express opinions - and ideally apply influence - regarding political, economic, management or other social decisions. It emphasizes participation must be direct and face-to-face involvement of citizens in social and political development which affects explicitly on their daily life. Midgley (1986) recognizes “Since participation must involve the whole community, the disadvantaged must be empowered to take an active part in the political process ... Also, since participation must take place on a direct interpersonal basis, the unit for participation and the primary forum for the expression of views, must be the small local community”.

2.2.3 Political Participation

Political systems persuade political participation through different degrees as it is central element of every political structure. People living in a particular society participate in the political system, which they developed. This Political participation fosters stability in the matters of state and confirms order by involving the people. According to, Huntington & Nelson, "By political participation we mean activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making" (Huntington and Nelso, 1976) as rational, independent, and concerned political persons able to expressing their opinion is being main concern as citizen in democratic theory. The active involvement of people in real approach influences the decision-making activity of the government. According to S. Verba, Political participation can be violent or peaceful, revolutionary or conservative or conducted on a global level as much as it could be locally (Verba and Henry, 2002).

There are many forms of participation and democracy in the form of government that encourages maximum participation in governmental processes. Debates on the forms of political participation and those who can exercise power within them have a long historical course they go back to the citizens' assemblies in ancient Greece, and all the way to the present time with the continuing search for alternative methods of individual or collective participation and new areas where it can be exercised (Labani, Kaehler and Paula 2008-2009).

From the beginning of the 20th century, in parallel to the debates on 'Who' can exercise political participation, new 'Forms' of political participation were suggested. The contemporary democratic ideal is based on the concept that political power has its roots in a sovereign people. Therefore, there can be no democracy without involvement, without participation of the people in political life. But, how do we define this political participation? Participation can set in abundant activities, such as being involved in different groups or associations but, what does political participation mean? What are we citizens of? What is political? And, how does someone become a political actor? Political participation can be any activity which aims at influencing the structure of a government, the appointment of leaders and the policies they execute. These activities can have the goal of supporting the existing structures and politics or changing them. They include active and passive actions, collective or individual, legal or illegal, support or pressure actions, by which one or several persons try to influence the type of government that may lead a society, the way the state of that particular country is led, or specific government decisions affecting a community or their individual members (Conway, M., 2000). Based on that definition, we can extract different categories (Monlina, José and Baralt, 2000):

Firstly, with relation to the form of participation, we can distinguish- the vote, the political campaign, community activity, individual activity and the protest activity.

The most apparent way of political participation in democracy is voting. Other ways include such behaviors as reading or listening or watching the mass media of communications, taking part in political discussions, listening to political speeches, attending party meetings, giving contribution to political parties, writing petitions or letters to public officials or newspaper editors, trying to influence the voters, contesting the election for office etc. Lipset has pointed out that high-level participation cannot always be treated as good for democracy. It may indicate the decline of social cohesion and breakdown of democratic process. "A principle problem for a theory of democratic system is under what conditions a society can have sufficient participation to maintain the democratic system without introducing sources of cleavage which will determine cohesion" (Ballington and Karam, 2005).

Above five activities of political participation differ based on- (a) The level of influence that the person can exercise through it; in other words the pressure exerted on leaders so they act in a certain way, and the capacity of citizens for demanding accountability for their leaders' actions and decisions; (b) The result obtained or to be obtained and whether there is a collective or individual benefit; (c) The level of conflict experienced by those involved; (d) The level of personal initiative required to carry out the activity and finally, (e) the degree of cooperation with other people required to carry out the activity (Ballington and Karam, 2005).

Secondly, based on the level of integration in the decision-making state process, political participation can be classified in two ways:

(1) Institutional political participation: this refers to the activities involved in the government mechanisms for decision-making such as referenda, elections, advisory bodies, etc.

(2) Non-institutional political participation: this includes actions that are not part of the official channels for the establishment of policies and that are aimed at exerting pressure on them from without, such as demonstrations, electoral campaigns, individual or collective requests to public organizations, promotion of certain groups or social classes interests, membership and activities within political parties. The possibility of being freely involved in non-institutional activities is linked to the minimum requirements for the existence of a democratic regime, while institutional participation strengthening is part of its development process. This classical categorization (institutional and non-institutional participation) is differentiating political participation as “conventional” and “non-conventional”.

The term ‘Womens’ participation in politics’ is recurrently used all through the report and consequently need some clarification. Political participation is identified as a social movement and Womens’ political participation is a movement carried out by women to enable them to be a part of the decision making of their government and therefore their daily lives and social wellbeing. The Womens’ movement, similar to other social movements, operates over a wide range of aspect of life; at home, in education, in industry, in politics and others. In each of these areas it represents a search for an arrangement that will answer the new idea of status being formed by women (Lyman, 1995).

From above discussion it can be contemplates that, Womens’ political participation means Womens’ ability to participate equally with men, at all levels, and in all aspects of political life of public and private in decision-making. It extends to other arenas, such as family life, cultural and social affairs and the economy includes Womens’ political mobilization, access and participation through civil society and other of the polity.

2.2.3 Obstacles of Women Participation in Politics

Bangladesh as a developing country where democracy is consolidating stage, the vast majorities of Bangladeshi women are illiterate, in poor health, invisible in the system of national accounts. Though it is not always possible to measure gender discrimination in all spheres, socio-cultural practices based on strong patriarchal customs, feminization of poverty, unemployment (Caldwell, 1982) have served to limit mobility of women as well as asymmetrical involvement in the labor market and restrictive socio-cultural influences on education, nutrition, health and political participation are obvious along with women in Bangladesh. They have low status, little or no access to property and land (Kalpana, 1986) and get little recognition for their largely unpaid home-based labor (Rustagi, 2004). we see that Womens' participation in politics are depends on various factors and land scape of polity. On the basis of socio economic demographical condition and political history, culture and nature of political institution of Bangladesh women political participation usually face some hindrance influencing broadly by socio-economic, cultural, religious, political and ideological factors. These are same in other developing country which we will describe in next chapter broadly and try to identify difference of degree and the nature of those factors in developed and developing country.

Chapter Three

Observation of the World-wide Womens' Political Participation

Introduction

Hence democracy, by definition, cannot afford to be gender-blind. It must strive towards equality and representation of women and men in decision-making processes and in the opportunities to achieve both these goals. The equal participation of women and men in public life is one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1979, and in force since 1981. Today, more than 30 years since the signing of the convention, 186 countries are party to it and bound to take measures to promote Womens' participation in decision making and leadership positions⁸.

In 1995, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing generated renewed pressure for the implementation of the CEDAW provisions: the Beijing Platform for Action identified 'inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels' and 'insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women' as two areas of significant concern where action was critical for the advancement of women⁹. Which emphasized on improving Womens' access and full participation in power structures and decision making and encouraged all government to adopt affirmative action measure to ensure that women made up at least 30% of all representatives in national parliaments?

⁸ <http://un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/accesswed>, on 25 July 2013.

⁹ <http://un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform>, accessed on 25 July 2013.

This was further expanded to encompass women's participation in post conflict state building, which expression finds in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, passed in October 2000. In the debate introducing Resolution 1325 in 2000, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that ' peace is inextricable linked to equality between women and men maintaining and promoting peace and security requires equal participation in decision making.

The rights of women to participate in political decision making are preserved in many international treaties and laws. Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security is heralded as being the first Security Council resolution that officially recognizes the importance of women inclusion in decision-making political process. Yet resolution 1325 followed on from decades of earlier milestones and political advances that recognized the need for a global strategy to advance Women's' rights.

3.1 Factors Hindering Women's' Political Participation in develop and developing countries

Since 1990 the United Nations has accepted that the minimum proportion of women representatives necessary for a legislature to be representative of women is thirty per cent. Thirty per cent is considered to be the 'critical mass' of women in a decision making institution if their presence is both to make a difference to its outputs, practices and culture and to ensure that the representation of women is normalized and will continue. At national level, in 1990 only four Western European countries had such a critical mass and the UK was not among them. By 2000 a further three Western European countries passed the 30 per cent threshold. The UK was still not among them. There is a steady upward trend in Women's' political participation and representation in developed countries particularly in Nordic

countries. Out of twelve countries where women representation in parliament is more than 33%, nine of them are ranked in the high human development category. Though, the improvements in medium and low human development countries are not significant. In spite of this Nordic countries, United States as the pioneer of liberal democracy is also away from the level of expectation in this regard. Womens' representation decreased in 22 percent from 27 percent in the 2012 election in United States. However, Womens' living standard (i.e. rate of education, economic freedom, social mobility etc.) is much better in these countries. So, it seems that there are some hindrances also. On the other hand, Womens' representation is about 54 percent in the parliament of Rwanda with fringe backwardness in economic freedom and social status. Whereas, institutionalization of democracy as a longer process, has not been accomplished in Rwanda. Womens' representation in the parliamentary affairs in India is about 15% only. In reality, social and political culture and their structure control the rate of Womens' participation in different countries. As opposed to legal framework (quota) females are not interested entering politics alongside their professional and economic advancement in the developed countries. And with the same legal structure participation rate is low in the developing countries by reason of low rate of education, economic strength and socio-religious obstacles.

The structural and functional constraints faced by women are shaped by social and political relations in a society. Traditional democratic legal decisions are not enough to afford women access to the national politics. Other considerations come into play, such as the parliamentary structure and the practices of the political parties, illiteracy and poverty. But, Womens' participation and access to formal political power structures vary across countries. The common pattern of Womens' political exclusion in developed and developing countries stem from (a) social and political discourses (b) political structures and institutions (c) the socio -

cultural and functional constraints that put limits on Womens' individual and collective agency (Farzana, 2005). Actually, causes and hindrances are all most same in the developing and developed countries with different nature and extent, which are shown below in the table-

Table-3.1

Factors hindering the women participation in politics in Developed and Developing countries

Factors	Developed countries	Developing countries
Ideological and Psychological Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Perception of Politics as not a good 'career' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Perception of Politics as 'Dirty' ▪ Politics is male function
Political Factors		
Nature of political institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of party support ▪ nature of electoral system ▪ nature and degree of quota provisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of party support (financial and other resources) ▪ Nature of electoral system ▪ nature and degree of quota provisions ▪ male standards political institutions and political attitudes
Decentralization structure	Inequality of quota system	absence of equality, lack of a constituency for women.
Economic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Profession and technological line of business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feminization of Poverty ▪ Unemployment ▪ segregation into lower-paid jobs ▪ inequality of pay between men and women ▪ post-conflict peace negotiations and rehabilitation problems
Socio-Cultural Factors		
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ dual Burden ▪ family obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ religion ▪ dual Burden ▪ family obligations ▪ violence against women
Lack of social capital and political capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of Confidence ▪ Absence of Social Mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of Confidence ▪ absence of Social Mobility ▪ lack of Education and Training ▪ Womens' low self-esteem and self-confidence ▪ lack of coordination with and support from Womens' organizations and other NGOs
The Role of the Mass Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of media attention to Womens' contributions and potentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lack of media attention to Womens' contributions and potentiality ▪ lack of women friendly media
Right to information	Available but not women friendly process	Lack of access to information about laws, policies and the institutions and structures which govern their lives

Despite the advancement in Womens' representation in power structures and decision-making, Women participation in politics is still far from the critical goal of 30 percent set by the Beijing Platform for Action. Above mentioned obstacles are discussed below with relevance to developed and developing countries socio-political, economic and cultural aspects. This inequality depends on the following factors limiting Womens' political participation-

A. Ideological and Psychological Hindrances

Patriarchy as a system of male domination shapes Womens' relationship in politics. It transforms male and females into men and women and constructs the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged (Eisenstein, 1984). Andrienne Rich (1998) defines patriarchy as "A familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male"(Farzana, 2005).

The gender purpose ideology is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public sphere. This is one of the vital factors that figure the level of Womens' political participation globally. However, this ideological divide is not reflective of the reality. The boundaries between public and private are often imprecise in the daily lives of women. Nonetheless, domestic domain continues to be apparent in the North as well as in the South as the legitimate space for women while public space is associated with men. Women have to negotiate their entry into and claim on public space according to the discursive and material opportunities available in a given culture and society. Although the gender role ideology is not fixed rather remained in a flux while intersecting with economic, social and political systems of a

particular society, women continue to be defined as private across countries which resulted in their exclusion from politics.

We can identify the ideological and psychological hindrances for women in entering politics include the following-

- gender ideology, cultural patterns, and predetermined social roles
- assigned to women and men;
- Womens' lack of the confidence to stand for election;
- Womens' perception of politics as a 'dirty' game; and
- The way in which women are portrayed in the mass media.

The Perception of Politics as 'Dirty'

In some countries, women perceive politics as a 'dirty' game. This has jolted their confidence in their ability to participate in political processes. In fact, such a perception is prevalent worldwide. Unfortunately, this perception reflects the reality in many countries. Although the reasons for this differ, there are some common trends. The basis of passive corruption can be explained by an exchange between the advantages and benefits of the public market (e.g. legislation, budget bills) and of the economic market (e.g. funds, votes, employment), which seek financial gains by escaping competition and by fostering monopolistic conditions. In addition to this, a significant increase in the cost of election campaigning has become evident, and this in turn enlarges the persuasion to use any source of money that becomes obtainable.

Also in some countries, corruption and organized crime scare women and provoke their fears of losing members of their families, all of which militates against their political involvement or their standing for elected bodies. Corruption can have many faces. Bribery and extortion in the public sector, as well as the procurement of goods and services, are key manifestations of it. Although new democracies need time to establish themselves and to develop roots, corruption has spread further in countries where the process of political and economic

transformation is taking shape in the absence of civil society, and where new institutions are emerging. However, in many places where the changes in the political and economic system have already taken place, the market economy has become ensnared in the ‘law of the jungle’, the mafia and corruption.

These factors combine to scare women and provoke their fears of losing members of their families, all of which militate against their political involvement or their standing for elected bodies.

Although the perception of corruption may not always be a fair reflection of the actual state of affairs, it is itself having an impact on Womens’ attitude towards a political career. Is it a coincidence that countries where corruption occurs on only a small or a moderate scale seem to have a higher rate of Womens’ representation in elected bodies? For example, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and New Zealand are perceived as the least corrupt, and in these countries women MPs make up between 30 percent and 45.4 percent of the total number of MPs, that is, between five and ten times more than in countries where corruption scores higher (Karam, 2005).

B. Political Factors

The nature of politics is an absolute factor for the inclusion or exclusion of women in politics and driven force toward stable participatory political culture. Vicky Randall defines politics as an “articulation, or working out of relationships within an already given power structure” (Farzana, 2005), which is in contrast with the traditional view of politics that defines it as an activity, a conscious, deliberate participation in the process by which resources are allocated among citizens. This conception of politics restricts political activity only in public arena and the private sphere of family life is rendered as apolitical. This public- private dichotomy in

traditional definition of politics is used to exclude women from public political sphere and even when women are brought into politics they are entered as mothers and wives. Male domination of politics, political parties and culture of formal political structures is another factor that hinders Women's political participation. Often male dominated political parties have a male perspective on issues of national importance and practice male dominated attitude that dishearten women as their point of view is often overlooked and not reflected in the politics of their parties. Also women are usually not elected at the position of power within party structures because of gender biases of male leadership. Meetings of councils or parliamentary sessions are held in odd timings conflicting with Women's domestic responsibilities. On the other hand those women who hold important position in party system or parliament many of them consider their husband role playing actor where decision come from patronage political culture, according to Hossain and Akhter (2011), many women in parliament are proxies for male family members who were previously themselves politically active, but whom for a variety of reasons (typically, imprisonment or corruption charges) are disqualified from electoral competition.

Women's political participation is on the other hand forced by the larger democratic framework and level of democratization. Secular democracies in Europe and also in some of the developing countries have shaped comparatively more space for Women's participation in politics as compared to countries where religious orthodoxy has been twisting politics and democracy. Among the political obstacles that women face, the following feature prominently (Ballington and Karam, 2005):

- the prevalence of the 'masculine model' of political life and of elected government bodies;
- lack of party support, for example, limited financial support for women candidates,

- limited access to political networks, and the more stringent standards and
- qualifications applied to women;
- lack of sustained contact and cooperation with other public organizations such as trade (labour) unions and Womens' groups;
- lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for Womens'
- leadership in general, and for orienting young women towards political life; and
- the nature of the electoral system, which may or may not be favorable to women candidates.

Decentralization structure

There is another factor may consider with relation to decentralization processes and their impact on women. In fact, many of the countries studied are experimenting with decentralization processes by which some central government competencies and some powers are redistributed to local bodies. For these processes to be beneficial for women and to promote their political participation, they need to be coupled with a gender transforming perspective, giving great importance to Womens' collective demands, responding to their interests and needs and creating mechanisms for integrating women in the decision-making processes. However, as it has already been noted (See Point- Political factors), these mechanisms are not always in place and in some cases decentralized.

In the 20th century women started in advance access to political, economic and social rights. All these achievements are leading to significant changes in Womens' lives, while women have partly succeeded in combating discrimination based on gender, disparities remaining in many fields. At the beginning of the 21st century, women continued to face both old and new challenges, particularly intra- and interstate conflicts and terrorism. The persisting challenges include: balancing work and family obligations; segregation into lower-paid jobs; inequality of pay between men and women; the feminization of poverty; increases in violence against

women; and exclusion from post-conflict peace negotiations and rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. In addition some procedural and internal factors may influence Womens' access to decision-making bodies, including- lack of party support, lack of financial and other resources to fund Womens' campaigns and boost their political, social and economic credibility; the type of electoral system as well as the type of quota provisions and the degree to which they are enforced; the tailoring of many of these institutions according to male standards and political attitudes; the lack of coordination with and support from Womens' organizations and other NGOs; Womens' low self-esteem and self-confidence, endorsed by certain cultural patterns which do not facilitate Womens' access to political careers; and the lack of media attention to Womens' contributions and potential, which also results in the lack of a constituency for women.

But the mentioned obstructions vary according to the political situation in each country. Based on all the above, it is necessary to implement mechanisms and strategies to facilitate Womens' political participation and representation. As it has already been said, Womens' political participation and the wider goal of gender equality are closed interlinked, and therefore many of the actions that will be listed here as strategies to facilitate Womens' participation are integrated in a general way within the broader goal of gender equality. This research work would try to critically appraise Womens' participation in politics in Bangladesh on the basis of beyond discussed obstacles by social survey.

C. Economics factors

The condition of economy plays a significant role in the participation of women to legislatures in both sustainable and consolidating democracies. The social and economic status of women in society has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions

and elected bodies. For example, researchers point to the correlation between Womens' legislative recruitment and the proportion of women working outside the home, as well as the percentage of women college graduates. According to some researchers, socio-economic conditions take second place to electoral systems in Womens' legislative recruitment within established democracies.

In addition to lack of adequate financial resources, the socio-economic obstacles impacting on Womens' participation in parliament are:

- Illiteracy and limited access to education and choice of professions; and
- the dual burden of domestic tasks and professional obligations.

To be able to participate in politics it is necessary to have access to important material resources. In many contexts, electoral campaigns are privately financed and material resources are needed to ensure a degree of influential power. Womens' lack of access to production resources and to the

“The two most overwhelming obstacles for women in entering parliament are lack of constituents and lack of financial resources. Women move from their father’s home to their husband’s home . . . They are like refugees. They have no base from which to develop contacts with the people or to build knowledge and experience about the issues. Furthermore, they have no money of their own; the money belongs to their fathers, their husbands or their in-laws. Given the rising cost of running an effective campaign, this poses another serious hurdle for women in the developing world”.

-Razia Faiz, former MP, Bangladesh
(Quoted from Ballington and Karam, 2005)

ownership of goods limits their possibilities for action in the political arena.

The Feminization of Poverty and Unemployment

“One of the most striking phenomena of recent times has been the increasing proportion of women in the labor force . . . In 2003, out of the 2.8 billion people that had work, 1.1 billion were women . . . However, improved equality in terms of quantity of male and female workers has yet to result in real socioeconomic empowerment for women, an equitable distribution of household responsibilities,

equal pay for work of equal value, and gender balance across all occupations. In short, true equality in the world of work is still out of reach” (ILO, 2004).

In 2004, the overall share of women in total paid employment was above 40 percent worldwide. But, Womens’ participation in economic activities remain unvalued at the national level because of patriarchal social structure, traditions and norms (Parvin, 1995: 113) Women are major contributors to national economies through both their paid and their unpaid labor. As far as the latter is concerned, rural Womens’ input and their role as a significant electorate should not be underestimated. Although the importance of Womens’ biological and social roles is clear, their input in all spheres of life often goes unrecognized. Eradicating poverty will have a positive impact on Womens’ increased participation in the democratic process. The economic empowerment of women, along with education and access to information, will take women from the constraints of the household to full participation in politics and political elections. To eradicate feminized poverty and consolidate women empowerment, Parvin (1998:45) suggest that to ensure women centric health, education and employment facility, structural development and participation of more women in decision making and human resource management.

D. Socio-Cultural Factors

The subordinate status of women vis- à- vis men is a universal phenomenon, though with a difference in the nature and extent of subordination across countries. Gender role ideology does not only generate duality of femininity and masculinity, it also places them in hierarchal approach in which female sex is generally valued less than male sex because of their socially ascribed roles in reproductive matter. The gender status quo is maintained through low resource allocation to Womens’ human development by the state, society and the family. This is reflected in the social indicators which reflect varying degrees of gender disparities in

education, health, employment, ownership of productive resources and politics in all countries. Additionally gender is mediated through class, caste and ethnicity that structure access to resources and opportunities. The socio - cultural dependence of women is one of the key detrimental factors to their political participation in public political domain. Women also find it hard to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. With their primary roles as mothers and wives and competing domestic responsibilities and care work, they are left with little time to participate in politics. In some of the countries, particularly in South Asia, women also face cultural constraints on their mobility. The mechanisms of sex segregation used to restrict their mobility. Politics requires Womens' exposure to interact with male and female constituents and address public meeting.

Religion

Religion furthermore plays a very vital role in keeping women at home rather than going outside and participating in political decision process. The only point of difference is the type of religion that impedes Womens' participation.

According to the 2011 census, Bangladesh is close to 90 percent Muslim and their religion is Islam.¹⁰ Islam represents a strong apology for patriarchy and is explicit about the sexual division of labor and responsibility and in effect, sanctifies male dominance. Restriction has also been imposed by religion on the movement of women outside their house. Women are instructed to use 'purdha'¹¹ when they are outside their home. Once habituated to restricting themselves within 'purdha' they are likely to lose any interest in political activities. The expansion of fundamentalism has introduced new forms of oppression and violence against

¹⁰ The population of Bangladesh is approximately 150 million: Muslims 88.3 percent, Hindus 10.5 percent, Buddhists 0.6 percent, Christians 0.3 percent, and animists 0.1 percent (<http://bbs.gov.bd>).

¹¹ 'Purdha' is a sort of veil used by the Muslim Women in Bangladesh for physical exclusion from the males

women, in Bangladesh. Increasing cases of violence against women meted out via ‘fatwa’¹² and ‘mullahs’¹³ in the countryside are being reported. Besides, there has been a rising trend in religious fundamentalism which has gradually pushed its presence into the mainstream political space. A number of actions on the part of successive governments have led to its growth.¹⁴

The Dual Burden

In most countries women hold a disproportionate share of domestic work. Their participation in politics is further constrained by poverty and be short of education and access to information. It necessity be recognized that it is hard for women to participate in political life

when their major concern is survival and they have no alternative but to expend much of their time trying to assemble the basic needs of families.

This is heightened by the enhance in the number of female-headed households (which stands at 25

‘Women believe that entering parliament means choosing between private life or a public life. This is not the case. Instead, women should view their life as a continuum. They should decide what they want to achieve in life and priorities these goals in chronological order. There is a certain right time to achieve each of these goals, whether it is becoming a wife, mother, professional or a parliamentarian. Life is long and women can achieve many things.’

-Anna Balletbo, former MP, Spain
(Quoted from Julie Ballington and Azza

percent worldwide), particularly in developing countries, where this is partly a result of ongoing conflicts. In addition to that, however, some women may have full-time jobs as wives and mothers as well as other full-time careers (e.g. as teachers, lawyers or doctors).

Becoming an MP in these conditions might then be considered a third full-time job.

¹² The term ‘*fatwa*’, which in Islamic legal parlance refers to a clarification of an ambiguous judicial point or an opinion by a jurist trained in Islamic law.

¹³ ‘*Mullah*’ is a term of address for one known or believed to be learned in religious matter.

¹⁴ These factors are the constitutional adoption of Islam as the state religion, the growing aid dependency of the government on middle-eastern Islamic countries, the formation of successive governments with the supporting seats of the Jaamat-e-Islam party (Jaamat-e-Islam is the name of a political party whose main aim is to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh) and the increasing governmental allocations to religious educational institutions (Shamim, Ishrat and Mahbuba Nasreen (2002) Gender and Local Governance: A New Discourse in Development, The Journal of Social Studies, Centre for Social Studies, Dhaka, Vol. 94/95, October-March (Joint Issue), Pp. 50-87).

Lack of Social Capital and Political Capabilities

To reach leadership position, women traditional roles have been considered an important obstacle. In this regard, the results are a lack of capabilities and means for political participation, lack of training, lack of economic resources, education, empowerment, and access to information technology. In spite of those limitations, women must be considered as political actors and essential individuals in the decision-making process, and in accountability.

Womens' participation and representation in politics is fundamental. In fact, in context of basic democratic principle, each adult has to be recognized as a citizen of a State and should be able to fully participate in decision-making and have the capacity to represent his or her group so his or her needs and interests are taken into account. Men and women have different interests, priorities and requirements in society; therefore one group cannot represent the lawful interests of the other. A woman's voice is indispensable for democracy to embrace the plurality of needs and interests of the whole society (Lorraine, 1997).

As Karam (2005) notes, Womens' presence in the political arena has changed the nature of the political agenda itself. Questions concerning reproductive health and choice, nutrition, equality in education and in employment opportunities and circumstances, care, questions concerning conciliation of professional and personal life, and the environment, are just a few of the areas that women have brought into public debate. Womens' participation in spheres of power has generated changes in the perceptions with respect to men's and Womens' roles in society and sexual division of work, in speech, in how women are regarded and in the way political institutions work (Karam, 2000) Womens' participation in decision-making and in political life is critical for advancement. Women still suffer inequality because their interests, needs and priorities are not taken into account in the political arena. According to the

recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action, “Womens’ equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Womens’ equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for Womens’ interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of Womens’ perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved”¹⁵.

In other words, Womens’ political participation is a stipulation for their empowerment. When they leave their homes to become active citizens and experience working with men they become more aware of the limitations, discrimination and inequalities they suffer as “women” within society. They become aware of their identity as a group and learn how to organize themselves and become actors for change and pressure groups. Womens’ participation in the public sphere can take several forms. They can amalgamate themselves into pre-existing formal channels of political participation within which they can form a specific group or not. For example, women acting as representatives in parliament can opt for forming a committee or special group to defend Womens’ interests and needs. Or they can come together in civil society organizations and interest groups and, depending on their number, their way of organizing themselves and their social and political impact; they may become a social movement. However, it is important to pay attention to their speech and to the values they represent and defend. In patriarchal ideologies, women are the symbol and the custodians of traditional culture and values. The system can even provide them with participation spaces so they can defend those values. These women become “superwomen”

¹⁵ Recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action, in *Women’s Political Participation and Good Governance: 21st Century Challenges*, The United Nations Development Programme, 2000, p 89. Available at <http://www.iknowpolitics.org>

defending patriarchal values; therefore they should not be mistaken as “pro women” (Labani, Kaehler and Ruiz, 2010).

Education and Training

There is no consistent correlation between literacy rates and Womens’ political representation, but many candidacy nomination procedures require a minimum level of literacy. This prevents women from registering as candidates for elections and decreases their confidence to do anything in political ground. In addition to basic education, many women lack the political training obligatory to participate effectively in the political arena. An expansion of the pool of women who are qualified for recruitment to political careers is therefore needed. This can be done by giving women access, from an early stage, to work patterns that are conducive to political leadership, such as special training in community-based or neighborhood organizations. Common understanding of the concerns of women, gendered political awareness-raising, lobbying skills and networking are important for the process of training women for political careers. To that end, Womens’ leadership programmes play a special role since they provide the opportunity for links to be made with wider groups of women and diverse politicians; and they are very often the only occasions when women can be prepared for a political career in parliament and encouraged to seek such a career. Special attention should be given also to the involvement of young women and the importance of collaborating with men.

Lack of Confidence

Lack of confidence is one of the main motive for Womens’ under-representation in formal political institutions, whether parliaments, ministries or political parties. With confidence and determination women can reach the highest levels in the political process. That is why

women should believe in themselves and should do away with the widespread perception that men have to be their leaders. Women are equal to and have the same potential as men, but only they can fight for their rights. Women are very good campaigners, organizers and support-mobilizes, but fear sometimes thwarts women from competing elections and from participating in political life.

Social Mobility

Cultural norms activate both as a restriction on a woman's mobility as well as an impediment for Womens' participation in the public sphere in both Bangladesh and India. These cultural norms are perpetuated and sustained by powerful institutions of family, caste and religion. The location of polling booths and their relative is reveries from their homes and workplace often discourage women from exercising their right as voters. The demands of contestants' right from filling nominations to canvassing for elections, requires them to be mobile. The inconvenient timings, distance and the lack of escort impede female representatives' full participation.

Along with these problems, the family circumstances of women members are also an impediment to their mobility. Mokhopadhyay (2003) pointed out in his studies that, "in Bangladesh, as one husband said, this is a Muslim country; she (a woman member) is a woman, so she cannot go out in the evening. He (the husband) saw his wife's responsibility as caring for the children" (Mukhopadhyay, 2003) Thus, it becomes very difficult for a woman to involve herself in non-household activities.

The Role of the Mass Media

The mass media justify to be called the fourth branch of power because of their influence on public opinion and public consciousness. The media in any society have at least two roles: as a chronicler of current events; and as an informer of public opinion, there by fostering different points of view. Often, the mass media tend to minimize coverage of events and organizations of interest to women. The media do not adequately inform the public about the rights and roles of women in society; nor do they usually engage in measures to promote or advance Womens' position. Most of the world's media have yet to deal with the fact that women, as a rule, are the first to be exaggerated by political, social and economic changes and reforms taking place in a country—for example, they are among the first to lose their jobs. The fact that women are largely estranged from the political decision-making process is also ignored by the media.

Admittedly, the mass media also tell stories about women politicians and about businesswomen and their successes, but this kind of coverage is rare and infrequent. The presentation of topics such as fashion competitions, film stars, art and the secrets of eternal youth is more typical. Not surprisingly, such views barely promote Womens' sense of self-worth and self-respect or encourage them to take on positions of public responsibility.

The role of the mass media in an election process cannot be stressed enough, and we do not yet have abundant global and comparative research. Practically speaking, if there is lack of proper coverage of Womens' issues and the activities of women MPs, this contributes to a lack of public awareness about them, which in turn translates into a lack of constituency for women MPs. The mass media still need to recognize the equal value and dignity of men and women.

3.2 Regulatory and Institutional Framework of Womens' Status around the Globe

United Nations international and regional framework and AECID's policy are significant to make a path toward ensuring gender equality and Womens' political participation. In this sub-chapter we will discuss those regulatory framework to carry out how much these are important as a regulatory reference framework in terms of gender equality and Womens' political participation and what is there contribution in this term.

3.2.1 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW is a legally binding international treaty for all states that have signed up to it and it is a thorough reference framework for all actions in terms of Gender equality. Articles 2(4) and article 7 of CEDAW (1979) include all the specific actions concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against Womens' political participation, and they recommend legal and temporary measures, as well as positive actions¹⁶.

Article 2 States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and Article 7 States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

¹⁶ Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979 (resolution 34/180) and entered into force on 3 September 1981.

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Moreover Article 8 covers the elimination of discrimination against Womens' political participation in the international arena.

3.2.2 Beijing Platform for Action Declaration

Considerable progress has taken place in Womens' political participation, particularly towards the end of this century. Despite this progress, however, the 21st century begins with enormous unfinished business in this realm. Twenty five years after the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City, more than 20 after CEDAW, and five after the Fourth World Conference in Beijing, gender equality has finally been inscribed on the political agenda of most of the world. The Beijing Platform for Action set the goal of 30 per cent for women in national decision making positions, as a milestone toward the ultimate objective of 50%.

Five years after Beijing, the level of women in parliaments in the world has increased from 10 per cent to 12 per cent. However, regional variations are significant. They range from 37.6 per cent in the Nordic countries to 15.5 per cent in the Americas, 13.4 per cent in Asia, 12.5 per cent in Europe excluding the Nordic countries, 11.6 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 8.3 per cent in the Pacific and 3.3 per cent in the Arab states. Since Beijing, women speakers of parliament have been named for the first time in six countries: Ethiopia (1995), Latvia (1995), Peru (1995), Jamaica (1996), Malta (1996) and Poland (1997). With regard to ministerial and sub-ministerial positions, two countries have reached over 30 per cent representation for women (Sweden and the Bahamas). At the other end of the spectrum, there are 15 countries in which there is no presence of women in these posts (Afghanistan, Bahrain,

Djibouti, Lebanon, Monaco, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, the Solomon Islands, Somalia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen). Six women are currently presidents or prime ministers: Bangladesh (Prime Minister), Guyana (President), Ireland (President), New Zealand (Prime Minister) and Sri Lanka (President and Prime Minister). Estimates on women as local counselors are 23 per cent in the United States, 20 per cent for Europe (ranging from 40 per cent in Sweden to 4 per cent in Greece), 18 per cent in Canada, less than 5 per cent in Africa and 3.8 per cent in Latin America. No estimate is available for Asia. Differences by sector are significant in all countries. For example, Sweden has the highest percentage of women in parliament (44 per cent), but less than 10 per cent of women in senior academic positions, while in Egypt women constitute less than 2 per cent of Parliament, but over 40 per cent of senior academic staff (Koleilat, 2013).

3.2.3 United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) came about as a outcome of constant and targeted lobbying by civil society organisations, particularly the international Womens' movement to demand identification of the role of women in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace-building, and the specific effects of conflict on women. According to former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, "Resolution 1325 holds out a promise to women across the globe that their rights will be protected and that barriers to their equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace will be removed. We must uphold this promise."¹⁷

¹⁷ United Nations Secretary General; October 2004; Report of the Secretary General on Women, Peace and Security to the UN Security Council; United Nations Security Council; S/2004/814

The resolution specifically highlights the need for action in four inter-related thematic areas-

- 1) Participation of women at all levels of decision-making relating to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.
- 2) Gender perspectives in conflict analysis and training of military and civilian personnel in peacekeeping missions, including on the protection, rights and needs of women affected by conflict.
- 3) Protection of Womens' rights during conflict including prevention of and ending impunity for GBV (Gender Base Violence), respecting the civilian nature of settlements for those displaced by conflict; and addressing the needs of female ex-combatants.
- 4) Gender Mainstreaming in United Nations' implementation and reporting mechanisms including reporting by the UN Secretary General on progress towards implementation of UNSCR1325 (Naraghi-Anderlini, 2000).

By requiring that attention is given to the situation of women, the resolution attempts to redress the 'gender-blind' approaches to conflict prevention, management and resolution that have been central to the global failure to achieve sustainable peace. Specific initiatives, such as those outlined in UNSCR 1325, are also needed to ensure that Womens' rights and status are not further eroded in times of conflict or through the processes employed to bring about peace (Hillyard, Rolston and Tomlinson, 2005).

3.2.4 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Declaration

The United Nations has been a key forum for Womens' advocacy around the world. From the 1975 UN International Year on Women through the Decade on Women (1976-1985) and the global conferences and summits of the 1990s¹⁸ women participated actively to form

¹⁸ These conferences included: the Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) where women's vital role in environmental management and development and the need for their full participation to achieve sustainable development was recognized; the International Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) where women's human rights were spelled out for the first time; the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) where formal recognition of women's reproductive rights

economic, social, and political development. In these situation advocates established planned mechanisms, predisposed resolutions and won crucial commitments to set a far-reaching global policy agenda that recognizes gender equality and Womens' empowerment as essential components of poverty eradication, human development and human rights. The Millennium Declaration imitates widespread international acknowledgement that empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality are key matters of human rights and social justice. It is another warning of the successful efforts of women to put gender on the global policy agenda.

Conclusion

Since it is reveals that women remain out from power structure, having no effectiveness on decision making within their working area, thus stayed in old value where dominated male nature being perceived. In this economical and societal context, ensuring participation in high level of policy making and accountability quota system may influential in short term but it need other then long term policy creating environment for women inclusion in polity. As the number of women participation increased in national parliament women are being dependent more on party. Whether if the number of women increases in cabinet makes aspiration women are increasing in executive body, but this role has attribute many time decorated. To ensure participation in every aspect along with legislation, a holistic approach has needed from every wing. For that in parliament and out of parliament structural, legal along with social cultural and behavioral pattern should come to change.

prevailed despite bitter opposition; the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) where the link between gender equality and poverty was explicitly recognized; and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) where advocates won a broad-based agenda for promoting and protecting women's human rights worldwide, while establishing the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men in all arenas.

Chapter Four

The Status of Womens' Politics and Political Participation in Bangladesh

Around the world in many countries political equality of men and women are being guaranteed now in constitutions at least in theory, while it is not ensured in practice. Alike equal rights to women to participate in all aspects of public life has also been recognized and guaranteed in the 1972 constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Consequently, Article 28(1) stipulates 'the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth'. Along with Article 28(2) states, 'Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and public life'. Besides these, Articles 9-10 and 37-39 also precisely proclaim on the ground of ensuring Womens' participation in all spheres of state and public life and to this ordered taken steps on this aspect. Therefore, as safeguard of Womens' rights, various legislation such as the Women and Children Repression (amended) Act, 2003 and the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980 (amended in 1982) has also been enacted. Despite all these guarantees to protect Womens' rights and eliminate discrimination against women, Bangladeshi women are deprived and denied to equal rights with men. As a result, women equal participation in the development process remains innumerable.

The scope for Womens' participation in politics in Bangladesh is not as wide as in India due to its unitary nature.¹⁹ Since independence in 1971, the local government system²⁰ has been

¹⁹ Bangladesh's unicameral legislature consists of a parliament (Jaityo Songhsod) with 300 members. The constitution provided for 15 reserved seats for women (Clause 65), these were doubled to 30 in the second national assembly (1979-1982). The seats lapsed in 2001. In the year 2005, legislation was passed for restoration of reserved seats and increase in the quota to 45 seats, after 15th amendment of the constitution women reserved seats increased to 50 from 45. The women are indirectly elected by the members of the house. The quota does not prevent women from contesting on general seats. Currently 9th Parliament there

key concerns to policy makers'. With a view to securing a minimum representation of women at local level government bodies, in 1976, the government promulgated the Local Government Ordinance and introduced a three-tier local government system. In this Ordinance the structure of the local government system underwent changes and the provision was made to select two women members in the union council (Ahmed, 2001). For the first time it was starting of consideration women as to be included in the local government. With the passage of time, every government tried to incorporate more women to ensure equal participation of development in local government bodies as well. In 1983, changes were brought in the structure of the union parishad, promulgating the local government (Union Parishad) ordinance. Whether the earlier system (1976) remain unchanged; one chairman and 9 members were to be elected directly, 3 female members, 1 from each ward had been added in the new ordinance. In 1993, Local Government (Union Parishad) Act (Amendment) was passed in the Parliament to secure the minimum representation of women in local government. According to this act, provision was made that each union parishad would be divided into nine wards. Moreover, three seats were reserved for women; accordingly, they were elected by the chairman and members of the Union Parishad rather than directly elected by the voters (Ahmed, 2001).

In the history of Womens' participation in Bangladesh, year 1997 appears as a mile stone as The Local Government (Union Parishad) Second amendment Act had been passed in this year. In this act, provision was made for three reserved seats for women in each Union Parishad in which the provision also declared Womens' direct election where they would be

are 19 directly elected women in parliament. Unusual in the case of Bangladesh is that both the head of government and leader of opposition are women.

²⁰ A four-tier local government system is now in operation in Bangladesh. Among these four tiers, the top tier is the district council (Zilla Parishad); followed by the Upazilla Parishad which is the lowest level of operation for the bureaucracy and line ministries; the third tier is the Union Council (Union Parishad); and the fourth, village level Gram Sarker. Union Parishad is the only local self government bodies in operation..

elected based on universal adult franchise. This was a major initiative taken by the government of Bangladesh for ensuring Womens' participation in political decision making (Sultana, 2000).

The union council is made up of thirteen members including the Chairman and three women. The Chairman is elected by the entire union council and each member of the council is elected by the voters of their own constituency. But different system has been provided on the ground of election of three other women member of council. Each woman however represents three wards and is elected by the combined voters of these wards, thus serving three times the number of constituents than her male counterparts. Various functions of the union council are executed through 13 standing committees and women are to head one third of them regarding the provision of union parishad , with the mandate to head the committees on Womens' and children's welfare, culture and sports; however, in reality women are often excluded from the committees (Mumtaz, 2005).

Getting the right ensuring participate in governance was taken through reserved seats as proverbial first step for women in Bangladesh. According the statistics of 2003 election of the Union Parishad, 39,419 female candidates contested 12,669 reserved Womens' seats and then average 3.1 women was contested against one seat. Even if the rate of participation of women candidates in the reserve seats is quite satisfactory, the participation rate of women in general seats and for the post of chairmanship is comparatively low. Of the 21,376 candidates who contested the chairman's posts, 21,144 were male and 617 female. On the other hand,

137,909 candidates competed for general member posts; among them 137,292 were male and 617 were female.²¹

According to a presidential proclamation in 1978, increased the number of reserved seats for women participation in parliament to 30 from 15 and extended the period of reservation for 15 years from the date of promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic in December 1972. This Constitutional provision lapsed in 1987 and was reintroduced by an amendment in 1990, to be effective for 10 more years from the first meeting of the next legislature. Overwhelmingly this provision also been lapsed in 2001. To reintroduce quotas for women, the 14th Constitutional Amendment had been passed in the Parliament, where the number of seats for women was moved up to 45 from 30. Allocation of these seats will be in proportion to parties over-all shares of vote were stipulated. On the other hand this quota system replaced the previous system, which expired in 2001. While reintroducing the quota system in 2004, the Bill placed before the Parliament stated in its preamble: "Whereas the War of Liberation was fought with great ideal for establishing a democracy through effective participation of men and women in order to ensure equal justice - social, political and economic - for which the people of Bangladesh made supreme sacrifice."²²

The Article 65(3) described as amended in 2004 stated: "Until the dissolution of Parliament occurring next after the expiration of the period of ten years beginning from the date of the first meeting of the Parliament next after the Parliament in existence at the time of the commencement of the Constitution (14th Amendment) Act, 2004 there shall be reserved forty- five seats exclusively for women members, and they will be elected by the aforesaid

²¹ Bangladesh Election Commission, www.bd-ec.org

²² The Constitution (14th amendment) Bill, 2004.

members in accordance with the law on the basis of procedure of proportional representation in the parliament through single transferable vote." But in 2012 the 15th amendment of the Bangladesh constitution the reserved seat of women increased up to 50 from 45.

This reservation of seats in favour of women did not exclude them from being candidates in the general election.

To increase the number of women representatives in the committees of all political parties to 33% by 2012 ensuring women equality in political decision The Election commission (EC) has taken step to made the Peoples representation Order (amended in 2008) as mandatory for those registered party. Hence from the Observers view that the role of women in the 9th parliament will be greater than before where around 69 women MPs are in the house. Justifying their role in national politics and the decision making process is really a great challenge for the women in Bangladesh.

4.1 Status of Womens' politics and political participation in British India

Indian Womens' position in society very much fragile during the medieval period, when child marriages and a ban on remarriage by widows became part of social life in some communities in India. The Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent brought purdah to Indian society. Among the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the Jauhar was practised. In some parts of India, some of Devadasis were sexually exploited. Polygamy was practised among Hindu Kshatriya rulers for some political reasons. In many Muslim families, women were restricted to 'Zenana areas'²³ of the house. In spite of these conditions, women often became prominent in the fields of politics, literature, education and religion. Razia Sultana became the only woman monarch to have ever ruled Delhi. The Gond queen Durgavati ruled for fifteen years

²³ The part of a house in Asian countries such as India and Pakistan reserved for the women of the household.

before losing her life in a battle with Mughal emperor Akbar's general Asaf Khan in 1564. Chand Bibi defended Ahmednagar against the powerful Mughal forces of Akbar in the 1590s. Jehangir's wife Nur Jehan effectively wielded imperial power, and was recognized as the real power behind the Mughal throne. The Mughal princesses Jahanara and Zebunnissa were well-known poets, and also influenced the ruling powers. Shivaji's mother, Jijabai, was queen regent because of her ability as a warrior and an administrator. In South India, many women administered villages, towns, and divisions, and ushered in new social and religious institutions.

During the British Raj, many reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Jyotirao Phule fought for the betterment of women. Raja Rammohan Roy's efforts led to the abolition of Sati under Governor-General William Cavendish-Bentinck in 1829. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's crusade for improvement in the situation of widows led to the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Many women reformers such as Pandita Ramabai also helped the cause of women. Peary Charan Sarkar, a member of "Young Bengal", set up the first free school for girls in India in 1847 in Barasat, a colony of Calcutta (later the school was named Kalikrishna Girls' High School).

While this might recommend that there was no positive British contribution on women empowerment during the Raj era, more willingly than 'Missionaries'. But, during this time some Indian's women were obtained higher degree- Chandramukhi Basu, Kadambini Ganguly, Anandi Gopal Joshi, Sarojini Naidu . In 1917, the first Womens' delegation met the Secretary of State to demand Womens' political rights, supported by the Indian National Congress. The All India Womens' Education Conference was held in Pune in 1927, it became a major organisation in the movement for social change. In 1929, the Child Marriage

Restraint Act was passed, stipulating fourteen as the minimum age of marriage for a girl. Though Mahatma Gandhi himself married at the age of thirteen, he later urged people to boycott child marriages and called upon young men to marry child widows.

Women played an important part in India's independence struggle. Some famous freedom fighters include Bhikaji Cama, Dr. Annie Besant, Pritilata Waddedar, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kriplani and Kasturba Gandhi. Other notable names include Muthulakshmi Reddy and Durgabai Deshmukh. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment of Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army consisted entirely of women, including Captain Lakshmi Sahgal. Sarojini Naidu²⁴, a poet and freedom fighter, was the first Indian woman to become President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman to become the governor of a state in India.

Naidu served as the first governor of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh from 1947 to 1949; the first woman to become the governor of an Indian state. She was the second woman to become the president of the Indian National Congress in 1925 and the first Indian woman to do so.

²⁴ Naidu was born in Hyderabad to Aghore Nath Chattopadhyay and Barada Sundari Debi on 13 February 1879. Sarojini Naidu, born as Sarojini Chattopadhyay also known by the sobriquet as The Nightingale of India, was a child prodigy, Indian independence activist and poet. Naidu passed her matriculation examination from the University of Madras, but she took four years' break from her studies. In 1895, the "Nizam scholarship Trust" founded by the 6th Nizam - Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, gave her the chance to study in England first at King's College London and later at Girton College, Cambridge. In 1925, Naidu presided over the annual session of Indian National Congress at Cawnpore (now Kanpur). In 1929, she presided over East African Indian Congress in South Africa. She was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal by the British government for her work during the plague epidemic in India. In 1931, she participated in the Round table conference with Gandhi and Madan Mohan Malaviya. She also helped to establish the Women's Indian Association (WIA) in 1917. Her daughter Padmaja became the Governor of West Bengal.

Naidu joined the Indian national movement in the wake of partition of Bengal in 1905. She came into contact with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Annie Besant, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

During 1915-1918, she travelled to different regions in India delivering lectures on social welfare, Womens' empowerment and nationalism. She was sent to London along with Annie Besant, President of WIA, to present the case for the Womens' vote to the Joint Select Committee. She played a leading role during the Civil Disobedience Movement and was jailed along with Gandhi and other leaders. In 1942, she was arrested during the "Quit India" movement.

Another prominent women activist, revolutionarist Pritilata *Waddedar*²⁵, Pritilata decided to join the Indian freedom movement. Surya Sen had heard about her and wanted her to join their revolutionary group. On 13 June 1932, Pritilata met Surya Sen and Nirmal Sen in their Dhalghat camp. A contemporary revolutionary, Binod Bihari Chowdhury, objected that they did not allow women to join their group. However, Pritalata was allowed to join the group because the revolutionaries reasoned that women transporting weapons would not attract as much suspicion as men. In 1932, Surya Sen planned to attack the Pahartali European Club which had a signboard that read "Dogs and Indians not allowed". They decided to attack the club on 23 September 1932. The members of the group were given potassium cyanide and were told to swallow it if they were caught. They reached the club at around 10:45 PM and attacked the club. Pritilata incurred a single bullet wound. An injured Pritilata was trapped by

²⁵ Pritilata *Waddedar* was born to a middle-class family on 5 May 1911 in Dhalghat village in Patiya *upazila* of Chittagong, Bangladesh. She passed out of Dr. Khastagir Government Girls' School in 1928 and in 1929, got admitted to the Eden College, Dhaka. To pursue higher education, Pritilata went to Calcutta and got admitted to the Bethune College and graduated in Philosophy from the college with a distinction. However, her degree was withheld by British authorities at Calcutta University. Pritilata decided to join the Indian freedom movement. Surya Sen had heard about her and wanted her to join their revolutionary group. Along with the revolutionary group of Surya Sen, Pritilata took part in many raids like attacks on the Telephone & Telegraph offices and the capture of the reserve police line. In the Jalalabad battle, she took the responsibility to supply explosives to the revolutionaries.

the British police. In order to avoid arrest, she swallowed cyanide and committed suicide. Bangladeshi writer Selina Hossain calls Pritilata an ideal for every woman²⁶. A trust named *Birkannya Pritilata Trust (Brave lady Pritilata Trust)* has been founded in her memory. The trust considers her to be "a beacon of light for women".²⁷

Another famous women politician Rani Bhabani²⁸, who was made great contributions to spread up women education and empowerment and cultural and religious development during the end of British raj in Bengal.

4.2 Status of Womens' Politics and Political Participation in Pakistan Period

Popular history has not adequately documented regarding the political contribution that women have made to Bangladesh society. One may summon up here that Bangladeshi women did participate in the anti-British political movement in the 1930s and 1940s. In the aftermath of independence in 1947, women also increasingly participated inclusively in the autonomy and democratic movements when Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan. Although women have played a significant role being sacrifice their life in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh in 1971, their historical contributions remain largely invisible and ignorable. During the Pakistan period Fatima Zinna played a crucial job to emphasize women movement both political and socio-economic empowerment. Basically she has played a key role to achieve the voting right of women.

²⁶ "Contribution of Pritilata recalled". *The Daily Star*, June 1, 2011, retrieved 18 December 2013.

²⁷ "A beacon of light for women". *The Daily Star*. September 26, 2012, retrieved 18 December 2013.

²⁸ Born in Chhatin gram, Thana: Adamdighi, Bogra, Bangladesh., Bhabani was married off to Raja Ramkanta, the then zamindar of Rajshahi. After his death, Bhabani became the de jure zamindar, and started being referred to as *Rani*, or queen. A woman as a zamindar was extremely rare in those days, but Rani Bhabani managed the vast Rajshahi zamindari most efficiently and effectively for over four decades. John Holwell, an English writer, speculated that the stipulated annual rent of the estate to the crown was 7 million rupees, the real revenues being about 15 million. Rani Bhabani is also famous as 'Natorer Rani'. She also made great contributions in Tarapith & Varanasi (Benaras).

Voting right of Women had been established in this country for the first time during the period of Pakistan. In the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly Elections of 1954 women primarily exercised their voting rights where only one woman was elected regardless of that there was a provision for ten reserved seats for women at that time. Women also exercised their voting rights in the 1970 general elections of Pakistan. It is notable that women involvement in Language movement in 1952, six point movement in 1966 and mass movement in 1969 where women actively engaged and raise their voice in national politics.

4.3 Status of Womens' politics and political participation in Bangladesh (1971-2014)

4.3.1 Bangladesh Politics (1971-75)

In the first general election in 1973, only two women were nominated by the major parties and both women were defeated in the elections. Consequently, Womens' active participation in politics and government was remaining unusual and minimal until the early 1980's. In this era Womens' participation in politics was widely discouraged and denied by the major political parties. In particular, the religious-based political parties such as the Jamat- e - Islami did not believe in gender equality and viewed Womens' direct participation as "anti-Islamic" (Kamal, year not mentioned). This prompted analyst to argue that economic and social empowerment of women cannot be advanced unless Bangladeshi women are brought into and made a part of the political institutions (Nilufar, 1997).

Indisputably, Peoples are most vital resources of the country regarding that Bangladesh also remain in this absolute truth. Women make up nearly half of the population and work force of Bangladesh in this reality using these resources can upheld the nation prosperity. Hence it is essential that they should participate in sufficient numbers in politics and government to ensure a truly democratic and representative government. But in reality Womens'

participation in politics continues to be discouraged, denied and resisted. As pointed out by Choudhury, 'In Bangladesh, women have remained outside the play of power politics. Their visibility in popular struggle for democracy, in election campaigns and in community work has not translated into greater influence in public domain. Only a small number have been able to enter positions of public decision making' (Chowdhury, 2002). Particularly in recent years, it is alleged securing a party's nomination assume in a set of price. As a result with meager financial resources, women are highly disadvantaged generally to gain preference of the political parties. Even if they have money they may not gain party nomination because they are women.

4.3.2 Bangladesh Politics (1975-1990)

In most developing countries, that fact has been seen as women political leaders more often than not raise to power "in times of social or political distress". Adversely in this country both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina came up to power in times of social and political turmoil in Bangladesh. We also observe similar scenario in other Asian countries such as Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, Srimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, and Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi of India, and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan.

In the 1979 elections, term of military regime only 17 women were among 2,125 candidates for 300 seats; none of the women won, and only 3 polled over 15 percent of the vote. Prior to the 1988 parliamentary election, the provision for reserved seats for women had been allowed to lapse. In 1981, the Awami League (AL) chose Sheikh Hasina Wazed as their first female head of the party and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chose Begum Khaleda Zia as the first female party chairman in 1984. These two highly popular women leaders at the top of public office have entered into politics mainly because of family connections. Both are from political families who got substantial sympathy and support of the masses and the

media. While Khaleda Zia was the wife of former president General Zia (assassinated in 1981), who proclaimed independence of the country, Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of father of the nation, Sheikh Mujib (also assassinated in 1975). By this it may assume that in the political culture of Bangladesh mostly depends women entry in politics according to their family's past or present direct involvement in the power structure and social activities.

4.3.3 Bangladesh Politics (1991-2014)

Even so, Bangladesh occupies a unique position of having had successive women prime ministers- (Begum Khaleda Zia (1991-1995 and 2001-2006), Sheikh Hasina (1996-2000 and 2009-present) an exceptional feature in world politics. In term of catching the attention and support of lot of followers Both Khaleda and Hasina are successful to be popular and powerful leaders, and effectively directed their respective parties. Notably they also fought cooperatively against the authoritarian regime of President Ershad in 1990.²⁹ At present, there is no other country in the world where both the head of the government and leader of the opposition are women except Bangladesh. So of that, women in Bangladesh should enjoy a distinct advantage in advancing their rights of political participation for getting equality. Nevertheless, that does not portray the real picture of Womens' participation in politics.

Despite having women leaders at the top, women remain extremely excluded from government and politics and subjected to domination and discrimination in the political platform. Moreover, existing laws seem tremendously unable to protect women affective from violence and economic deprivation. On the other hand in party hierarchical structure women contribution seems drastically low. The BNP and the AL have yet to involve women

²⁹ Begum Khaleda Zia became the first woman Prime Minister in a male-dominated society and politics of Bangladesh.

in their inner circle of advisers. Certainly, tiny expansion of women in the sphere of politics has taken place since women appearance in relentless economic and social restraints as well as cultural hindrances. Besides social biases and situational barriers, women also lack education and the support of parties and volunteers. Therefore, the status of women has remained very stumpy, gloomy, along with disheartening. A leading woman activist of Bangladesh emphasizes that male politicians take it for granted that politics is a matter of black money and armed hooliganism coupled with pressuring voters to vote by visiting house to house.³⁰ Women have not been part of this rough political process or generally disqualified according to their nature.

None of the major political parties of Bangladesh such as the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL) have in reality called attention to women issues or else supported Womens' participation in public life. If truth be told, enthusiasm has not yet been seen from the above two major parties about increasing the share of women direct participation in politics. For instance, in the seventh general election held in June 1996, only 24 women candidates had been extended nomination by the major political parties. It is worth mentioning that the extreme right party, the Jamat-e- Islami (JI) did not nominate a single woman in any elections, as it has been always strongly opposed to gender equality and particularly Womens' participation in politics.³¹ Some "Mullahs" (local religious fundamentalists) openly condemn those women pursuing public life. Although statistically very insignificant, one may point out that in one union in the country namely, 'Kalikapur' located in the Madaripur district, women are still prevented from going to the pooling centers

³⁰ For details see *Daily Janakantha*, 13 May 2000.

³¹ In the 1996 parliamentary elections, Jamat-e-Islami won 3 seats and obtained 8.62% of the total votes cast.

because of local “fatwas” declaring that it is inappropriate for women to vote (Shehabuddin, 1999).

In the 2001 Bangladesh parliamentary elections more than 56 women candidates contested in different constituencies. A total of 30 candidates were being nominated from the major political parties where the AL nominated ten female candidates for fourteen seats remained highest in this election. Among 14 seats the AL Chief Sheikh Hasina contested for five seats along and she was elected from four constituencies. Another nominee of AL, Hamida Banu Shova, was also elected, but eight other AL female candidates including former ministers of AL Motia Chowdhury, Sajeda Chowdhury, and Jinnatunnessa Talukder were defeated in the election. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia also contested for five seats and she was consequently elected from all. Due to their mass popularity and the lack of credible opposition in most of these constituencies Khaleda and Hasina’s got victory from multiple constituencies. In the 2001 elections, two other BNP nominated female candidates, Khurshid Jahan Haque and Israt Sultana (Elen Bhuttu), were also elected. Thus, BNP female candidates won seven seats out of eight contested. The Islami Jatiyo Oikya Front elected Rowshan Ershad, wife of former President Ershad, as a candidate. A record number of nine female candidates ran for election as independents, but not surprisingly they were all defeated due to lack of party sponsorship, campaign money, and group support.

In the 2001 elections 76 percent of voter turnout which was very high and significant compared to many developed countries, This awe-inspiring turnout of women voters in a dominant Muslim society could be largely recognized to Womens’ increasing political consciousness. As well as special arrangements by the government, such as provision of separate booths for women voters exclusively conducted by female presiding and pooling

officers proved government attempt on this occasion to increase women political intervention. In the rural areas, then substantial numbers of female voters came to exercise their right to vote in confronting severe weather, the inconvenient transportation system, and disregarding household work and long hours of waiting. Observers point out that women voters came to the polling stations as the election was held under the “Care-taker government”³² who ensured security by deploying armed forces, police, and other responsible for the law and order situation. Women could cast their vote without any coercion, fear, and political violence and they turned out to do so. This indicates that although women are increasingly eager to participate in national elections if the situation remains supportive, their representation remains otherwise low during most elections.

Running for the Bangladesh Parliament is in reality a harsh and strenuous exercise as a consequence of the rising high levels of campaign costs and pre and post elections violence. As a result entering of women in direct politics and competing in election inspiring to be deterrent. Moreover, women candidates in parliamentary elections generally do not have full-fledged campaign strategy, sufficient volunteers, and a broad network. They are not at all enthusiastic to give shelter to the hooligans in order to capture polling centers. As pointed out by an observer, in order to capture the polling booths; and purchase voters, motorcycles, and gangster, the major parties prefer to nominate those who have enormous amount of black money as well as their own motorcycles and musclemen.³³ Ignoring the ideology to select leadership in terms of quality and devoted in the nomination process has usually seen in nature of the major political parties. All these clarify why Bangladeshi women are disadvantaged and discouraged when competing for political office against men. In the term

³² The 13th amendment to the constitution of Bangladesh provided for a Caretaker government to conduct a free and fare election in the country.

³³ See, *Daily Star*, 19 August 2000.

of harsh dominance by male money plays a dominant role in politics and elections everywhere, the extent of black money, muscle power, and violence that characterize the national elections in Bangladesh poses an extraordinary barrier to Women's participation and thus casts doubt on whether it is a fully functioning democracy. Table 4.1 below provided the position of elected women members to the Bangladesh *Jatiyo Sangsad* (National Parliament) during 1973-2014.

Table 4.1

Elected Women's Members to the Bangladesh Parliament (1973-2014)

Year of election	% of Women candidates	Won in Direct seats and by-Elections	Total elected women	Reserved Seats	% of women in the parliament
1973	0.3	0	0	15	4.8 (out of 315 seats)
1979	0.9	0+2	2	30	9.6 (out of 330 seats)
1986	1.3	5+2	7	30	11.21 (out of 330 seats)
1988	0.7	4	4	0	1.31 (out of 300 seats)
1991	1.5	8 +1	9	30	11.81(out of 330 seats)
1996	1.36	13+2	15	30	13.03 (out of 330 seats)
2001	1.79	6	6	45	13.62 (out of 345 seats)
2008	-	19+1	20	50	20 (out of 350 seats)
2014	-	19	19	50	19.71 (out of 350 seats)

Source: Election Commission of Bangladesh.

Table 4.1 shows that in 2009, the Bangladesh Parliament had the highest representation of women (20%) including the reserved seats. However, in the 1988 Parliaments, the provisions for 30 reserved seats for women were not maintained, which resulted in fewer women represented in the Parliament. In respect of the reservation of seats for women, the debate continues. The Election Commission of Bangladesh observed that 'whether the present system of reservation of 30 seats for women in the parliament should be continued in its present form or in some other suitable system should be reviewed.'³⁴ Women leaders demand that there should be at least 100 seats in the national parliament where women representatives would be elected by the direct voting of the electorate.

³⁴ See Bangladesh Election Commission, "Gender and the electoral process", 2001-2003.

Table-4.2
Women Representation in Bangladesh Parliament (1973-2014)

Parliament	Direct elected	Reserved seats	Total representation	Average Women representation (%)
First Parliament (1973)	0	15	15	4.80
Second Parliament (1979)	2	30	32	9.70
Third Parliament (1986)	5	30	35	10.6
Fourth Parliament (1988)	4	00	4	1.30
Fifth Parliament (1991)	4	30	34	10.30
Sixth Parliament (1996)	3	30	33	10
Seven Parliament (1996)	8	30	38	11.5
Eight Parliament (2001)	7	45	52	15.1
Ninth Parliament (2008)	20	50	70	20
Tenth Parliament (2014)	19	50	69	19.71

Source: Election Commission of Bangladesh.

Table 4 shows that total representation of women in first parliament is 15 whereby they all were elected on their reserved seats remain 4.8% of total member of parliament where second and third parliament shows little increase of 9.7 and 10.6% of total elected member but due to provision of no reserved sit in fourth parliament women participation remain lowest in 1.30%. However, provision of reserved seat had been ensured from fifth parliament where in fifth parliament and sixth parliament women participation was approximately same 10.30 % and 10%. Women participation in parliament of Bangladesh has been gradually increased in seven, eight and ninth parliament respectively 11.5%, 15% and 20%. Hence the number of reserved seat also increased gradually from 30 to 50.

Women in Cabinet

In seventh parliament (1996) Prime Sheikh Hasina inducted three women leaders in her 42-member cabinet including herself. Other women cabinet ministers included Motia Chowdhuri (Minister for Agriculture) and Sajeda Chowdhury (Minister for Environment and Forest). Women cabinet members did not increase afterwards. Sheikh Hasina lost in the 2001 parliamentary elections and Khaleda Zia was again elected as the prime minister for the

second time in eighth parliament. The BNP-led coalition government of Khaleda Zia has also included three women cabinet ministers (excluding herself) in the unprecedented 62-member large cabinet. These women are Khurshid Jahan Huq (Minister for Women and Children Affairs), Begum Selima Rahman (Minister for Cultural Affairs), and Jahanara Begum (Adviser for Primary and Mass Education).

But in nine parliament AL-led grand coalition government of Sheikh Hasina has also included six women cabinet ministers (excluding herself) in the unprecedented 58-member large cabinet. These women are Motia Chowdhuri (Minister for Agriculture), Dr. Dipu Moni (Minister for Foreign Affairs) Maher Afroj Chumki (State Minister for Women and Children Affairs), Shahara Khatun (Minister for Telecommunication), and Munno Jan Sufian (State minister for Labour and employment) and first time in history a female women member appointed as a speaker (Shireen Sharmeen chowdhury). Additionally, woman was appointed as a committee chairperson in two committees out of thirty-five Standing Committees of the national parliament during 2008-present. Thus, women leaders in Bangladesh have had very limited access to the highest decision-making bodies. It is apparent that women ministers are assigned somewhat 'soft' ministries perceived by the aspirant political leaders. The same politically and financially influential men belonging to large political parties have always dominated government and politics and occupied more significant ministries. Table 5 below presented the women participation in cabinet in different parliament.

In present parliament (2014) four women legislature are in cabinet where as Prime minister, minister of agriculture and other two state minister respectably served. Which denote lesser in number from previous nine parliament.

Table-4.3
Women in Cabinet: 8th, 9th and 10th Parliament

No.	Officials Incumbent	Title	Secretariat and Executive offices
	Seven Parliament (1996-2001)		
	Sheikh Hasina	Prime Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Establishment • Cabinet Division • Ministry of Defence • Armed Forces Division • Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources.
	Begum Matia Chowdhury	Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture
	Shajada Chowdhury	Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest and Environment
	Eight Parliament (2001-2007)		
1	Begum Khaleda Zia	Prime Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Establishment • Cabinet Division • Ministry of Defence • Armed Forces Division • Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources.
2	Kurshid Zahan Haque	Minister of State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women & Children Affairs
3	Begum Salina Rahman	Minister of State	
	Ninth Parliament (2009-13)		
1	Sheikh Hasina	Prime Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Public Administration • Cabinet Division • Ministry of Defence • Armed Forces Division • Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources.
2	Begum Matia Chowdhury	Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture
3	Shahara Khatun	Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts and Telecommunications
4	Dr. Dipu Moni	Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Foreign Affairs
5	Begum Monnujan Sufian	Minister of State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour and Employment
6	Meher Afroze	Minister of State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women & Children Affairs
	Ten Parliament (2014- till)		
1	Sheikh Hasina	Prime Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Public Administration • Cabinet Division • Ministry of Defence • Armed Forces Division • Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources • Ministry of Home affairs • Ministry of Public administration
2	Begum Matia Chowdhury	Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Agriculture
3	Meher Afroze	Minister of State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women & Children Affairs
4	Esmoth Era Sadak	Minister of State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public administration

Source: Cabinet division, Government of Bangladesh.

4.4 Determinants of Womens' Political Participation in Bangladesh

In the earlier section, an attempt was made to point out the present status of Womens' participation in the local governance in Bangladesh. Due to commencement of a number of amendments in the Constitution by government to increase Womens' participation in the political process, the presence of women in local governments has increased noticeably. Now the important question that needs to be answered is this: What are the determinants of Womens' participation in Bangladesh? In the following section an effort is made to identify those determinants and analyze their role in explaining Womens' participation in Bangladesh.

State

The nature of state politics have been determined by the diverse courses and political development processes and it took as root to maintain this characteristic. Bangladesh has moved from Parliamentary to military rule to the presidential system, and sought integration into the regional and global economy which the state seems as agent for socio political socio-political reformation. Given the privileged classes and groups' inherited political power, any opportunity that women obtained were through the benevolence of the state (Mumtaz, 2005). The turmoil that accompanied independence, in case of India, opened spaces for women and legitimized their participation at the public level (Mumtaz, 2005). It took final shape when the Government of India passed the 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution, ensuring 33% reservation of seats for women in the local level. The emerging democracy of Bangladesh began its drive with the overthrow of autocratic rule by a mass movement in the end of 1990. Since then democratization of local government units has become a priority for the government. That is why in 1993 the Local Government Ordinance, 1983 was amended to recognize the UP wards from existing three to nine new wards. Moreover, by getting liberate of the nomination system of women members, the amendment endowed with for indirect

election of three women members- by the chairman and members of the respective UPs. Again, direct election for women members was introduced, by the amendment of the ordinance in 1997; therefore, the changes in UP structure have been accounted to a degree as the democratic transition in the country.

Constitution

The Constitution plays a vital role for guaranteeing Womens' political participation in any countries. For instance, the Indian Constitution has been committed to introducing socio-economic and political transformation. The initiatives to empower women and the marginalized sections are reflections of the democratic spirit of the Indian Constitution and can be brought together from a number of amendments in these fields, especially, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts that provide for Womens' entry into the political sphere (Shamim and Kumari, 2002).

Like the Indian Constitution, the Constitution of Bangladesh also provides for equality of men and women. There is no legal barrier to women contesting or voting for any elective office, including that of the head of the state. Article 9 of the Constitution promotes the special representation of women in local government³⁵.

Fortunately, the local level representation of women at the upazilla level has increased remarkably. This is a noteworthy move to empower the women from the grass roots level. This is consistent with the Constitution of Bangladesh that provides in Article 9 of the Constitution: "The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of

³⁵ Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2011

representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given as far as possible to peasants, workers and women."

Political Parities

In recent times, to influence and to make pressure on the government to initiate changes for increasing Womens' participation, opposition political parties have been acted as a powerful engine. The party in power all too often has strong incentives to elude accountability in many aspects, but opposition parties have their own inducement to uncover wrongdoings of the government and publicly persecute incumbents of their misdeeds. In the case of India, over the decades, political parties played a crucial role in furthering the issue of Womens' equal participation. Another significant factor is that in India, local government election is conducted on party basis. In this regard, political parties play an important role from candidate selection to election. But, the case of Bangladesh is quite different: due to political instability, opposition parties always remain busy criticizing the government. They have hardly any time to raise their voices or create pressure on the government to initiate affirmative changes in regards to women. But, there are some leftist political parties who are more vocal on these issues by their ideology of equality, but the voice gives no result cause of being have no continues representation in parliament. As a result, their voices are not taken into consideration by the government. But in present 2010-11 local government election in Bangladesh is conducted on a party basis. That is an optimistic attitudes for political parties will be showed big attention in the course of Womens' participation at the local level. Moreover, both the leading political parties in Bangladesh are headed by women chairperson, but it is a matter of regret that the position of women in general remains discouraging³⁶.

³⁶ One possible explanation might be that both leaders do not want to be gender biased by advocating for women or by initiating several affirmative actions designed for the improvement of women in Bangladesh.

Table 3.4 denotes the number of women politician in different political parties in Bangladesh. According to statistics of Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) party standing committee has been organized by 14 member where women position remain only one compare to their central executive committee, among 164 member women are carried only 11 position. This scenario remains overwhelming on Bangladesh Awami-league where 5 women served as presidium member within 36 member and in central executive committee among 201 member the number of women participation remains only 6. This scenario usually same in other political party except Jamaity Islami where no women participation was reported in their two important committee.

Table-4.4
Women in Political Parties of Bangladesh

Parliament	Name of the high level committee	Total member	Women member
Bangladesh Natinalist party (BNP)	National standing committee	14	1
	National Executive committee	164	11
Bangladesh Awamiligue (AL)	Presidium	36	5
	Central Executive committee	201	6
Jatio Party (JP)	National standing committee	31	2
	Executive committee	201	6
Jamathy Islami	Mojlish-e Shura	200	0
	Mojlish e- amla	24	0
Bangladesh Communist party	Presidium	-	-
	Central committee	31	1

Civil Society

Civil society is usually defined as organizational activity between the individual (or the family) and the state. Its democratic roles are to advocate for constituents, to act as watchdog over the state, and to support political competition generally (Hansen, 1996, cited in Blair, 2000). According to USAID and several donor agencies, civil society is essential for democratic local government (Blair, 2000). To ensure democratic local government (DLG), it is fundamental to ensure equal participation of women in the decision making process. In this

context, pursuant the issue of DLG civil society plays a strong role to ensure Womens' participation.

One would assume that civil society has at least gotten off to a good start at the national and state (and to some extent the district) levels, where organizations of women, environmentalists, professionals, farmers, and others have occupied a prominent role in the political landscape for some time. However, Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in Bangladesh are different from those of India. Before 1990, there were hardly any CSOs in Bangladesh. After the restoration of Democracy in 1991, several of them have been in operation. But, these organizations have not been successful in furthering Womens' issue because of two reasons: First of that an inadequate number of civil society organizations that deals with Womens' issue and the rest the partisan characteristics of these organizations. The CSOs are clearly divided in two political streams. One allied to Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and other to Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). That is why these organizations failed to capture the confidence of the general public, as well as government.

Womens' Organizations

Womens' own agencies have been key factors that led both the governments of India and Bangladesh to bring about transforms in policies regarding Womens' participation in politics along with they are fighting to ensure equal social and political rights for women. The experience in India and Bangladesh reveals that Womens' activism achieved them in the space that they now have and which they also have to preserve and protect.

In Bangladesh, towards the end of 2001, when the provision of reservation of 30 seats in the National Parliaments lapsed, the movement by several women organizations mounted a

concerted effort to mobilize opinion and create the necessary political will to provide for a quota system that reflected their stand. Before the impending dissolution of Parliament in 2001, some 20 Womens' groups mobilized by Mohila Parishad (Womens' Council--the largest movement oriented Womens' organization) lobbied the government, political parties and parliamentarians. Women activists carried on street activities, formed human chains, and staged rallies and symbolic protests advocating increasing the number of reserved seats in the Parliament, as well as introducing the system of direct election for women in those seats. However, this heightened level of advocacy failed to have enough impact on the Government of Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2002).

Although the number of reserved seats from 30 to 45 has been increased, the system of election remained the same. When the government passed the bill for reservation of 45 seats for women in the parliament (by 14th amendment), the Womens' agencies went to court challenging the acts of the government, particularly the provision of indirect election, but the Court had rejected their challenge. Along with advocating Womens' equal rights, these Womens' organizations always remained active to organize various training programs to build women leadership capacity. As Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), a mass-based organization was established in 1970. Committed to a society based on gender equality, democracy and peace, it has played a key role in promoting Womens' formal participation and has worked on training programs for escalating women political representatives. Identifying the latter's main problem as isolation and hostility and disregard from male colleagues, BMP decided to intervene in three constituencies to address these problems. The BMP's strategy was to develop support groups for three women representatives--one from an urban council and two from the union parishad. Each support group was made up of 15 women from the representatives' constituency and included BMP members. The members

were trained by BMP to enable them to provide support to the elected representative. They organized constituency meetings, built alliances with influential political leaders and linked the representatives with government officials. They also built the capacity of elected women and organized joint training for women and male elected members of the councils. The result was that elected women attended council meetings and questioned procedures, thus developing transparency; became more active and succeeded in getting development projects for their areas; took up gender specific issue; and set up an autonomous Womens' cell (Mukhopadyay and Meer, 2004). Thus, Womens' organizations not only created pressure on the government to initiate policy in favor of ensuring equal participation, but also organized several training programs for women members to help them realize what is good for them, what their rights are and what they should do.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Demand accelerated for more women representation in government and politics from some concerned women; however the presence of women representatives in both national and local level politics has remained relatively low. The ever-growing contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) by in furthering the cause of equal rights of women in every sphere in life has influenced the government to a large extent. , NGOs are conducting several training programs for women over the last few decades in Bangladesh, along with advocating for Womens' equal rights. NGOs have been actively involved in training over a thousand of union parished and upzilla parished members in the state, a majority of who are poor, uneducated and helpless which is being complex task. NGOs have played a key role in generating consciousness and mobilizing the people (Sharan, 1998). While there are a large number of NGOs in Bangladesh, working to help women win confidence and gain more

knowledge about their role as Union/Upzila Parishad members, their capacity via training varies greatly.

Independent Womens' groups, activists, and NGOs in Bangladesh such as "Jatiya Mahila Shanshad", "Women for Women", "Naripokho", "Bangladesh National Womens' Lawyer Association" (BNWLA), "Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha", "Democracy Watch", and "Khan Foundation" are strong advocates of Womens' rights, gender equality, and Womens' empowerment. Affirmative action and positive policies have been demanded from their side to redress the current problem caused by continual discrimination and denial of Womens' participation in politics. Nonetheless, the struggle for Womens' political equality in Bangladesh still has a long way to go, despite the efforts of Womens' organizations and groups.

Along with advocating equal rights for women, sometimes these NGOs play a direct role in politics. Some NGOs through their umbrella organization, Association of Development Agencies of Bangladesh (ADAB),³⁷ indeed played a proactive role in national politics during the mass movement³⁸ which emerged against the Khaleda Zia regime in the mid-1990s. In the election of 1996, ADAB coordinated a Democracy Awareness Education Program through which 15,000 trainers ran awareness raising workshop across the country, contributing to an impressive voter turnout of 74% (Ashman, 1997).

³⁷ ADAB was the leading umbrella organizations of NGOs in Bangladesh.

³⁸ In 1996, a political turmoil took place in Bangladesh politics in regards to the controversial election of 15th February, 1996. All opposition political parties boycotted the election and was advocating for passing the bill of 'Non-partisan Care taker Government' to conduct a free and fair election in Bangladesh. Ignoring the opposition's demand, the then Government led by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia went for contesting the election alone but the continuous mass movement compelled the Government to resign accepting the opposition demand for 'Non-partisan Care Taker Government'.

These activities encouraged both men and women to involve themselves in electoral politics, especially women members who gained immense knowledge from these programs. Another example is the efforts of Gono Shahajjo Sangstha (GSS).³⁹ While encouraging its landless group members as candidates in local union parishad election in Nilphamari⁴⁰ it was brutally confronted by local landlords, who burnt the NGO's schools, attacked staff and members and conducted a house to house search to seize books and publications (Hashemi, 1995). All these activities of NGOs build awareness among its women members in regards to their involvement in the political process. They furthermore produce enormous pressure on the government to make necessary changes in their policies regarding Womens' participation.

Media

Media plays a crucial role in bringing about changes in the society. The messages that are played and replayed through media go a long way in influencing the mindsets of the reader, audience and the viewer. This has resulted in the implementation of gender-sensitizing projects in various sectors within South Asia. In recent times, the media has played an important role for promoting Womens' issues. In fact, the media's role can attributed in twofold. On the one hand it brings Womens' issue to the government's arena, on the other; it informs the general mass about the government's decision on a particular issue. In this regard the media highlights the issues of Womens' equal rights and demands government decisions. But, this contribution of media was unfolded because the media in Bangladesh until 1990 was totally controlled by the government. After, 1991, several private TV and radio channels emerged. This emerging electronic media in the country has brought about a striking change: An active presence of female faces on the screen competing with their male colleagues. News

³⁹ GSS is the name of a NGO in Bangladesh.

⁴⁰ Nilphamari is the name of a district in Bangladesh.

channels now have more, female reporters, if not an equal number of male and female reporters. The electronic media, consequently, reflects a new scenario: a trend of gender empowerment reflected in the presence of women journalists who occupy important roles on taking more tasks to disclose important fact toward mass people. These channels are highlighting gender issues to a great extent. They broadcast different programs on women and present women leaders in front of the audiences with an intention of increasing the level of awareness of the general women. Along with the broadcast media, there are more than 430 daily newspapers published from various corners of Bangladesh.⁴¹ The situation in India is much better than Bangladesh as both print and broadcast media are free from government control. These newspapers and broadcast media, build public opinion which compels the government to accept changes.

Various international events like Womens' Day, etc., are also highlighted in the media. The entire perspective could have been different if more women were involved in the decision-making panels, drawing attention of the policymakers to the praxis that Womens' empowerment is strongly connected with development issues.

Conclusion

Women make up half of the population of every country in the world, yet, in no country, do women composition 50% of the national legislature. For years, Sweden reigned as the country with the highest percentage of women in its parliament. In 2003, however, Rwanda achieved 48.8% women in its legislature. The fact that Rwanda and Sweden rank first and second in Womens' legislative presence suggests that one cannot assume that women do better in Western industrialized nations. Britain for example ranks 52nd and is behind Mexico, Namibia and Vietnam. Interesting enough, the United States in 2005 was ranked

⁴¹ TIB (2013), Governance in Print Media.

61st falling behind Ecuador, and Zimbabwe. The story of women, politics and power is therefore poles apart than that of women in education or women in the labor force. Despite of having women remarkable progression in higher education and conventionally male occupations as well, the political sphere remains an arena where women have far to go⁴². The long history of struggles in South Asia--from Womens' suffrage to Womens' participation in electoral politics at national and local levels-is an ongoing process. The state's initiatives of conceding quotas or reservation for women have proved to be a mixed bag. Still women of Bangladesh have been facing numerous social, religious and political hindrances while participating in local level governance as well as national level.

⁴² Paxton, Pamela and Hughes Melanie, 2007. *Women, Politics, And Power: A Global Perspective*. Pine Forge Press: Los Angeles, United States of America.

Chapter Five

Obstacles of Womens' Political Participation in Bangladesh

This chapter analyzes and discusses the results and other relevant issues to obstacles and hindrance of women political participation in Bangladesh. To indicate different obstacle on women participation in politics in this chapter we analyzes data from a survey conducting for this research. Existing information was divided in six large categories for analyzing. On this regard statement from key informant interview also considered to analysis with regarding issues.

5.1 Perception about the state of women politics

A large proportion of respondent 58% indicate the state of women participation is only a system of constitutional and legal obligation. However, among respondent 14% considered it at will and 10% indulge something imposing. Interestingly in term of decorative the proportion increased slightly 18%.

Perception on current state of women politics

Self-motivation	14%
Constitutional and legal obligations	58%
Imposed	10%
Decorative	18%

Note: *Single response count*

Chart-1

Respondent satisfaction on current level of women participation in Bangladesh politics

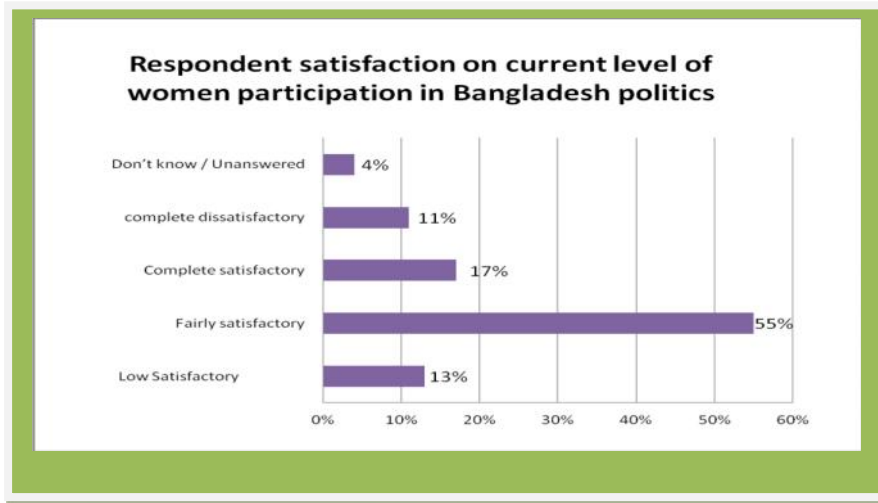
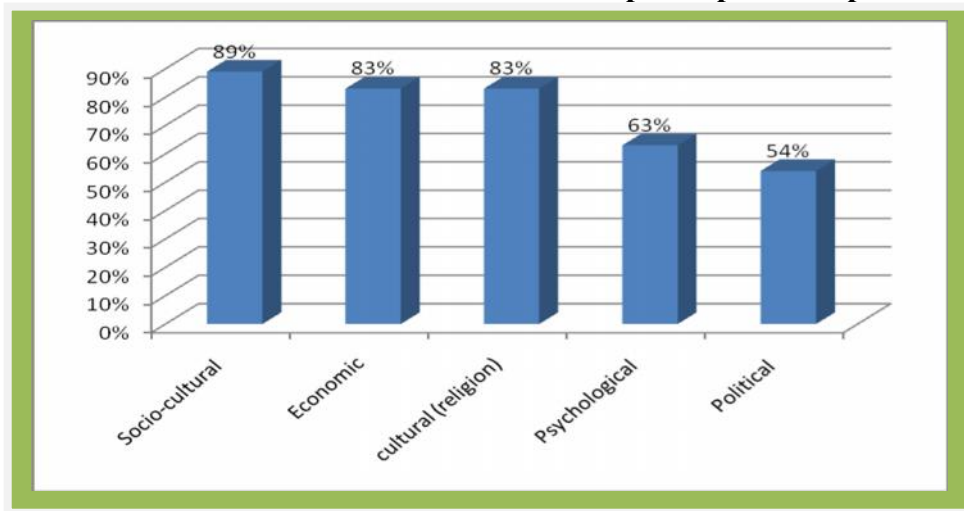


Chart one shows that 13% respondent prefer current level of women participation in politics as low satisfactory whether 55% think it as fairly satisfactory. But whenever respondent decided participation level as complete satisfactory, the proportion decreased to large extent, 17%. Rest of the respondent 1% remains silent to answer and 3% aspire as lack of knowledge.

5.2 The major obstacle of women political participation on broad sense

Chart -2

Factor as main obstacle/barrier of women participation in politics



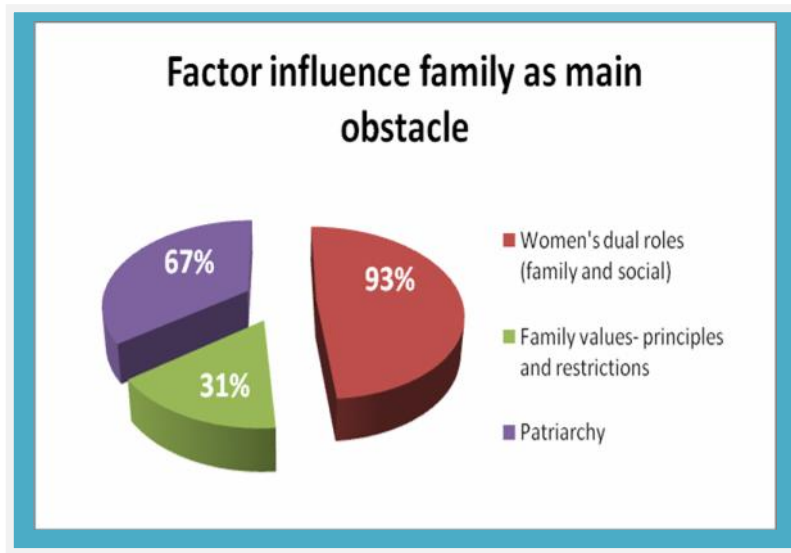
Note: Multiple response count

Most of the respondents 89% have decided women participation in politics would hinder by family, proportion of decision as main obstacle was women economic incapability and religion remain same 83%. Remarkably, more than two-third (63%) of overall interviewees opted occasional Political Environment as main barrier for women to participation. But data shows sharp decreased 10% on proportion of society-culture as an obstacle. Furthermore, 23% and 31% present respondent opined that inadequacy of the social condition and women mentality was main obstacle participating in politics.

Among them who think family as main barrier, 93% assume those Womens’ dual roles (family and social) make them incapable mostly being participant. Interestingly, only 31% answered as the family practice – policy and restrictions would here be influential factor. On the other hand, 67% of respondent indicated mainly patriarchy culture inherited in family being strong influential on giving obstruction women to participate in politics.

Chart- 3

Why family as a main obstacle in women participation in politics?



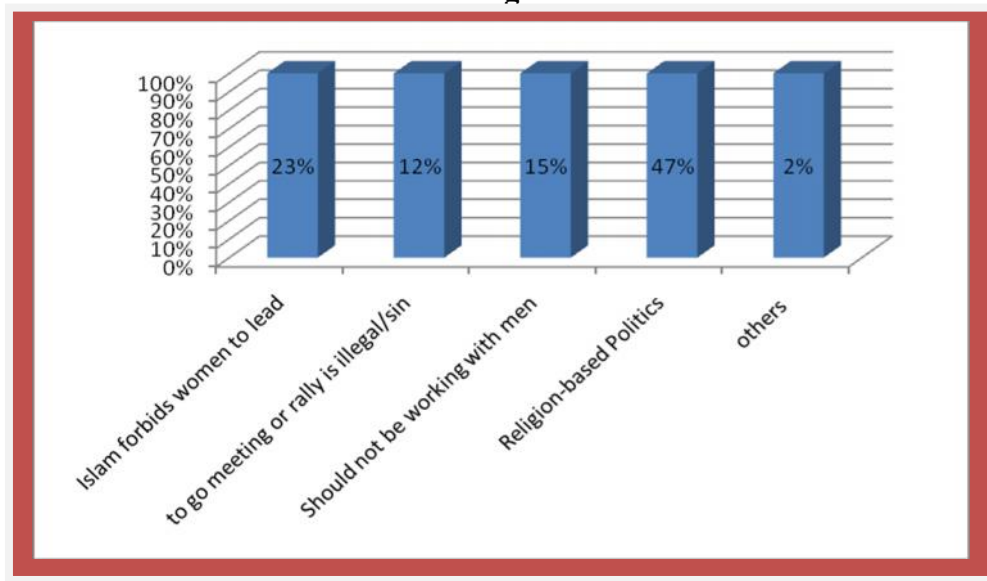
Note: *Single response count*

Lack of time for public life (activism and mandates) because of the need to judge family and career responsibilities is the obstacle most frequently cited all over the world. Not a single

respondent fails to mention it. The issue of time is clearly linked to family duties, which remain an accepted or imposed priority for many women, taking precedence over responsibilities to the polity or towards themselves.

The situation is aggravated by - Inadequate day-care facilities; Lack of family support, Failure of parties to adjust their timetables and meeting schedules and the general constraints of public life, which prompt a formal woman MP Mrs. Helen Jerin Khan from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has observed, "*Having experienced the work in top party and political posts, I consider executing such functions a demanding, exhausting and thankless task. Wise are those women who do not seek political posts*".

Chart 4
Factor influence religion as main obstacle



In respondent view among the factor **religion-based** politics has significant effect 47% on making obstruction to women participation in politics, on the other hand in the ground of forbidden rule from religion to go meeting or rally is illegal or sin and strong prohibition of working with men have expressed 12% and 15% of respondent. Moreover, 23% think that Islam forbids women to lead. Jabunnasa Haque a formal MP in Bangladesh Awami League

(AL) graphically summarizes traditional attitudes as follows: "*Women should not take part in political life - women belong in the kitchen*".

Ideological and Social Capital as hindrance to participate in politics

Lack of social mobility.	37%
Women relating subject has no contribution in political parties ideology and program	38%
Lack of women self-confidence.	53%
Absence of cooperation and Support from different Womens' organizations and NGOs	73%
Potential contribution of women has not promote in the media	91%

Note: *Multiple response count*

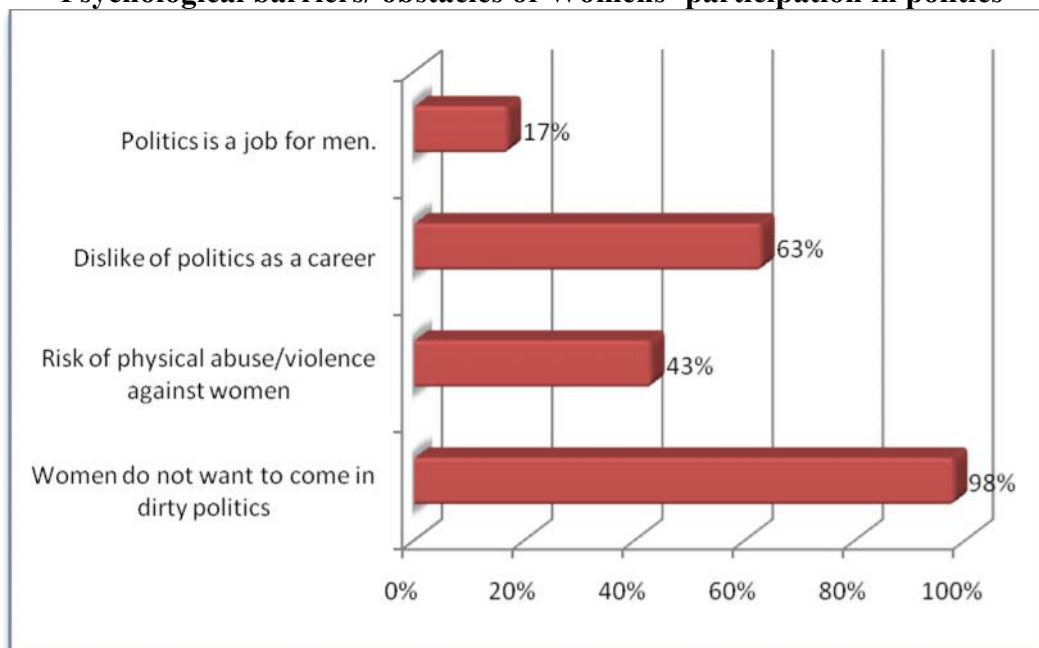
Thirty eight percent respondents supported that woman relating subject has no contribution in political party's ideology and program. 53% respondent figured out lack of women self-confidence is responsible for lacking of ideological and social capital. 37% indicated lack of social mobility but large proportion expressed their concern on absence of support and cooperation from different Womens' organizations and NGOs is being main cause to influence. Surprisingly, 91% alleged that media hadn't any potential contribution of women to promote reasoning lack of ideological and social capital as hindrance to participate women in politics.

A negative image in the media and everyday conversation: "Election campaign, electoral combat, wrangle, battle, arena, confrontation, win, lose, victory, defeat" - a series of warlike words that recur in the replies and are more frequently associated with male culture and upbringing. Hence the feeling among many women that they can make a more effective contribution outside the political arena, for example through voluntary organizations (like Mohila shomithi, Naripokko, etc.) or by pursuing a successful career.

Key informant's Jabunnasa Haque, Hamida Begum, Dipu Ray and Sabiha Sultana⁴³ frequently mentioned other factors are-lack of self-confidence, lack of fighting spirit, fear of incompetence, fear of conflict with family members, fear of slander and verbal or physical violence. All these factors reinforce or are reinforced by existing prejudices in cultures. One of key respondent Dipu Ray noted that “*deteriorating social conditions make women lose interest in political life*”.

Most of respondents mentioned illiteracy and inadequate education, training and political awareness. But similar factors are also saw in many European political parties (the Flemish Christian Social Party in Belgium, the Democratic Party in Cyprus, the Socialist Party in Hungary) and by the Social Democratic Party in Japan (Bécane, 1999).

Chart 5
Psychological barriers/ obstacles of Womens' participation in politics



Note: *Multiple response count*

⁴³ Interview with researcher, see details in appendix -3.

Most of interview 98% asked in term psychological barriers that women do not want to come in dirty politics. 43% respondents were aware of issue of risk of physical abuse and among the respondent 63% dislike politics as career. On the contrary, little proportion 17% denote politics is only for men career. Lack of motivation and the bad image of politics is a major obstacles of Womens' participation in politics. Lack of interest, which may be related to inadequate training but also to lack of faith in political activity, goes hand in hand with a critical image of politics. One of young women political activist (student wing) Diva Mahrunnasa tells, "*uneasiness with the whole political environment*"⁴⁴. Many key respondents describe a male-dominated macho milieu that discourages women. Jabunnasa Haque a formal MP in AL speaks⁴⁵, "*lack of interest due to the hostile climate and strong competition from men*".

Factors these are influences as a Political barriers for women to participate in politics

Failure to Intensive communication with high-level	93%
lack of support / initiative from political parties to increase the participation of women (financial and other)	89%
Unequal position of women in the party structure	84%
Women opinions is ignored in political decision-making process or used to just legalize	79%
The material and immaterial transaction environment Inside the party for getting post.	68%
Incompatibility of Quota system	66%
Male effective political institutions and political uses	63%
Election campaign based on black money, muscle power, party lobbying - grouping, etc. discourage Womens' participation	60%
Noncooperation and unfair competition of male colleagues to enter politics	53%
Electoral systems are not friendly to women	41%
women opinions are not Given the importance in politics	39%
Candidate nomination process is not women friendly	39%
Obligation to participate in risky political program	27%
Legal and policy rules is not conducive to Womens' participation	27%
Haughty behavior and illegal demand from senior leader and member	23%

Note: *Multiple response count*

⁴⁴ Interview with researcher at Dhaka, see details in appendix-3.

⁴⁵ Interview with researcher at Sylhet, see details in appendix-3.

Above table shows that 27% respondent considered as both destructive legal and policy rule and obligation to participate in risky political program may hindrance women to participate in politics. However two third (63%) of interview asked that male effective political institution is a political barrier for women as well as unequal position of political structure as political hindrance was supported by 84% respondent. Seemingly 89% respondent said lack of support from political parties creates no place for women in politics comparatively low level of proportion 23% has seemed on haughty behavior and illegal demand from senior leader and member as political barrier. Among the respondent 53% and 63% respectively assumed that Noncooperation and unfair competition of male colleagues to enter politics and the material and immaterial transaction environment inside the party for getting post are significant to make women lower proportion of participation in politics. According to a national level women activist and key informant Farida Yesmin mentions, "*Politics is generally considered a malpractice of rough competition*". And one of women activist and academician Hamida Begum speaks of "*society's disillusionment with politics*"⁴⁶.

However, large proportion of respondent 93% opined that Failure to Intensive communication with high-level could reject women nomination in election and in political structure. On the contrary proportion of opinion have been decreased sharply when factor of Candidate nomination process is not women friendly and Election campaign of black money, muscle power, party lobbying - grouping, etc. came as political hindrance in front of respondent respectively 39% and 10%.

All respondents who are directly involved in national politics mention difficulties /Obstacles within parties, especially when it comes to nominating candidates. According to one of respondent Mrs. , "*the party takes less vigorous action in support of women candidates*".

⁴⁶ Interview with researcher, see details in Appendix-3.

According to some respondents, parties still fear that the electorate is reluctant to vote for women candidates.

In addition, 41% expressed their concern that electoral process is not women friendly and 66% alleged incompatibility of quota system as political hindrance to women participation. As usually from the view of 79% opinion of women is ignored in political decision making or just used to validate but one third opted women opinions are not given important in politics.

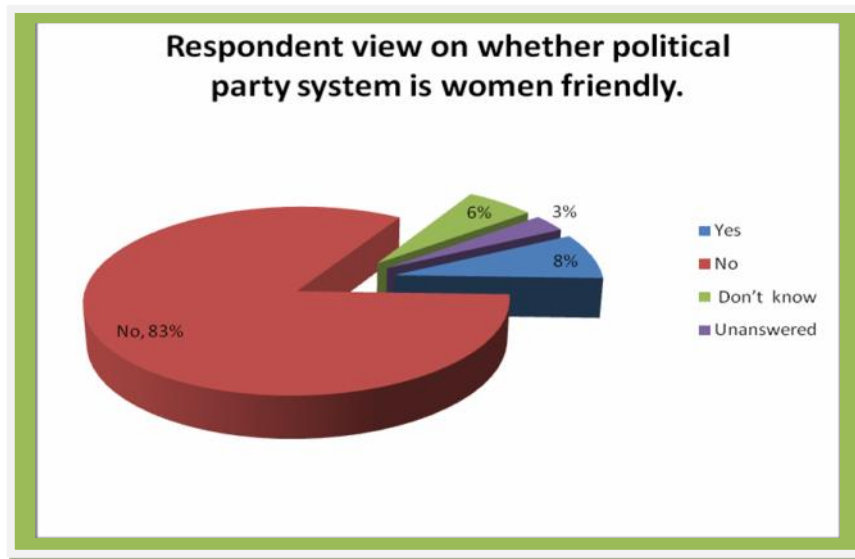
Socio-economic Barriers to women participation in politics

Womens' penury and unemployment interrupted on participation in politics	79%
Inadequacy of education, training, and other facilities	39%
Women disability to expense money in party politics	87%
Violence against women	91%
Failure to comply terror, extortion, muscle power depending supporter group	98%

Note: *Multiple response count*

Table shows that 79% respondent prefer Womens' penury and unemployment as socio economic barrier, conversely all respondent approximately 98% belief that women are not able to participate cause of failure to comply terror, extortion, muscle power depending supporter group as well as violence against women is most influential was believed by 91% respondent whether 87% expressed their view on women disability to expense money in party politics seems as socio-economic barrier to participate in politics. Only thirty percent gave preference women inadequacy of education, training and other facilities.

Chart-6



Among respondent 8% only prefer women friendly party system has been exist in present atmosphere adversely 83% respondent differ it. Rest 6% and 3% haven't idea or remained silent to answer.

Respondents were asked at the end of the questionnaire to list the obstacles to candidacy for political office that were cited by women. It was the question that elicited the most detailed replies and the largest number of comments. Certain themes recur, regardless of the region and position on the spectrum of the parties concerned, conveying the impression that the barriers to access to politics are general and universal. One of local level women activist and councilor of City corporation Mrs. Sabiha Sultana notes that "*Problems are no longer in the law but in people's heads - attitudes*".

It is significant that most obstacles to progress consist, as so often in the case of women, in deficiencies of various kinds: the complications of everyday life, lack of time because of the priority accorded to family or career, lack of training, lack of money, insufficient media

influence and, above all, the survival everywhere of traditional prejudices and stereotypes regarding the putative roles of men and women in the family and public life. All of these factors reflect the persistence of traditional stereotypes of male and female social roles and a somewhat negative image of politics. They are compounded by the persistent inferiority complex and sense of inadequacy that make women reluctant to become involved in public life.

Conclusion

The 20th century adopted achievement of women access to political, economic and social rights leading changes women condition but, even women have partly succeeded in getting the strength to combat against discrimination based gender disparities still remain in many fields. In reality fact is that women continue to face both old and new challenges in society. The persisting challenges include: balancing work and family obligations; segregation into lower-paid jobs; inequality of pay between men and women; the feminization of poverty; increases in violence against women; obligation of religion women should excluded from politics.

Despite government in many countries attempt to remove the legal barriers to Womens' political participation, government remain male dominated in their existing nature. Various factors influence Womens' *access to decision-making bodies*, including- lack of party support, including financial and other resources to fund Womens' campaigns and boost their political, social and economic credibility; the type of electoral system as well as the type of quota provisions and the degree to which they are enforced; the tailoring of many of these institutions according to male standards and political attitudes; the lack of coordination with and support from Womens' organizations and other NGOs; Womens' low self-esteem and

self-confidence, endorsed by certain cultural patterns which do not facilitate Womens' access to political careers; and the lack of media attention to Womens' contributions and potential, which also results in the lack of a constituency for women.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Obstacles vary according to the political situation in each country. However it has different in developed and developing countries. Thus this research has an attempt to make reasonable relation in some important indicator in term of wider obstacle to women exclusion from politics. According to field survey it is assumed those respondent factors are as obstacle family, religion and occasional political environment. In these context women dual roles in family and patriarchy culture in family motive may strong in family toward stopping women in political participation. On the other hand in analysis on religion indicator religion based politics has comparatively larger contribution among other indicator. Current state of women participation according to data denoted mostly base on constitutional and legal barrier. This mainly ensure by quota system where a little number of participant think this quota has lower effectiveness in local level and no value to increase women participation in national level, moreover it is barrier to women real empowerment being thought and a large proportion have expressed concern to reduce quota system gradually, hence women could attain in direct election. As ideological barrier most of the women ascribe politics as dirty game and several ensure that they face to lack of confidence to participate in politics, as well number of participant shows their disgrace to take politics as their carrier. However absence of cooperation in NGOs and institution or organization acting key role to ensure women participation also recognized important barrier along with lack of media role to promote women contribution. Regarding political barrier significant obstacle stream from mostly male dominated political institution where women remain unequal position in party structure; they are deprived from party support whether it is in the ground of financial or other influence women less participation. Regarding male domination nature from male colleague they have little access to make communication with party high level and culture of the material and

immaterial transaction environment inside the party for getting post deprive them from this completion has been assure large proportion of respondent. Overall women opinions are ignored in party decision making process.

Survey show that 66% respondent alleged incompatibility of quota system as political hindrance to women participation. Most women enter office through methods which do not base the selection of women politicians on the preferences of women as an electoral constituency. In most countries, affirmative action to feminize legislatures is pursued through voluntary or imposed quotas – political parties must front women candidates for a proportion of the seats they contest (Htun, 2004). Quotas are widely seen as a legitimate means of remedying Womens' under- representation precisely because they acknowledge that women do not constitute a politically distinct group with interests limited to gender-related concerns. Gender does not map onto distinct geographic areas or constituencies in the way that ethnic or racial differences can do. Quotas enable women to participate in political parties, but those parties' agendas represent a range of often competing perspectives. As Anne Phillips points out, if the parties that women join do not advocate 'an explicitly woman-friendly programme (which men might claim they were equally capable of pursuing) there is no guarantee that women will represent Womens' interests': 'gender parity is in this sense a shot in the dark' (Phillips, 1995).

The development of democratic principles in public life and the economic development of a society being impoverished and inhibited for excluding women from positions of power and from elected bodies. According to nature existing in society where Men, who do not necessarily support Womens' political participation, dominate the majority of governing institutions, it remains imperative to emphasize that women must lead the process to organize

and mobilize their networks, learn to communicate their interests with their male counterparts and different organizations, and push for mechanisms to enhance their representation. Positive action should be taken to assure representation that reflects the full diversity of societies, with the target of the 'gender-balanced' legislative body. Though every country have different connotation of obstacles which may differ in nature, women should compete in whole country to be able to make a level playing field with men.

Present study chart three says that 93% respondent think family is the main obstacles to Womens' participation in politics and again 67% think that Patriarchy is the barrier, that means socio-cultural factors are not friendly to participates of Womens' in politics. In this findings narrates to feminist theory- the factors of private life features dominate the public life of women i.e., socio-economic and political life of women. Where traditional theorist has defined politics as public affairs, then Feminist theorist and Liberal theorist has defined women private life as their whole sphere of women empowerment. Research findings saw that in Bangladesh private life of Womens' play a vital role in case of participating in politics and different barriers of personal life is also the barrier of their participation in politics and bursting empowerment. Again sometimes women also dislike political participation. Finding reveled maximum women treat politics of Bangladesh as dirty and risk of violence against women. Actually after 90's political culture of Bangladesh, specially keeping females in front of the rally, meeting, protestations, procession and attack or abuse on street by law enforcement agency or supporter of acting rolling party is the main reason to develop this type of mentality. On the other hand women can't actively participate or be succeed to politics in absence of internal democratic practice within the political parties, lake of equal participation of women in the party structure and in absence of rules and activities to increase women participation. Parvin (1994: 31-32) shown that patriarchy cultural of society, the

elected women members activities in local government body are dominated and controlled by influential male member of concern political party.

In survey it is seen that 89% participant think that financial insolvency and lack of other support from political party or state are the barrier to the Womens' participation to the politics. On the other hand because of insufficient democratic combination among the party women can't reach the higher authority. One of key informers Shamima Akther⁴⁷ says that all the political instructions come from the highest leader of the party especially for the political party like, AL, BNP, JP. There a rural Womens' access to the leader is not easy unless she has a strong reference. Main reason is, most of the women parliament members who has elected directly or for the reserve seats somehow have family or relative background. In this case strong political family background, financial solvency and muscle power act over her quality or party principle. Survey says 91% women think that women cannot come to main stream of politics because of financial insolvency. Beside these female can't accept the politics depending on muscle and violence.

Liberal democratic theorist give importance to countries implementation of act and legislation to create the scope of equal and real participation of both female and male to create a democratic society. If we consider the political culture of Bangladesh, it will found that constitution says about equality of male and female and to motivate Womens' empowerment, right and participation, different act and legislation has implemented like, reservation of 50 seats in the parliament, and reservation of seat in local governance- Union, Paurashava and Upazilla election.

⁴⁷ Interview with researcher, at Khulna, see details at appendix -2.

Though the politics of Bangladesh is known as liberal democratic but preconditions of such system has not yet been fulfilled. As a result, actual environment of women empowerment has not yet been created. Although different obstacle and boundless imposed by society and patriarchy yet is barrier to Womens' participation to politics in Bangladesh. Radical feminists and Marxist feminist's seek to abolish patriarchy and attempt to set up an equal political system, but this theoretical approach can't be possible in Bangladesh polity because of socio-economic, religious, political and cultural structure of Bangladesh. As here religion plays a vital role to developed political and social structure. According to Primary survey 47% respondent think religion based politics is an obstacle and 23% think that Islam has forbidden Womens' to participate in politics (chart-4). Having the socio-political, cultural and religionist structure of Bangladesh it is need to increase women friendly reform and take a holistic right based approach to confirm women access and participation in politics, which include different political and socio-cultural organizations, political parties and electoral systems need women friendly renovation to stop religion based politics and trying to make an equal field of liberal democratic polity.

It is hoped that the findings presented in this thesis will be drawn upon to inform public policy and to underpin further research into Womens' participation in politics, in Bangladesh and other developing country. It would be gratifying if this study fully or partially contribute to stagger the women empowerment and participation in politics toward ensuring democratic value into polity.

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Appendix: 01**Research Design****Status of respondent**

Respondent	Dhaka	Rajshahi	Khulna	Sylhet	Total
Women representative	6	6	6	6	24
Active women Politician	4	4	4	4	16
Women activist	4	4	4	4	16
House wife/ordinary people	4	4	3	3	14
Female student at graduate level	6	5	5	5	21
Male politician	3	2	2	2	09
Subtotal Total	27	25	24	24	100
Key informant in national level (MPs, Political Activist, Academician, representative of difference socio-cultural organizations, civil society members etc.)					10
Total					110

Appendix: 02**List of Interviewee**

Sl. No.	Name	Profession	Date of interview
1	Jabunnasa Haque	Formal Member of the Parliament	12 November, 2013
2	Helen Jerin Khan	Formal Member of the Parliament	29 January 2014
3	Hamida Begum	Academician and women activist	22 February 2014
4	Nasrin Zahan	NGO activist	09 December 2013
5	Farida Yesmin	Women activist	09 October 2013
6	Dipu Ray	Researcher and Women activist	20 January 2014
7	Shamima Akther	Political activist (Youth wing)	04 March 2014
8	Diva Mahrnunasa	Political activist (student wing)	17 October 2013
9	Sabiha Sultana	Councilor, City corporation	13 October 2013
10	Rumana Poly	Political activist (Women wing)	24 March 2014
11	Ruksan Dilruba	Councilor, Union Parishad	17 November 2013

Appendix: 03

Questionnaire

Name (Subject to permission):

Age:

District:

Mobile No (Subject to permission) :

Occupation:

- A) Politician/ political activist/ supporter B) NGO activist/ member of civil society
C) Social scientist/ educationist/ student D. businessman E. Politician (male)

Educational qualification:

- A. Secondary or less B. Higher Secondary. C. Honours/Masters D. Higher

1. Do you feel comfortable on current level of Womens' participation in politics in the country?

- A. Low Satisfactory B. Fairly satisfactory. C. Complete satisfactory.
D. complete dissatisfactory. E. No answer F. Don't know

1.1 Why do you think? (Show rationale for your answers)

- a.
b.
c.

2. What are you think about current state of Womens' participation in politics? (Multiple answers are eligible to receive)

- A. Self-motivation B. Constitutional and legal obligations C. Imposed
D. Decorative E. No answer

2.1 If Answers would c or d then show the rationale.

- a.
b.
c.

3. Which sector as you thinks to be main obstacle/ barrier of women participation in politics?

- A. Family
B. Women economic inability
C. Inadequacy of the social condition of

- D. religion
- E. Society-Culture
- F. Occasional Political Environment
- G Women Mentality
- H. Other (please specify) ...

4. Why you think family as obstacle/ barrier to participate in politics?

- A. Womens' dual roles (family and social)
- B. Family practice - policy and restrictions
- C. Patriarchy
- D. Other (please specify) ...

5. Why do religion on your eyes act as obstacle/barrier of women participation in politics?

- A. Islam forbids women to lead
- B. to go meeting or rally is illegal/sin
- C. Should not be working with men
- D. Religion-based Politics
- E. Other (please specify) ...

6. Why do ideological and lack of social capital at your gaze act as hindrance to participate women in politics?

- a. Women relating subject has no contribution in political parties ideology and program
- b. Lack of women self-confidence.
- c. Lack of social mobility
- d. Absence of cooperation and Support from different Womens' organizations and NGOs
- e. Potential contribution of women has not promote in the media

7. Women relating subject has no contribution in political party's ideology and program

- A. Lack of women self-confidence.
- B. Lack of social mobility.
- C. absence of Support cooperation from different Womens' organizations and NGOs
- D. Potential contribution of women has not promote in the media

Other (please specify) ...

8. What are the issues you think as the psychological barriers / obstacles of Womens' participation in politics ? (Multiple answers allowed)

- A. Women do not want to come in dirty politics
- B. Risk of physical abuse.
- C. Dislike of politics as a career
- D. Poltics is a job for men.
- E. Other (please specify) ...

9. Allowing women to participate in politics in any of the following, which are considered as political barriers? (Multiple answers acceptable)

9.1	Legal and policy rules is not conducive to Womens' participation	
9.2	Male effective political institutions and political uses	
9.3	Unequal position of women in the party structure	
9.4	lack of support / initiative from political parties to increase the participation of women (financial and other)	
9.5	Haughty behavior and illegal demand from senior leader and member	
9.5	Obligation to participate in risky political program	
.96	Noncooperation and unfair competition of male colleagues to enter politics	
9.7	The material and immaterial transaction environment Inside the party for getting post.	
9.8	Failure to Intensive communication with high-level	
9.9	Candidate nomination process is not women friendly	
9.10	Election campaign of black money, muscle power, party lobbying - grouping, etc. discourage Womens' participation	
9.11	Electoral systems are not friendly to women	
9.12	Incompatibility of Quota system	
9.13	Women opinions is ignored in political decision-making process or used to just validate.	
9.14	women opinions are not Given the importance in politics	
9.15	Other (please specify) ...	

10. Which of the following do you think as socio - economic barriers to Womens' participation (Multiple answers acceptable)?

Inadequacy of education, training, and other facilities	
Women disability to expense money in party politics	
Failure to comply terror, extortion, muscle power depending supporter group	

Violence against women	
Other (please specify) ...	

11. Do you think political party system in Bangladesh is women-friendly?

- A. Yes B. No C. Don't know D. Unanswered

11.1 If Answer be 'No', why don't you think it is as women friendly? (Show rationale for your answers)

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

11.2 What are your recommendations for creating women-friendly political parties?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

12. How do you evaluate the 'quota system' to ensure Womens' participation in politics?

- A. Existing quotas effective on local and national politics
- B. Although it is effective for local level, no need at national level.
- C. Quota system is hinder on real empowerment of women.
- D. The direct election should manage by the gradual reduction of the quota system
- E. Don't know / unanswered
- F. Other (please specify)...

13. What are your recommendations to overcome barriers ensuring effective participation of women in politics?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

Thank you.

Name of respondent

Time and Date.....

.....