The State of Gender in Bangladesh Politics

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Political Science

<u>**AUTHOR**</u>

Md. Mahbubur Rahman

Ph.D. Researcher

Registration no.: 69/2010-2011

Re-registration no.: 58/2015-2016

Department of Political Science

University of Dhaka

University of Dhaka
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University of Dhaka
Faculty of Social Sciences

<u>CERTIFICATE</u>

This is to certify that Mr. Md. Mahbubur Rahman, Ph.D. Researcher, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka has written his Ph.D. thesis on '**The State of Gender in Bangladesh Politics**'.

To the best of our knowledge, 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.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Political Science.

Dr. Shawkat Ara Husain	Ms. Bushra Chowdhury
Supervisor	Co-supervisor
Professor	Associate Professor
Department of Political Science	Department of International
University of Dhaka	Relations, University of Dhaka

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DECLARATION

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University of Dhaka

This thesis is dedicated

To

My Parents

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Abstract

It is ironic that although women's position in the central leadership in Bangladesh politics has significantly increased in the last three decades, women in general still form a group of disadvantaged minorities in the overall politics of the country. Women and men are not equally represented in the decision and policy making bodies in Bangladesh. For example, women are less represented in the political, legislative and administrative bodies. Women occupy an insignificant portion of the parliamentary seats. A few members of the Cabinet are women. Women's participation in the local government institutions is also not equal to that of their male counterparts. Therefore, there is lower number of women in comparison to men in the power structure.

There are many factors that hinder gender equality in Bangladesh politics. This thesis, however, mainly throws light to the policy level factors and particularly to the national women development policy. In this context, it finds three broad reasons which are responsible for gender inequality in Bangladesh politics. Firstly, this thesis has noticed that the existing provisions of the policy are insufficient to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics. Secondly, it has further noticed that there is a gap between the existing policy provisions and its implementation

mechanisms. Therefore, the extent to which the policy reflects in Bangladesh politics is not enough to ensure gender equality. And finally, some of the major challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics are not addressed in the current gender policy, this thesis has noted.

This thesis has identified ten of such challenges. These are: influence of patriarchal values and culture on politics, mindset on women's involvement in politics, unequal opportunity for political participation, unequal gender representation in political institutions, unequal access to the decision making processes, unequal political qualifications, unequal economic obstacles, lack of political commitment by the political parties, political trend to depend on black money and muscles power, and unequal domestic labor load.

In order to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics, this thesis has drawn ten recommendations which suggest that gender awareness raising programs should be launched, equal opportunity for political participation should be created, attitudinal change programs should be initiated, quota policy should be revised, scopes should be given to women for taking decisions, special training programs should be launched for female politicians, inheritance law should properly be applied, political parties must commit to promote gender equality, political trend to depend on

black money and muscles power should be eradicated, and gender policy should address the need of equal distribution of domestic labor load.

It is expected that on one hand, the recommendations of this thesis will help the policy makers of Bangladesh to promote gender equality in politics by addressing the unmet challenges that in turn will strengthen the democracy, preserve the human rights, ensure the effective use of human resources and bring a pace to the overall development of the country. On the other hand, the thesis itself will add a new knowledge and dimension to the existing policy discourse.

List of Chart/Diagram/Table/Photo

Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter encapsulates background, objective, research question, rationale, importance, and chapter plan of the thesis. The background is sharply divided into two parts. The first part is a larger one which draws a thumbnail sketch of power relations between women and men and its ideological basis in Bangladesh politics from 1971 to 1990. The second part quickly moves around the state of gender in Bangladesh politics under women's leadership since 1991. Against the backdrop the objective and research question of the thesis are built on.

Background

Bangladesh politics was clearly 'male dominated with respect to number and position in the party hierarchy, presence and effectiveness in the national legislature and other formal political structures' (Chowdhury 1985:268) in the first two decades of the country following independence. Power was functioned based on a patriarchal ideology whereby the state operated first and foremost in the interest of men. Power was not used through the consent of the people. As a result, legitimacy of the governments was in question. In addition, a clear public/private division was created to sideline women from politics. Let us look back.

Gender in Mujib's Regime

There were four governments under the leadership of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation. Gender took different dimensions but did not undergo significant changes during the period. For examples, the need for gender equality in politics was first felt in his regime. However, he was not able to make Bangladesh politics completely free from androcentric practices. The political challenges *Bangabandhu* faced were huge and must be taken into consideration in the assessment of gender dimensions of his regime.

The first and foremost challenge for *Bangabandhu* was to declare Bangladesh as an independent country. He successfully did so on 26th of March 1971 before being arrested by Pakistan military. Bangladesh, therefore, was born as a new country in the world map. However, in order to get an actual political independence, the country had to gone through a revolution, an armed struggle called liberation war, against the then State of Pakistan. The war started by the declaration of the independence of the country and ended on 16th of December in the same year through the victory of Bangladesh.

The first government of Bangladesh was formed as a government-in-exile on 17th of April 1971. *Bangabandhu,* who was detained in Pakistan at that

time, was made the President of Bangladesh. On behalf of the President, some Awami League leaders were running the government during that period. The mission of the government was to facilitate the liberation war and secure international cooperation for Bangladesh. It was successful in its mission as within a few months many people joined the *Mukti Bahini* (liberation force). India, Soviet Union and some Eastern European Countries extended their support to Bangladesh. 'India played a decisive role in the speedy conclusion of the liberation war' by their direct intervention to the war (Jahan 2005: 274). Naturally, this government had no scopes to particularly think about women. Still, many women joined the *Mukti Bahini* as freedom fighters, many others facilitated the war indirectly through various means. Hence, this government is marked with a vibrant and large scale of women's movement which was happened for the first time in the history of Bangladesh.

After being freed from Pakistani prison, *Bangabandhu* returned an independent but devastated Bangladesh on 10th of January 1972. Therefore, a lot of challenges were waiting for him. The greatest challenge for him was to make a Constitution for Bangladesh. In order to tackle that he issued a Provisional Constitutional Order stipulating a unitary parliamentary form of government. Accordingly, he resigned from the post of the President and became the Prime Minister. Hence, the second

government under the leadership of *Bangabandhu* took over. Without a doubt, the greatest achievement of this government was to make a Constitution for the country. As a result, Bangladesh got a Constitution on 4th of November 1972, which became effective on 15th of December in the same year. The Constitution incorporated four principles as the ideology of the State of Bangladesh: nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism.

The Constitution of Bangladesh was very gender friendly indeed. It clearly stated that steps should be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life (Article 18). Considering the socio-economic and cultural constraints faced by women in our society, the 1972 Constitution reserved 15 seats for women in the Parliament for 10 years (Article 65.3). Nonetheless, there was no territorial constituencies for the reserved seats. Also, a system of indirect election was put in place for the reserved seats, i.e., the directly elected members of the Parliament were to elect the female members of the reserved seats which was 5 per cent of the directly elected seats. This Constitutional provision was therefore criticized by different women's group (Holiday 1972).

A research survey was shown that majority of female politicians had believed that the provision of the reserved seats was the only way to get a

minimum of representation in the Parliament. But they felt that in future the system of indirect election should be replaced by direct election. Some respondents protested this system arguing that in the long run it would slow down women's political development. However, by and large, the respondents felt that the liberation war had disrupted the communication system to such a colossal extent that it would have been impossible for women candidates to reach millions of voters without the provision of the reserved seats (Jalal 1975).

Another challenge for *Bangabandhu* was to reestablish the social cohesion which was torn apart during the liberation war of Bangladesh. Reportedly, at least 200,000 women were victims of rape and other kind of sexual and gender-based violence during the nine months of the liberation war. Later, these women were awarded with the title of war heroines (*Birangonas*). Although the androcentric social culture politically recognized their sacrifices, Bangladesh society was not ready to accept them easily. It was observed that the liberation war divided the patriarchal society of Bangladesh into different fractions but could not tear the texture of patriarchy. Therefore, on one hand, integrating the war heroines (*Birangonas*) into the society was a great challenge for him; on the other hand, it was much needed for establishing social cohesion in newly emerged Bangladesh. This led him to destroy the initially prepared

list of the *Birangonas* (Ibrahim 1998), as a part of his efforts to reestablishing the social cohesion.

The other part of the social cohesion was relevant to the issue of dealing with war collaborators. From social science perspective, it was needed to minimize the tensions between the freedom fighters and war collaborators and reintegrate the war collaborators into the society. Nonetheless, it did not happen. On one hand, there was a popular demand for bringing the war collaborators under trials; on the other hand, there was a strong pressure from the friends of Pakistan in international community to drop any ideas of war crime trials. In order to create a balance, *Bangabandhu* just put some restrictions on political parties and people who had collaborated with Pakistan. This, however, made both the groups unhappy.

Amid these tensions, the first parliamentary election was held in Bangladesh in 1973. The ruling Awami League won 291 seats in the Parliament out of 300 seats. Hence, the third government under the leadership of *Bangabandhu* took over. It was observed that women were only marginally involved in the 1973 electoral contest. Although only 2 women contested out of 980 candidates in the 1973 parliamentary election, no one came out successful. However, as per the Constitutional

provision, 15 women were nominated from Awami League to the reserved seats for women in the Parliament. Later in the same year, a local government election was held in Bangladesh and for the first time in the history of the land the statutory representation of women was ensured at the Union Parishad level. However, in 1973 local government election, only one woman from Rangpur was elected as the chairman of a Union Parishad out of 4352 Unions (Qadir 1995).

Another challenge for *Bangabandhu* was to reconstruct Bangladesh economy. Although achieving the economic liberty of people was an integral part of the spirit of the liberation war of Bangladesh, the war initially destroyed the existing economic system of the country. Also, people of Bangladesh were ideologically divided into two on this issue. One group was in favor of free market economy. The other one was in favor of socialist economy. In order to satisfy both the group, he introduced a mixed economic system that called for the formation of compulsory village cooperative society and nationalization of heavy industries. This step, however, dissatisfy both the groups. On one hand, the rich farmers in the village were unhappy for putting their resources onto the cooperative society. On the other hand, the urban bourgeois were also unhappy of losing their industries. The whole system also put extra pressure on the fragile state apparatuses. The overall situation, therefore,

created a huge challenge upon him for reconstruction of the economy of Bangladesh.

Another challenge for *Bangabandhu* was to build external relations. He tried to pursue a balanced strategy. He was successful in getting India and Eastern bloc as staunchness allies of Bangladesh. For example, 25 years 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Government of India and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh' was signed on 19 March 1972. He used the Muslim image of Bangladesh to get recognition from Arab countries. Therefore, he took Arab's side during 1973 Arab-Israel conflict. He, however, failed in getting Western bloc, who were a major source of humanitarian and economic assistance, as strong allies of the country. Bangladesh's trade relations with Cuba instigated USA to take retaliatory measures, such as, delaying US grain shipment in Bangladesh when the country was facing a famine in 1974. This step had a disastrous consequence for the regime's ability to tackle the famine.

The failure to tackle the social and economic challenges pushed the country to internal insecurity. A sense of crisis deepened as the voice of political opposition was rising. Also, law and order situations were deteriorating as various factions of leftist parties engaged in class warfare in different parts of the country (Maniruzzaman 1980). In order to tackle

the situations, *Bangabandhu* created *Rakkhi Bahini*, a paramilitary counter-insurgency force composed of Awami League loyalists. This step, however, promoted factionalism in military forces. Awami League itself was plunged in a deep schism between militant youth leaders calling for the establishment of a revolutionary government and the older moderate leaders urging the continuation of the parliamentary democracy (Jahan 2005).

The context of this political turmoil led *Bangabandhu* to take a masculine decision of moving from one party domination in the Parliament to a single party system. Therefore, the Constitution was amended for a one-party presidential form of government in January 1975. Hence, the fourth government under the leadership of *Bangabandhu* took over. Bangladesh Krishak Shramik Awami League (BAKSAL) was formed dissolving all other political parties. Gender issues were taken into consideration in BAKSAL as women constituted a significant front among five fronts of BAKSAL: peasants, workers, youth, student and women. The creation of BAKSAL, however, threatened the status quo of the existing power relations in the society and promoted further factionalism in the politics. As a result, before completion of his new political experiment, *Bangabandhu* along with his extended family members was assassinated

by a group of junior military officers under the auspices of external allies on 15th of August 1975.

Then Sheikh Hasina as a dynastic inheritor was brought into politics by some male Awami League leaders. She was made the President of Awami League as a symbol of her father to save the party from falling into pieces. Although she was a housewife, she had a little bit of political experience as a student leader during her university days (Salahuddin 1995).

Gender in Zia's Regime

After 27th of March 1971 when the then Major Zia declared the independence of Bangladesh on behalf of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, he again came to the lime light of Bangladesh politics by a soldier's mutiny on 7th of November 1975. It took him approximately two years to fully assume the power in Bangladesh politics. There were two governments under the leadership of Ziaur Rahman who took some significant steps for women's empowerment in politics and society. For examples, during his regime, the number of reserved seats for women in the Parliament was increased from 15 to 30 in 1979, and the Dowry Prohibition Act was passed in 1980. However, the entire political system of the country was still patriarchal. Also, androcentric and masculine

practices were prevalent in the field of politics. Therefore, women remained marginalized in Bangladesh politics.

Any discussions on Zia's regime will be incomplete if it is not linked to the prior regimes, i.e., regimes in between Mujib and him. After assassination of *Bangabandhu*, the coup leaders put Khondakar Mushtaq Ahmed, an Awami League leader in power on 16th of August 1975. It was a short-lived regime which was dismantled by a counter coup led by Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf on 3rd November of the same year. He installed the Chief Justice ASM Sayem as the President of Bangladesh and the Chief Martial Law Administrator. However, Musharraf and his allies were killed on 7th November 1975 in a soldiers' mutiny engineered by *Biplobi Gono Bahini* (people's revolutionary army) led by retired Colonel Abu Taher and *Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal* (JSD). They wanted to put Major General Ziaur Rahman in the power. But Zia refused their offer and just became one of the three Deputy Martial Law Administrators under the leadership of Justice Sayem (Jahan 2005).

As a Deputy Martial Law Administrator, very soon Zia became a military strongman and played a positive masculine role in Bangladesh politics. He ruled the country from behind the scene. For examples, he contributed to promulgate a new set of martial law regulations on 15th of November

1975 stipulating death sentence to future mutineers. With the help of this law, he restored the discipline in Bangladesh military by putting down many coup attempts. He redressed the grievances of the soldiers that led to the 7th November munity. He integrated the *Rakkhi Bahini* with the military by bringing them under the control of army. Also, the repatriated officers from Pakistan were accommodated in Bangladesh military under his leadership. Some pundits blame Zia for taking some ruthless actions against future mutineers in the military. However, it was necessary at that time from a military point of view. Today, Bangladesh owns a disciplined military force. This would not be possible without the interventions of Major General Ziaur Rahman.

Zia assumed the Office of the Chief Martial Law Administrator on 30th of November 1976 and became the President of Bangladesh on 20th of April 1977. Hence the first government of Ziaur Rahman was formed. The government was still running under the martial law. As the first step, he amended the Constitution through a martial law ordinance. This amendment brought some fundamental changes to the Constitution as well as Bangladesh politics. For examples, he redefined the notion of 'socialism' to mean 'economic and social justice'. While Article 42 of the Constitution provided for acquisition and nationalization of property 'with or without compensation', the amendment provided for acquisition and

nationalization of property 'with compensation' only. He replaced 'secularism' with 'absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah' as one of the principles of the State. He changed the nationality of the citizens of Bangladesh from 'Bangalee' to 'Bangladeshi'. As a result of these amendments, Bangladesh ceased to be secular and the State's commitment to socialism was diluted (Jahan 2005). Later in 1979, through the 5th amendment of the Constitution, the number of reserved seats for women was increased from 15 to 30 and the period for this provision was extended from 10 to 15 years. The number of the reserved seats then corresponded to 10 per cent of the directly elected seats. It showed Zia's commitment to gender issues and women's cause.

A serious of elections was held under Zia's martial law. These included a local government and national referendum in 1977, a presidential election in 1978 and a parliamentary election in 1979. A vibrant but low level of women's participation was observed during these elections. For examples, only 111 women took part in 1977 Union Parishad election whereby only three women were elected as chairmen and seven women were elected as members. Overall, only .02 per cent of women's representation was there in the Union Parishad. In 1977 Pourashava election, only 3 women contested for the positions of chairman and only 5 women contested for the positions of ward commissioner. In the parliamentary election of 1979,

only one female Member of the Parliament (MP) was elected to a general seat in a by election from an opposition party; all other female MPs were from the ruling party (Salahuddin 1995).

Zia's party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won the 1979 parliamentary election. Hence the second government of Ziaur Rahman was formed. This time the martial law was lifted after nearly four years. Democratic values were returning into the politics. Women issues were started getting priority. For instance, this government passed the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1980. Female MPs of the reserved seats to the Parliament made a significant contribution in raising the dowry bill. Also, this government adopted a populist style of leadership which was gender friendly. For example, Zia engaged in participatory dialogue with different groups of people including women.

Other characteristics of Zia's regime included a change in the economic and foreign policies. In terms of economic policy, the country moved from a mixed economy to a capitalist economy. During his regime, foreign aid significantly increased, activities of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) flourished, international work opportunities for Bangladeshi migrants opened. In terms of foreign policy, Zia brought Bangladesh closure to Islamic bloc. External relations with Saudi Arabia and other

Middle East countries were improved. Zia's most significant effort in the field of external relations was his inspiring vision of initiating the idea of the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Zia had to face no significant challenges as the President as he had already addressed all the critical political challenges from behind the scene during Justice Sayem's regime. Despite that the civilianized regime of Zia lasted only two years and ended on 30th of May 1981 when he was assassinated by a group of army officers. Then his wife Khaleda Zia was brought into politics to keep her husband's political party in tact as well as to rejuvenate it. Although she was a housewife and had no political involvement before she made a lateral entry into the party to assume the top leadership role, she was later successful in her political mission.

Gender in Ershad's Regime

There were three governments under the leadership of Hussain Mohammad Ershad. The concept of feminism flourished in Bangladesh politics during his regime in a sense that women raised their voices and activities of different women organizations increased. Interestingly, his main political opposition leaders were women. Before indulging into this

discussion, it is worth to going back and looking into the context of Ershad's emergence into Bangladesh politics.

It is to be noted that when President Ziaur Rahman was assassinated by a faction of the armed forces in 1981, Lieutenant General Hussain Mohammad Ershad was the Chief of Army Staff but he did not take over the power immediately. Rather he crushed the abortive coup and pledged his loyalty to the BNP government. The then Vice-President Justice Abdus Sattar became the President. Upon request of General Ershad, he formed a National Security Council with army, air and navy chiefs as members of the council. This position gave Ershad an opportunity to officially deal with the politics and public administration and prepare himself for the next step. In a less than a year, he acquired the necessary power and declared martial law, suspended the Constitution, dismissed Sattar and his cabinet, dissolved Parliament and became the Chief Martial Law Administrator (Jahan 2005). Hence the first government of Ershad was formed.

Under Ershad's martial law, some good policy initiatives were taken in relation to women's development in the fields of politics and society. For instance, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified with reservations

in 1984, and the Department of Women's Affairs was created in Bangladesh Secretariat in the same year. Moreover, a series of election was held during this period. These included local government election in 1984, a national referendum in 1985 and a Presidential election in 1986. Ershad paid a special attention to ensure women's participation in these elections. For example, he introduced the reserved seats for women in the local government bodies through the Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance of 1983, Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Ordinance of 1984, and Pourashava (Amendment) Ordinance of 1984 in order to ensure women's participation at the local level politics. However, only four women were elected as Chairman among 4401 Union Parishads in the 1984 election (Qadir 1995).

It was observed that Ershad's initiative could not guarantee an independent political status for women representatives due to the selection process. In case of Union Parishad, it was observed that the Chairman of a Union Parishad was a key factor in the selection process of female members for his Parishad. It appeared that his recommendation included only the names of those women with whom he had a kinship connection. Also, the selection criterion did not include educational qualification, work experience or involvement in the village welfare activities. As a result, in most cases the nominated female members were just housewives

who lacked consciousness about the problems and issues encountered by women in the community (Qadir and Islam 1987).

Under Ershad's martial law, political parties in Bangladesh played an important role with the help of women in order to mobilize and sustain people's support for the restoration of democracy. Still, women's status with a political party was grossly unsatisfactory whether as a member, or, as a party worker, or, as a party leader. Male-female disparity at the lower levels was alarmingly wide. Women could not go up the party hierarchical ladder in a routinized manner as men generally could do. The case of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia was a different one as they were created as leaders by special circumstances which were linked to political inheritance. Moreover, new women entrants in political parties were disheartened as they felt that they did not get proper guidance and incentives for party work from the party stalwarts (Salahuddin 1995). The below table gives an indication of women's position in the party hierarchy in 1985.

Table 1: Women's Position in the Party Hierarchy

Name of the Party	Name of the Party Organ	Total Number of Incumbents	Number of Female Incumbents
Bangladesh Awami League	President and Secretary	23	04
Bangladesh Awami League	Working Committee	27	nil
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	National Standing Committee	11	01
Bangladesh Nationalist Party	National Executive Committee	114	14
Jatiyo Samaj Tantrik Dal	Central Committee	59	01
Bangladesh Communist Party	Central Committee	34	nil

Source: Chowdhury 1985

Ershad won the 1986 Presidential election and became the President of Bangladesh. Hence the second government of Ershad was formed. This time the martial law was lifted. Ershad formed his own political party

called 'Jatiya Party' (JP). In the meantime, the provision of reserved seats for women in the Parliament or the quota system was expired on 10th of December 1987. Several women's organizations demanded for the revival of the quota system as women were 'still struggling hard under paralysing socio-economic disabilities' (Salahuddin 1995: 5). The provision of the reserved seats was therefore considered as necessary to ensure women's minimum participation in the Parliament. Amid this situation, a parliamentary election was held in 1988. JP won the election and hence the third government of Ershad was formed. This government decided to reintroduce the reserved seats for women in the Parliament. To that end, an amendment of the Constitution was necessary. Therefore, the 10th amendment bill was raised to the Parliament on 10th June. It was passed by the Parliament on 12th of June 1990. This amendment reinserted Clause (3) to Article 65 providing for 30 reserved seats for women for a further period of 10 years beginning with the commencement of the next Parliament.

Following Zia, Ershad also brought a fundamental change to the Constitution. For instance, he amended the Constitution giving Islam the status of state religion in 1988. This helped him in terms of better external relations with Islamic bloc. Women's organizations were broadly unhappy with the increasing public and symbolic emphasis on Islam

which strengthened the hands of the Islamist forces who wanted restrictions on women's public role.

Ershad made some significant contribution in Bangladesh economy and politics. For examples, he liberalized the economy. As a result, most sectors were opened for private investment and foreign aid considerably increased. He decentralized the local government system by making upazilas (sub-districts) the focus of local level government. As a result, it was possible to contribute to rural economy be pumping the development funds. He used to say, 'If 68,000 villages alive, Bangladesh will alive.' Ershad also decentralized the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. As a result, the legal services of the Supreme Court reached at the divisional level.

All these efforts, however, could not generate a sense of legitimacy for Ershad's regime. The movement against Ershad intensified in 1990 with the joining of different civil society groups along with the student wings of AL and BNP. Ershad tried to salvage his position by declaring a state of emergency but the military withdrew their support of Ershad in order to protect the institution. As a result, Ershad had no choice but to resign on 4th of December 1990.

Other reflections on gender:

Masculine trend

Although undeniably successive regimes from 1971 to 1990 promised to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics, they fell far short in delivering on their promises. Though *Bangabandhu* started with a gender friendly Constitution, he could not nurture the political institutions and culture needed for achieving gender equality in politics. He did not get chances to devote enough attention to developing rules, processes, procedures and mechanisms needed for it. Therefore, he just carried out the historical trend of masculine behavior and practices in politics. Zia and Ershad exacerbated this trend.

Policy Issues

Policy is important but more important are the interpretation and the way of implementation of the policy issues. It was observed that an androcentric approach was followed for interpretation of the policy provisions and masculine ways and methods were used in partial implementation of the policy issues in Bangladesh politics from 1971 to 1990, despite the fact that a gender friendly Constitution was adopted in Bangladesh during Mujib's regime and both number and period of reserved seats for women in the Parliament was increased during Zia's regime and the CEDAW was ratified during Ershad's regime. As a result,

the question of gender equality remained out of spheres of Bangladesh politics.

Parliament

In order to ensure women's political empowerment, the provision of reserved seats for women in the Parliament was created. However, the system of indirect election to the reserved seats for women in the parliament-initiated debates in the politics throughout the regimes. It was observed that women candidates for the reserved seats had an electorate mainly composed of men. As a result, this system increased the dependency of female politicians on the male politicians. It was further observed that this system had limited the scopes of women's participation in politics to the nominees of dominant parties in the parliament only. As a result, women representatives from the minority parties in the Parliament did not put up their candidates for the reserved seats and remained unrepresented. A question was raised that whether these female MPs had any connections to the voters as they did not come through direct election. In this case, how could they represent women effectively in the Parliament, many asked the question. Therefore, there presence in the Parliament served no purposes of women as they were ineffective in raising any women's issue in the Parliament (Salahuddin 1995).

It was further noticed that female MPs were not very much vocal and effective in the Parliament. They could neither make their presence felt in the Parliament nor could form a strong lobby to influence the decision makers to focus attention on women's issues. There were four reasons for this failure. Firstly, female candidates had to depend to a great extent on the sweet will of the stalwarts of their respective party for their nomination to the reserved seats. Secondly, female MPs did not hold any key position in the party power-structure to exert influence on party leadership from that position. Thirdly, majority of the female MPs were fresh entrants and had no previous knowledge of the techniques of parliamentary procedures. Lastly, they had no popular support base which could give them political strength and confidence as peoples' representatives (Salahuddin 1995).

Local Government

Union Parishad and Pourashava are the lowest tiers of the local government of Bangladesh operate respectively at the village and urban levels. In line with national level politics, women's participation in the local level politics was extremely low during the regimes. It was because socially and economically women were not reached such a position from which they can successfully contest the elective positions and secure at least minimum representation against men. Several factors contributed to

create this fragile status of women. This was included but not limited to female literacy rate, their economic dependency, and socio-cultural embargo on free mobility of women (Salahuddin 1995).

It was observed that women representatives at the local government bodies came from rich families. Therefore, they represented people belonging to the power structure in the area. Although theoretically they enjoyed the same rights and privileges as male members, practically they did not have the same status as male members (Qadir and Islam 1987). In several standing committees of Union Parishad, female members had given no responsibilities. In some cases, they were assigned the job of looking after education and health issues. Purposively, they were not included in the committees that deal with development projects. In this way, the female members were sidelined by their male counterparts who controlled the Parishads (Salahuddin 1995).

Political Party

As per the theories of party development, a two-party system leads to political stability. In Bangladesh, however, a two-party system could not be established during these regimes. Moreover, the 'party system inherited by Bangladesh at birth underwent significant changes over the years. During the first three years of elected civilian rule (1972-1975), the

country moved from a one-party dominant to a single party system. During the following fifteen years of military rule (1975-1990), we witnessed a return to multi-party system but at the same time emergence of state-sponsored political parties' (Jahan 2005: 13).

In a nut shell, the political parties' behavior and attitude were very masculine in nature in Bangladesh during the three regimes. It was due to the prevalence of clientele party politics that led to undemocratic and corrupt practices. Since the parties needed patronage system to mobilize and sustain a support base, they depended on distribution of state resources. This created an incentive to win elections at all cost and hang on to state power. The compulsion of winning elections at all costs then led to undemocratic and masculine practices such as election engineering, and suppression and oppression of the opposition parties.

Without a doubt, the regimes of Mujib, Zia and Ershad have contributed to promote androcentric practices and masculine behavior in politics and establish a patriarchal political system in Bangladesh. An overall assessment of the above mentioned three regimes indicates that women's representation in comparison to men was grossly inadequate during the period from 1971 to 1990. If we take into consider Walter's (1998) account that women's increased presence in the public spheres is the

evidence of power, then women in Bangladesh had a very limited power during the period. It was observed that female politicians worked as figureheads to the real operations of power that was based on patriarchal ideology. Also, female MPs were subjected to the strictures of their male Presidents and the masculinist culture of the Parliament. Because, throughout the period, no governments actively encouraged the advancement of women into political power. It has further been observed that the state apparatuses such as the law, the police and the army were very masculine in nature as they worked as instruments of coercion. In fact, due to lack of legitimacy, the most coercive form of power was used by the governments in order to establish control over the state apparatuses.

A dramatic shift to the power structure

Since 1991, the state of gender in Bangladesh politics has gone through some dramatic changes. For examples, women's leadership has ascended to the power; they have taken the positions of the Head of the Government, the Speaker and leader of opposition in the Parliament; they have also taken the charge of many important ministries, i.e., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs etc. which are earlier considered as solely reserved for men. Also, different women groups have emerged as power groups in the society. Moreover, several policy initiatives have been taken in order to promote gender equality in all

spheres of life including politics. The policy initiatives are included but not limited to the creation of Women in Development (WID) Focal Points in 1991, formation of the National Council for Women's Development (NCWD) in 1995, formation of the Task Force for Implementation of Platform for Action (PFA) Core Group in 1996, formulation of the National Women Development Policy in 1997, withdrawal of reservations from some clauses i.e., 13a and 16.1(f) of the CEDAW in July 1997, enactment of the Local Government Bill in 1997, establishment of WID Coordination Committees in all districts and upazilas in December 1998, adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of 2002-2008, increasing the number of reserved seats for women in the Parliament from 30 to 45 in 2006 and from 45 to 50 in 2011, and formulation of several National Plan of Action (NPAs) for implementation of women's and girls' interests.

These policy initiatives have resulted into an increase of women's representation in politics. Despite that women in general still form a group of disadvantaged minorities in the overall political arena of the country. For instances, women and men are not equally represented in the decision and policy making bodies such as legislative and administrative bodies and in the agencies which are responsible for law and justice in Bangladesh; they only occupy an insignificant portion of the

parliamentary seats; a few members of the Cabinet are women; and their participation in the local government institutions is also not equal to that of their male counterparts. Therefore, the presence of women is minimal in the power structure in political parties. For example, only 9 per cent of Jatiya Party's (JP) presidium members, 10 per cent of Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) national standing committee (NSC) member, and 25 per cent of Awami League's (AL) presidium members are women. There are no women members in the central executive committee (CEC), highest decision-making body of Jammat-e-Islami (JI). The contemporary gender segregation in the political parties in Bangladesh is presented in the below table:

Table 2: Gender segregation in political parties in Bangladesh

Name of the Political Party	Highest Executive Body	Total Members	Women Members	Percentage
Al	Presidium	15	4	25
BNP	NSC	19	2	10
JP	Presidium	42	4	9
JI	CEC	16	0	0

Source: Jahan 2015: 152

The above reflections on gender give an indication that overall there is lower number of women in comparison to men in the power structure in Bangladesh politics. Therefore, male domination in Bangladesh politics continues in concealment of the fact that women are in leadership positions in the country. This context creates the necessity to examine a critical feminist issue: the reasons of gender inequality in Bangladesh politics despite having the national women development policy.

Objective of the thesis

Against the backdrop, the objective of this thesis is to examine the policy implications with relevance to gender equality in Bangladesh politics. To meet this objective, this thesis will investigate not only the policy issues but also the theories of gender and politics, and their reflections on various aspects of Bangladesh politics. Also, this thesis will try to unearth and examine the causes of gender inequality in Bangladesh politics and to suggest a way forward in the form of a set of recommendations.

Research question

Why do women continue to remain unequal in Bangladesh politics despite prevailing policy to promote gender equality?

Rationale of the thesis

The rationale of doing this Ph.D. thesis includes but not limited to the following three points:

1. It is a demand of the time because, over the past few decades research on gender and politics has become an established sub-field of political science.

2. Women's strong presence in politics is justified for the effective use of human resources that brings development to a country (UN 1992). Therefore, it is important to explore the reasons of women's weak presence in Bangladesh politics and to suggest some guidelines to the policy makers so that they can ensure the effective use of human resources in Bangladesh. This thesis is going to do so.

3. As politics is generally male-dominated, there is usually slim possibility for the integration and reflection of women's perceptions and needs in the public policy. As a result, if women are not adequately represented in political decision making, issues of public policy relating to women's equality and empowerment remain under the control of men, who may not be interested in these issues. This might be resulted into under development because,

gender equity in politics is needed for development. In this context, this thesis will help the policy makers to bring gender equality in Bangladesh politics.

What new knowledge will this thesis add?

This thesis will add a new knowledge and dimension to the existing policy discourse. It has been revealed from literature review that so far, most research on gender in terms of politics was conducted separately on political institutions, i.e., women in local government, women in the Parliament etc. There the focus was on women's political participation. For examples, Jalal Firoj in his book titled 'Women in Bangladesh Parliament' has tried to draw a link between women's socio-economic background and women's representation in the Parliament (Firoj 2007); contributors in a book titled '*Narir Khomotayon: Rajniti O Andolon'* have measured the progress of women's empowerment in Bangladesh politics (Hossain and Masuduzzaman 2003); and Maleka Begum in her book titled '*Sonrokkhito Mohila Ason: Sorasori Nirbachon'* has talked about the need for direct election to the reserved seats for women in the Parliament (Begum 2000). However, in contrast to the existing scholarly works, this thesis discusses on the policy issues.

In this thesis, the focus of the arguments is on policy implications about gender equality in politics. It investigated the challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics holistically, both vertically and horizontally, and from policy perspectives. Instead of paying attention to gender issues in a political institution, this thesis has paid attention to gender issues in the overall political system of Bangladesh. It has argued how policies have failed to address these challenges. It has chalked out the common challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics. This thesis has observed how the challenges of gender equality are common to almost all the political institutions in Bangladesh.

Chapter plan

I have divided this thesis into seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction of the thesis. It mainly draws the background of the thesis. It also explains the objective, research question, and rationale of the thesis. Chapter two details out the research methodology of this thesis. Chapter three chalks out a theoretical framework for this thesis. It draws a set of indicators to help to assess the state of gender in politics of a country. Chapter four presents a note on literature review. In this regard, only those literatures have been reviewed that are relevant to gender and politics in Bangladesh. Chapter five presents the research findings. Based on an empirical research, it explains the observations on different scenarios of

gender inequality in Bangladesh politics. Followed by the context, chapter six analyses the policy issues. It chalks out the policy implications and challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics and examines why the existing policy has failed to address those challenges. Finally, chapter seven concludes the thesis with a set of concrete recommendations.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology

When we talk about research methodology, we talk about the research approach, methods and tools. There are several research approaches, methods and tools in the field of social science. It is a never-ending question that which combination is the most suitable for a research project. In this context, I would like to recall Newcomb (1970) who says that 'no research results are better than the methods by which they were obtained.' His statement indicates that any combination of research approach, methods and tools can be applied in a research project if it produces the true results.

Qualitative approach

It has, however, been observed that certain methods are suitable for certain types of research. It has further been observed that the qualitative approach of research is more suitable for a feminist and policy type of research. Since the research question of this thesis indicates that it is both a feminist and a policy research, the qualitative approach must be a better choice for this thesis. I have therefore applied the qualitative approach of research to this thesis. Further to be noted that I have used the qualitative approach in order to collect both the primary and secondary data. But only

selection of approaches is not enough to conduct a research study. We still need to think about the methods and tools.

Content analysis method

The research question of this thesis further indicates that this study needs scrutiny of the policy documents or analysis of the secondary data. Therefore, secondary data is more important for this thesis. In order to find the answer of my research question, I have mainly used the secondary data. References of the secondary data used in this thesis are drawn from eighty-four sources. For details, please see the bibliography. I have also applied the content analysis method of research to this thesis in order to collect and analyses the secondary data.

Field study

I have collected the primary data for this thesis through a field study. Both the interview and participatory observation methods of research were applied to the field study. It was also supported by a research tool, for example, a questionnaire.

Interview method

A large body of theory has been demonstrated that a researcher must talk with only a small fraction of people to obtain the characteristics of the

total population, provided that this small fraction of the people is carefully selected to represent the total (Campbell, A. and Katona, G. 1970). I have further applied the interview method of research to this thesis. The below table explains the details of my interview matrix.

Table 3: Interview Matrix

Political institutions	Female	Male	Sub-total
Parliament	12	12	24
Pourashava	12	12	24
Union Parishad	24	24	48
Total respondents			**96**

I have conducted a total of ninety-six interviews from three political institutions. These are the Parliament, Pourashava and Union Parishad. The Members of the Parliament (MPs) were selected from Dhaka district. However, they represented a variety of districts and constituencies. The members of the local government institutions were selected from Tangail district. I have interviewed the same number of female members and male members from each political institution so that my data is comparable.

Questionnaire

A pre-framed open-ended questionnaire has been used in this study as a research tool. This tool has guided me during the interview sessions. Enclosed please find the interview questionnaire with this thesis as Annex-I.

Participatory observation method

In addition to the interview method, I have applied the participatory observation method to this thesis in order to collect some in depth primary data. In this context, I have voluntary worked as a Political Assistant for two months with one of the female Councilors of Tangail Pourashava.

Data processing

Then the collected data was analyzed in percentage and presented in tables and charts, where applicable. Finally, various gender aspects of the political institutions in Bangladesh were scrutinized in the light of the theories or indicators of gender equality in order to assess gender equality in Bangladesh politics. It has been investigated, among other issues, whether women have equal influence in the decision-making process like their male counterparts or not.

Selection of the field locations

It has been mentioned earlier that Dhaka and Tangail districts have been selected as the field location for this thesis. This section explains the reasons of doing so. Dhaka has been chosen as a field location for this thesis to study the Parliament, because the Parliament is physically situated in Dhaka and MPs representing various constituencies normally stay in Dhaka. Therefore, it has been considered as an ideal place to meet the required number of the MPs.

Tangail has been chosen as another field location for this thesis to study the local government institutions because of three reasons. Firstly, the district consists of 12 Upazilas, 10 Pourashavas, 72 Wards, 211 Mahallas, 110 Union Parishads and 2526 villages. Therefore, it has been considered as an ideal district where the required number of respondents can be found easily. Secondly, the culture and political situations of Tangail district is most homogeneous to other parts of the country as geographically is it located almost at the middle of the country and it has a good communication network with other districts. And finally, it is a convenient place for me to closely observe the challenges of gender equality in politics and to check if the current field reality still agrees with the secondary data as Tangail is my home town. Therefore, using my social

network, I found the required number and categories of respondents and could establish a good communication and relationship of trust with them.

Feasibility study

Before selecting Tangail district as the field of study for this thesis, I have conducted a feasibility study at Tangail district in December 2015. The district has been found as a suitable field of conducting the research. Below please find two photographs which were clicked on during the feasibility study.

Photo 1: Allocation of symbols at the Office of the

Deputy Commissioner of Tangail district

Photo 2: A Councilor of Tangail Pourashava

is discussing with her workers

Time frame

In addition to the period spent on the feasibility study and the two months period of extensive participatory observation, I have spent at least one week in each field locations (different Union Parishads and Pourashavas) within the district of Tangail to complete the interviews. Please note that it also required staying few more days in some field locations. Also, I had to spend two months in Dhaka only to find and meet the Members of the Parliament. As a result, it took approximately six months to complete the field study. It includes the travel time too.

Did the respondents speak to me freely?

Though the conditions in the field was extreme and being a man collecting the primary data from women was difficult in the existing social conditions, my past work experience with the female politicians and my self-awareness about the socio-cultural norms and values of the country enabled me to feel and demonstrate empathy towards the respondents and to develop a relationship of trust with them. As a result, they spoke to me freely.

Ethical issues

It is to be noted that I have written the thesis by showing a due respect to the ethical issues of a research. The findings have been reported truly. The recommendations have been drawn based on the research findings. Due attention has paid to the needs of the policy makers so that they can find this Ph.D. thesis as an easy going and a handy document which can fulfill their purposes. I believe that this thesis has addressed the true state of gender in Bangladesh politics.

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents a theoretical framework for analyzing the state of gender in politics. The theoretical framework is based on the available discussions and debates on gender theories in political science. To this end, it first highlights the importance of gender equality in politics by presenting arguments over the purposes and goals of gender relations in politics. It argues that gender relations lie at the heart of politics. It notes that although sexual differences and sexuality are treated by a group of political philosophers as marginal to or outside of the subject matter of politics, the question of gender relations is inseparable from politics. It further notes the critical importance of women's political participation. Finally, it draws a set of indicators which can be used to assess the state of gender in politics or to examine whether there is gender equality in politics of a country or not.

This thesis has observed that feminist approaches to the history of political thought enable us to understand the relationship between gender and politics. These approaches critically examine the political significance of sexual differences, the patriarchal construction of central categories of political thought, and the relations between nature, sexes, reason and

politics. This thesis has noted that one of the major tasks facing feminist theorists today is to develop a set of indicators that encompasses the differences between sexes and among women so that the state of gender in politics can be assessed. This chapter attempts to do so. In order to serve the purpose, I have gone through some selected literature of political science.

I have observed that gender issues have always been a concern of political science. Several political philosophers have talked about male-female relations and their impacts on politics. In fact, arguments about the characters and attributes between women and men are fundamental to political philosophy. Let us see what the political philosophers talk about this issue.

Plato

I would like to start with Plato. His gender thoughts are explained in his classic texts the *Republic-V* and the *Laws*. He has talked about gender equality and has commented that if young girls and boys are trained identically, their abilities as adults will practically be the same. He has also commented that the aim of the true art of ruling is not the welfare of any single class or section of a society, but the greatest possible happiness of the entire community, provided that the idea of happiness is based on

three values: harmony, efficiency and moral goodness. On leadership issues, Plato has argued that the 'philosopher monarchs' are to include both sexes because women can perform all the functions needed by the city, including guardianship and philosophy (Okin 2007).

In my opinion, Plato's arguments on gender are unique in the treatment of feminist issues because he has considered women as persons and has paid special attention to women's education and training. The real significance of his treatment of the women question is that it is one of the very few instances in the history of philosophy when the biological implications of femaleness was clearly separated from all the conventional, institutional, and emotional baggage that had usually been identified with women.

Locke

Another classical writer John Locke is also a great gender sensitized political philosopher. Locke's views on gender are evidence of his individualism. In the *First Treatise,* he begins his theory of 'social contract' with the premise that women are born free like men and women are equal to men. He believes that women have intellectual potentials which could be developed to a higher level. For his concerns for gender equality, Butler (2007) has termed Locke as an embryonic 'equal rights' feminist.

Aristotle and Filmer

As opposed to Plato and Locke, some other political philosophers like Aristotle and Robert Filmer assume that women's stunted rationality, and moral and political capacities make them unfit for citizenship and political activities. They have seen women necessary to play in social-life but not in political life. They think that femininity symbolizes the private ties but not the public ties (Pateman and Shanley 2007).

Exploration of gender theories

Against the backdrop of seeing women as irrational by some political scientists, the feminists have identified a gap in political science regarding gender issues, which has led them to reinterpret the existing political theories. In this way, the concepts of gender studies have been emerged. The diagram-1 helps us to understand the emergence or exploration of gender theories or the development process of the concepts of gender studies.

Diagram 1: Exploration of gender theories

Concepts of gender studies
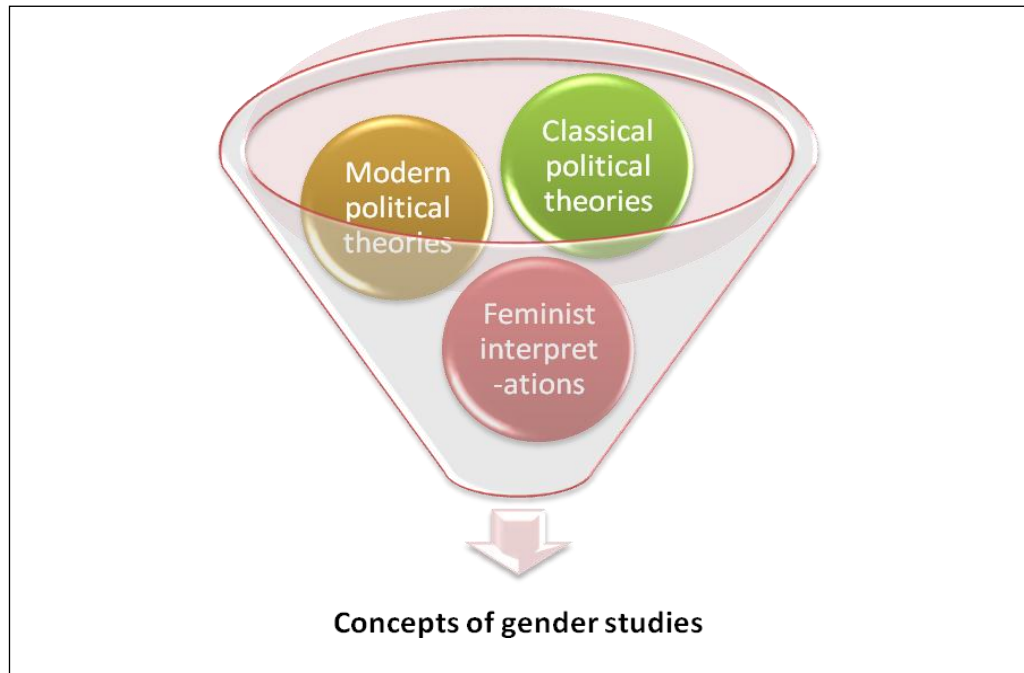
Source: Research findings

Since the gender theories or the concepts of gender studies have been derived and processed from political theories, these two sets of theories are closely inter-linked and overlapped with each other. In other words, the concepts of gender studies are the blended products of the classical and modern political theories with feminist interpretations and explanations.

Key gender theories in political science

This thesis has considered the following three as key gender theories in political science.

☐	Sex/gender binary

☐	Double standard

☐	Gender equality in politics

These theories are discussed below:

Sex/gender binary

There is a distinction between the notions of 'sex' and 'gender'. In short, the term 'sex' generally denotes to understand the biological differences between men and women, which are congenital and limited to physiological reproductive functions. In contrast to the term 'sex', the term 'gender' generally denotes to understand the social differences between men and women, which are culturally constructed and assigned. However, it is getting difficult day by day to establish a clear distinction between the terms sex and gender.

Originally these two terms were used as synonyms to each other especially by the biologists, psychologists and medical researchers. Later in the aftermath of the Second World War, an effort was made to distinguish the idea of sex from the idea of gender. During the 1960s a new way of thinking about gender began to emerge that critiqued the earlier frameworks, and introduced a paradigm shift of the concept of gender

from a biologically based analysis to a sociologically based analysis. On one hand, it has been meant that sex is natural and based on biological features of human. On the other hand, it has been meant that gender is cultural and based on social relations of men and women.

The concept of sex and gender differs both within and between cultures. It defines identities, status, roles, responsibilities and power relations among the members of any society or culture which is learned through socialization. It is not static or innate, but evolves to respond to changes in the social, political and cultural environment. This idea is expressed by Bradley (1996: 205) who thinks that 'gender refers to the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organization and reproduction, the sexual divisions of labour and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity.'

In discussion on gender, Mahtab (2012:119) quoted from Scott who says that 'the core of the definition of gender rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying the relationships of power.' Therefore, gender must be a lived experience. Although the term implies a social construct, it refers to aspects of our lives that are real. Further it

should be noted that gender is at the same time a material and a cultural phenomenon. It refers both to lived experiences of men and women in relation to each other and to the ideas we develop to make sense of these relations and to frame them. Material experiences inform cultural meanings, which in turn influence the way lived relations change and develop. Therefore, gender only becomes a meaningful term when we consider the relationship between a man and a woman and the broader relations surrounding them. The emphasis that gender is a lived experience is indicated by a series of examples. These examples are case studies, narratives, or personal stories of individuals.

Gender identities are thus not natural, rather cultural. People are born female or male (sex). In the course of time they learn how to be girls and boys, and then become women and men (gender). Gender refers to what is meant to be a boy or girl, woman or man, in a society or culture. Society teaches behaviors, attitudes, roles and activities. Gender defines the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and privileges of men and women in any context. This learned behavior is known as gender identity.

The formation of gender identity is further explored by the French writer Simone de Beauvoir, who says in her book *The Second Sex* (first published in English in 1953) that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'

(de Beauvoir, 1972: 295). De Beauvoir further describes women's status in a patriarchal and/or androcentric culture as 'the Other' and men as 'the One'. She has observed that women are defined and differentiated with reference to men, but men are not defined with reference to women. She has noted that in gender relations the masculine principle is always regarded as the favored 'norm' and the feminine one becomes positioned as 'Other'. For de Beauvoir, civilization was masculine to its very depths, and women were the continual outsiders. She offers several reasons for women's status as 'the Other' including the reproductive role which is seen as biological limitation by men. Lack of definite resources, feeling the necessary bond with men or dependency to men, and often accepting the patriarchal image of 'the Other' and being pleased with this status are the other reasons of being 'the Other' as mentioned by de Beauvoir.

Ann Oakley has explored the construction of gender in Western society in her book titled *Sex, Gender and Society*. She has observed that Western society is very prone to exaggeration of gender differences. She has further observed that there is a tendency in Western society in establishing women's best gender role as mothers and housewives. Western society furthermore believes that 'social efficiency' is based on women's role as mother and housewives, and any tempering with these roles would certainly diminish happiness. Oakley (1972) has argued that this is a

vaguely conceived belief which has a blatantly disreputable past. She has then commented that this idea should have been discarded long ago.

Does biology contribute to some behavioral characteristics? It was always a question in the discussion of gender. Judith Butler's theorization of gender introduces the notion of performativity and argues that biology does not contribute to behavioral characteristics rather gender behavior is based on performativity. This approach is perhaps the most radical one and questions the whole way we appeal to gender identity. Butler (1990: ix) asserts that all identity categories 'are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin.' She (1990:6) further argues that 'the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies.'

Double standard

The term 'double standard' denotes to two sets of principles and practices that are separately used to evaluate women and men. The concept of double standard has grown up in an androcentric or patriarchal culture. Therefore, it gives benefit to men in most cases. Because, the standard of

evaluation is not same to both women and men. It is evident that in order to exploit women economically, politically and/or culturally, double standard has been used by both men and women who have the power to do so. In this regard, Pilcher and Whelehan (2006: 36) have noted that the concept of 'double standard is most often used to describe a disparity between the experiences of women and men, which is to the benefit of men. More rarely is it used to draw attention to a disparity in which men are disadvantaged.'

Feminism has long been trying to address the existence of double standard in politics, society and culture. Feminists have noted that double standard exists between men and women in granting citizenship rights, voting rights, rights to participate in political activities and other political rights and rewards. They have further noted that the concept of double standard exists even in granting human rights and setting up the standard of norms and behavior between men and women in a family or society. Some feminists also noticed the existence of double standard in granting religious rights and assigning religious rituals between men and women. In addition to the above-mentioned fields, feminists have observed the association of the concept of double standard in analysis of informal norms and rules of behavior, particularly within sexual culture. The double standard of sexuality means that sexual behavior deemed

inappropriate in a woman, and for which she is shown social disapproval, may be regarded as appropriate and as praiseworthy in a man.

The concept of double standard must be read in the context of understanding the existing gender relations in a politics, society or culture. As the understanding of gender relations is becoming more problematic or complicated day by day, it has been observed that prevailing double standards are often far from uniform in their application or effects. The concept of double standard also varies in the context of class, ethnicity and power. In Connell's (1995) analysis of the gender hierarchy of power, hegemonic masculinity is suggested as the dominant force in the production and reproduction of double standards. He has noted that those men who do not live up to the hegemonic masculine ideal, may find themselves disadvantaged by the operation of double standards.

The concept of double standard indicates and explains gender relations and the status of women and men in a power structure. It shows the avenues that go to the reasons why in general women are disadvantaged than men in a family, society, economy, culture and politics. Therefore, there is no doubt that an understanding of the concept of double standard will immensely help us in analyzing the state of gender in the overall politics of a country.

Gender equality in politics

In order to understand what is meant by gender equality in politics, we need to understand first what is meant by gender equality. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to the question. Does it mean that women must take on masculine norms, values and lifestyles? What is the standard by which the achievement of gender equality is to be judged? Social scientists cannot rest assured the answers of these questions yet. Debates and researches are ongoing in order to find the common and agreed answers to these questions. Therefore, the issue of whether equality requires all women being treated the same as all men, irrespective of their differences, or whether equality requires that differences between women and men be recognized and provided for, remains central to gender studies. However, for the sake of this thesis, I will assume that equality is the condition or the state of being the same in terms of access to or, enjoying the human rights, such as, religious, social, economic and political rights, and so on.

However, we can also explain the concept of 'gender equality' from equality, difference and diversity perspectives. Believers of 'equality perspective' regarded the notion of gender equality as an attribute that should not be significant in the distribution of social values or rights. They think that it can be achieved through gender neutrality or androgyny. Believers of 'difference perspective' take an opposite position. They insist

on the recognition of and valuing of the ways in which women are different from men. However, believers of 'diversity perspective' criticize the explanations of gender equality as explained by the equality and difference perspectives by questioning the assumption that equality and difference are mutually exclusive opposite (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006: 38-40). Therefore, they try to find some connections between these two perspectives, what is well explored in the work of Young (1990: 171) who argues that 'difference now comes to mean not otherness, exclusive opposition, but specificity, variation, heterogeneity'.

My understanding is that gender equality can never be properly understood if it is read as an isolated concept. The diagram on the next page explains my understanding of the concept of gender equality.

Diagram 2: Gender equality
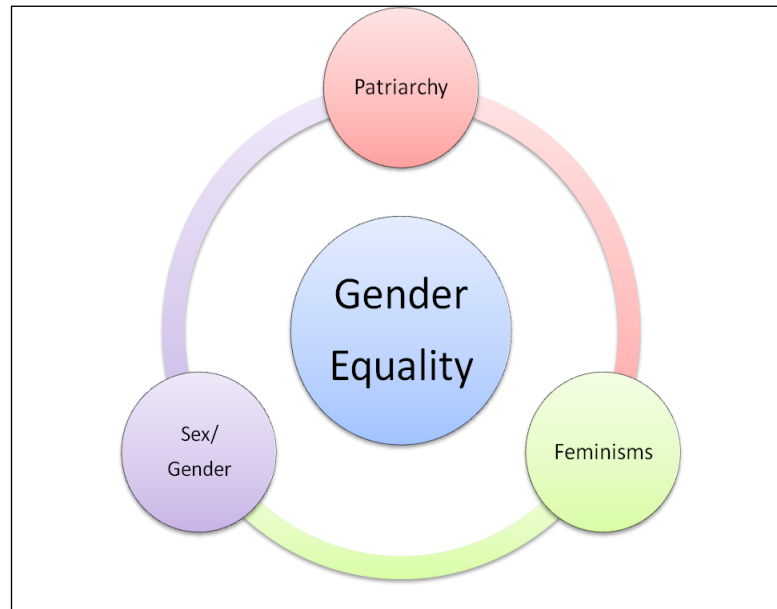
Source: Rahman 2014: 91

I have noticed that the concepts of feminisms, patriarchy and sex/gender binary all together help to understand the concept of gender equality. I have further noticed that these concepts relate to each other.

Therefore, there is no hard and fast answer to the question what is meant by gender equality in politics; because debates are ongoing to find a common agreed answer to the question. I think that what is meant by gender equality in politics can well be understood if the concept of politics is studied in the light of the other connected theories of gender studies and political science. One of such connected theories is the theory of political participation which says that a truly representative government cannot be

established unless gender equity is ensured in the process of political participation. This theory also explains the basic reasons for political participation and their linkages with other factors that create causes of unequal political participation of women and men in general. Let me discuss them in brief.

There are three basic reasons for political participation: a) to help and support the country, b) to achieve some self-advantages, and c) to influence the public policy of the county (Janda and Goldman 1992: 260). It is to be noted that these reasons for political participation are always motivated by other factors and social linkages. For example, education and social status have a strong link to political participation that is why in most countries political leaders are drawn disproportionately from upper status occupation and privileged family background (Almond and Powell 1966: 124). Since the reasons for political participation are motivated by other factors, they cannot equally attract both women and men. In fact, there are several factors that create division between women and men in political participation. For example, limited educational and occupational opportunities for women, which have barred most of them from achieving skills and resources essential to contest successfully for public office. Therefore, men are more likely to participate in politics than women.

In this thesis, we will see to what extent these theories are reflected in Bangladesh politics. I will also dig out the psycho-social reasons behind it. We will see why and how women have been depicted in Bangladesh as politically ineffective, unmotivated, naive, invisible and dependent upon the wisdom of men as described by scholars as one of the reasons of women's lower level of political participation (Bazter and Lancing 1980: 6). One point is clear from the discussion on theories of gender and politics that these theories pay special attention to the importance of gender equality in all spheres of life including a state's policies and/or legal framework. They also define a set of principles of gender equality in politics.

Relationship among the political theories, the concepts in gender studies and the principles of gender equality in politics

Political theories given by Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and other political scientists provide a range of arguments about the characters and attributes of men and women which are fundamental to the concepts in gender studies i.e., sex/gender binary, feminism, patriarchy, citizenship, double standard, representation etc. developed by feminist thinkers. These theories further suggest a set of principles of gender equality in politics. Therefore, the theories of politics, the concepts in gender studies, and the principles of gender equality in politics are

strongly inter-linked with each other which can be presented in a diagram to help visualizing the relationship among them at a glance. The following diagram shows that relationship:

Diagram 3: Relationship among the political theories, the concepts in gender studies and the principles of gender equality in politics

Political theories
Political theories provide the fundamental basis to the concepts in gender studies.

Development of the concepts in gender studies
Concepts in gender studies suggest a set of principles of gender equality in politics.

A set of principles of gender equality in politics
Principles of gender equality in politics includes but not limited to the equal participation of women in politics.
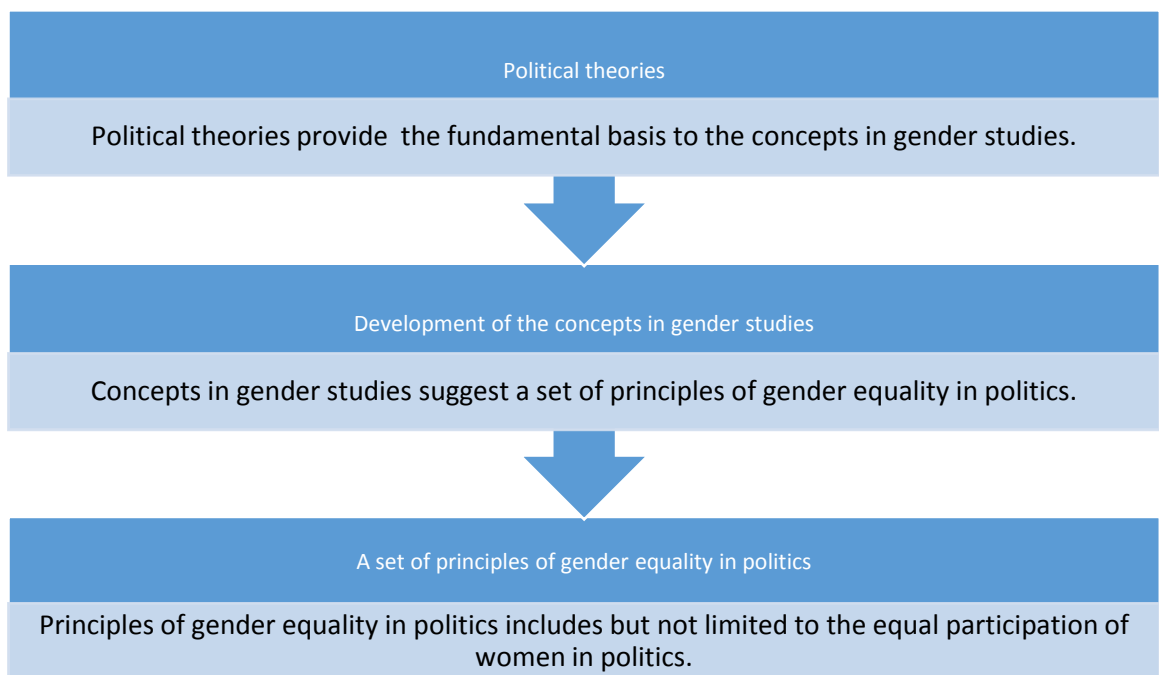
Source: Research findings

Key theoretical approach of this thesis

Public policy issues draw the key theoretical approach for this thesis where the notion of public policy refers to what governments do and what they refuse to do. It is to be noted that every policy proposal contains within it an explicit or implicit diagnosis of a political problem which is

shaped by various assumptions, values and approaches. Goodwin (1996: 67) thinks that the approach 'frames policy not as a response to existing conditions and problems, but more as a discourse in which both problems and solutions are created'. Therefore, public policy is viewed not only as an attempted solution to a problem, but also as a representation of that problem. And, any representation of a problem is an interpretation which involves judgments and choices. A further explanation of problem representation in a policy proposal is found in Bacchi's (1999) discussion. She says that any policy proposal by its very nature identifies what is of concern and what needs to be changed, which is called problem representation, and a focus upon it requires a focus upon discourses and approaches associated with the problem in question.

Three approaches to policy studies have reflected in this thesis. These are: (1) rational comprehensive approach, (2) politically rational approach and (3) public choice approach. Rational comprehensive approach sees public policy principally as a process of problem solving. It infers that public interest can rationally and analytically be determined, and the problem can be addressed if the correct neutral procedure is followed in policy making. On the contrary, politically rational approach insists that no final solution will ever be discovered through policy making, because the policy makers can attempt only to improve the situation. In contrast to the above two

approaches, public choice approach is mainly concerned with the improvement of the political processes and approaches used in policy making. It suggests that the task of a policy analyst is to figure out the ways in which politics maters so that less desirable aspects can be controlled in policy making (Dudley and Vodovich: 1995).

Also, there are certain issues that need to be taken into consideration in a policy analysis. In this context, the following fourteen issues have been taken into consideration by this thesis:

1. The ways in which problems get represented in a policy proposal.

2. The ways that uncover the implicit characterizations of policy targets and reflect upon the implications of those characterizations.

3. The competing constructions of gender issues addressed in the policy process, and the ways in which these constructions leave other gender issues untouched.

4. The discursive constructions of the problem made in the policy.

5. The assumptions associated in the policy formulations.

6. The presuppositions which are implied or taken for granted in the representation of gender inequality that is offered in the policy.

7. The effects which are connected to the representation of the problem.

8. The stumbling blocks which intentionally or unintentionally are appeared in the ways in which political issues are being represented.

9. The trajectories of development of the policy proposal.

10. The religious doctrines, political institutions and cultural myths since them all take a role in shaping public policy.

11. The silences or missing points in a policy proposal.

12. The layers that nest a policy proposal.

13. The problems which are misdiagnosed in a policy proposal.

14. The inactions by the government (what governments refuge to do) which can be as important as actions.

Indicators of the state of gender in politics

In order to assess the state of gender in politics or to examine whether there is gender equality in politics or not, a set of indicators is needed. The indicators should provide arguments on one hand, about political participation, citizenship and so on; and on the other hand, about the power relations between women and men that influence the politics. This thesis has drawn a set of indicators. Below please find them at the diagram-4.

Diagram 4: Indicators of the state of gender in politics
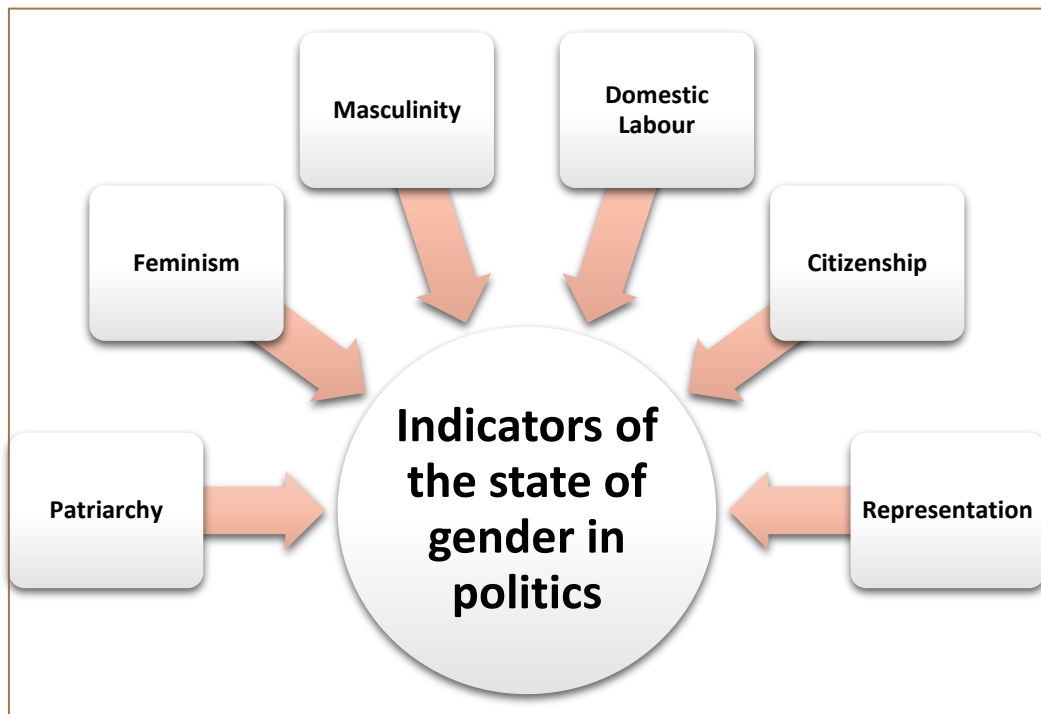
Source: Research findings

Now let me discuss the above-mentioned indicators.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is considered as one of the key theories of gender studies. It has been theorized in several ways where the aim is to identify the bases of women's subordination to men. According to Marxist feminists, patriarchy arises from the workings of the capitalist economic system where patriarchy requires and benefits from women's unpaid labour in the home. The subordination of women to men in society therefore tends to

be regarded as a by-product of capital's subordination of labour. Class inequality is argued to be the central feature of society and is seen to determine gender inequality (Barrett 1991) in the Marxist feminist explanations of patriarchy. However, some scholars think that it overly emphasizes the notions of class and capitalism. As a result, 'the dual systems' approach has emerged where capitalism and patriarchy are understood as interdependent and mutually accommodating systems of oppression. Hartmann (1982) has noted that both the systems structure and benefit from women's subordination to men.

The above-mentioned explanations of patriarchy have some limitations. Firstly, they have failed to acknowledge or account for historical variations in gender relations. Secondly, in these explanations, the basis of patriarchy is limited to one or two factors. Thirdly, they do not recognize the cultural variations between women and men in different parts of the world. In my view, these limitations are addressed by the theorization of patriarchy by Millett and Walby.

Kate Millett has analysed the concept of patriarchy in her classic text *Sexual Politics,* where she shows how the family plays role to patronize patriarchy. In her own words (Millett 1977):

> *Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. Mediating between the individual and the social structure, the family effects control and conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient. As the fundamental instrument and the foundation unit of patriarchal society the family and its roles are prototypical....*
>
> *Traditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale. Classically, as head of the family the father is both begetter and owner in a system in which kinship is property. Yet in strict patriarchy, kinship is acknowledged only through association with the male line. Agnation excludes the descendants of the female line from property right and often even from recognition.*

It is to be noted that the term 'sexual politics' is first coined by Millett as she says, 'sexual politics obtains consent through the 'socialization' of both sexes to basic patriarchal polities about temperament, role, and status. As to status, a pervasive assent to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female' (Millett 1977: 26). Millett extends definitions of politics to embrace all relationships of power, particularly defined along gender and racial lines and specifically those which are enforced through informal means such as through marital relationships.

Walby (1990) argues in her book titled *Theorizing Patriarchy* that patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices where men not

only dominate and oppress women but also exploit them. She identifies six structures of patriarchy: household production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality and culture. Together, they capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of degradation of women. Her theory also explains how patriarchy moved from the private to the public sphere. She observes that women are now facing a new form of inequality and discrimination especially at the workplaces and in the academic institutions, which were absent in the early twentieth century.

Walby's account of patriarchy has been criticized by Pollert (1996) who thinks that Walby's effort to overcome the limitations of patriarchy is unsuccessful because she could not identify the root causes or the origin of patriarchy. She could only develop a more elaborate description of patriarchy, but not an explanation of why it exists and how it is perpetuated, Pollert has commented.

Feminism

The French notion of '*féminisme*' is the source of the modern concept of feminism. In the nineteenth century the concept of feminism was used as a medical term either to describe the feminization of a male body, or to describe women with masculine characteristics. Feminism was first used as a political term in the United States in the early twentieth century by a

group of women. They asserted 'the uniqueness of women, the mystical experience of motherhood and women's special purity' (Jaggar 1983: 5). Eventually it has become clear that the term refers to the notion of women's emancipation. Pilcher and Whelehan (2006) think that feminism has been emerged from diverse cultural and political perspectives and focuses on issues germane to the time and location they inhabit. Therefore, it has pluralistic characteristics. There are some dominant strands that make up the feminist thought. These strands are namely liberal, radical, Marxist and eco-feminisms.

Liberal feminism is based on the diversity of liberal thought dominant in Western society since the Enlightenment. It has proclaimed that the degradation of women or women's subordinate social position can be addressed by existing political processes under democracy. Mary Wollstonecraft's book titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, 1792 is regarded as the manifesto of liberal feminism. In this book the writer has argued that the biological reasons for granting different political rights between men and women are irrelevant. She further argues that women are intellectually inferior to men only due to lack of equal access to education (Mahtab 2012).

On the contrary, radical feminism is associated with the notions of separatism. Radical feminists assume that a woman-centred politics can only be devised in a women-only space (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006). Apart from this, radical feminists argue that the root cause of women's exploitation is biological. This reason is highlighted in Shulamith Firestone's book titled *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. In her book Firestone (1979) argues that women would achieve equality only with the help of advanced reproductive technologies such as IVF/test-tube babies.

In contrast, Marxist feminism links changes in women's social conditions with the overthrow of industrial capitalism and changing relations of workers to the means of production. We know that a society is divided by class, race and gender distinctions. These issues have been taken into consideration by Marxist feminists. They believe that it is more useful to consider different forms of oppression as multi-pronged and inter-related phenomenon rather than arguing that one form is more destructive than others (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006).

Eco-feminism is a relatively new concept in the realm of feminist politics. Eco-feminists argue that there is an integral link between women and nature. In support of their arguments, they provide examples of natural

degradation where it is evident that women and children are the primary and first victims of any natural disasters. They further argue that patriarchy is equally responsible for women's subordination and natural degradation. They claim that patriarchy is built on four interlocking pillars: sexism, racism, class exploitation and environmental destruction which resulted into the structures of gender subordination, where women are subordinated to men, and children and younger men are subordinated to elder men. Therefore, eco-feminists are committed to break down the structures of gender subordination and to ensure the rights of women as human beings. They want to make sure that any environmental policy must address women and children's issues considering that women and nature are interconnected (Mahtab 2012: 85-86).

Masculinity

The concept of masculinity arises in a social context in which men live and work. Men's positions in the various social institutions throw light to the notion of masculinity. Therefore, masculinity can be defined as a set of practices or cultural representations associated with the notion of being a man. The plural concept of masculinity or the word 'masculinities' is also used in the discussion of gender studies. It recognizes that the ways of being a man are varied in terms of history and culture. This variation is

evident between societies as well as between different groups of men within a society (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006).

Debates on masculinities grew tremendously from the 1970s to onwards. About the volume of writing already produced on masculinities, MacInnes (1998:1) comments that 'it seems as if every man and his dog is writing a book on masculinities'. This discussion on masculinities is resulted into men's movement. There was emergence of men's consciousness raising (CR) groups during the early 1970s. CR enabled men to learn a great deal about the process in which they were learnt to be men. There was an acknowledgement that men had the potentiality to be the oppressor because they had the power to exploit women and children. Therefore, the CR groups emerged as separatist groups in the USA and the UK, who wanted an end of violence against women. The CR groups also believed that men need liberation from masculinities where men were the gender oppressors. Thus, at the outset the CR groups had a good relationship with feminist groups. However, later feminists were sceptical about men's calls for 'liberation.' Tolson (1987: 144) has commented that this is 'to assume that men can, un-problematically, experience 'men's liberation'—that there are any analogies with gay or feminist politics—is, in the end, an illusion.'

Like the other concepts of gender studies, the concept of masculinity has different dimensions. As an example, in the field of natural sciences, the concept of masculinity is seen as the result of physiological factors of hormones and/or chromosomes. In this regard, Goldberg (1979) identified the 'neuro-endocrine system' (the interaction of the nervous system with the hormone system) as the biological basis of masculinity. Therefore, in the field of natural sciences, masculinity is a part of essentialism. However, in the field of social sciences, masculinity is considered as a form of power relations among men themselves and between men and women.

In support to this point of view, Connell (1995) thinks that masculinity is the effects of ongoing interpretations and definitions on bodies, personalities and on a society's culture and institutions. He has provided a scientific analysis of 'gender hierarchy' characteristic of modern Western societies. He shows that masculinity occupies all the upper ranks of the gender hierarchy and feminism occupies the bottom ranks. He further shows that there is 'hegemonic masculinity' at the top of the gender hierarchy. He argues that 'hegemonic masculinity' is the culturally dominant ideal of masculinity which is based on authority, physical toughness, strength, heterosexuality and paid work. In his analysis, Connell also talks about the masculinity politics and men's movement that

brought the social changes in the industrialized societies of the West in the twentieth century. He has commented that 'those mobilizations and struggles where the meaning of masculine gender is at issue' undermine the gender hierarchy and the position of hegemonic masculinity.

Some writing on masculinity suggest that it is only biological men who nourishes masculinity. MacInnes (1998) argues this position and explains that masculinity does not exist as the property, character trait or aspects of individuals. He thinks that it should instead be understood as an ideology about what men should be like, and this is nourished by both men and women in order to make sense of their lives. This explanation is agreed on by Connell. In his more recent work, Connell (2000) emphasizes that masculinity is not simply equivalent to biological men. In other words, masculine bodies, behaviour or attitudes can be the social practices of people who are otherwise defined as 'women'. He insists that masculinity is a concept that 'names patterns of gender practice, not just groups of people.' He further insists that masculinity is not only a discourse but also a non-discursive practice which is shaped by violence and sexuality, childcare and so on.

As like as feminism, the concept of masculinity is well known today as a theoretical site of ongoing debates in gender studies. The critique on

masculinity suggests that men are going through a period of transition. However, whether this indicates only men in crisis or opens an exciting new chapter in the history of masculinity is yet to be discovered. In this regard, Beynon (2002: 143) has commented that 'the fact remains that despite the huge amount written about masculinity, we still need to know how men perceive masculinity today; whether or how they experience masculinity-in-crisis, how they enact 'masculinities' and how they relate to other men and women.'

Domestic labour

The concept of the domestic labour has come into discussion in the academic arena in 1970s through some feminist writers. Critics has noted that the domestic works done by women are mostly unpaid and sometimes its importance is ignored by the male head of a household. They have argued that the importance of domestic work is enormous and no less than the importance of external economic work. Feminists think that domestic work has its own economic value because it is a form of productive activity like men's paid work. Therefore, domestic work should also be duly paid.

Delphy and Leonard (1992) explain the concept of domestic labour in the light of the theory of patriarchy. They argue that women's continuing

subordination in Western society is due in large measure to men's exploitation of women's domestic labour. They further argue that women's oppression is directly beneficial to men and perhaps only indirectly beneficial to capitalism. They say that all kinds of domestic caring work, including the sexual, emotional and symbolic works, done by women for men and other members of a family take place in a patriarchal mode of production. They have observed that men perform an insignificant amount of household caring work and as a result they get benefits from it.

Hartmann (1982) has observed that there is some inter-connecting phenomenon between capitalism and patriarchy in relation to the division of domestic labour which resulted into a vicious circle of disadvantage for women. She says that before capitalism, a patriarchal system of the division of domestic labour was established in a family setting. Through that system men have learnt how to dominate women and children. Through that system men also learnt other techniques of controlling labour power. Eventually when capitalism emerged, men used those techniques to segregate paid works in an industrial setting. Job segregation was made in such a way that men than women hold the jobs with greater material rewards. She noted that lower wages were paid to women intentionally and purposively.

Hartmann further argues that it is done in order to keep women dependent on men because they encourage women to marry. Married women must perform domestic chores for their husbands. This division of domestic labour, in turn, acts to weaken women's position in the labour market. Therefore, the hierarchical division of domestic labour is perpetuated by the labour market, and vice versa.

It has been observed that despite women's increased involvement in paid work, they remain responsible for the bulk of unpaid domestic works. This case is evident even when their male partners are themselves unemployed or when both partners are involved with full-time job. Other studies suggest that when both partners undertake full-time paid work, a solution increasingly favoured is to pay someone else to do the housework. Again, this someone is usually a woman (Gregson and Lowe 1994).

Though men's involvement with the caring work is increasing day by day, the rate of change division of domestic labour is very slow. Therefore, social scientists have turned their attention to understand the reasons for the persistence of traditional division of domestic labour which make women responsible for the unpaid caring work. Pilcher (1999) identified several factors including the greater time availability of women, lack of women's economic power in comparison to their male counterparts due

to gender segregation in paid work, and beliefs that it is women's role in a family to perform the domestic caring work. Therefore, it is unlikely that substantial changes in the traditional division of domestic labour will occur soon.

Citizenship

Citizenship is a status of a person with any gender identity within a political territory or nation-state that makes the person a citizen of that country by providing certain rights and obligations. The traditional accounts of citizenship are explained by the political scientists. But those accounts are identified as 'gendered' by the feminists. They argue that men and women cannot avail and enjoy the same types of rights and obligations in the traditional accounts of citizenship. Therefore, they developed the feminist account of citizenship. It suggests that irrespective of gender identity, a person should have the same political rights and obligations. In this regard, T.H. Marshall, Pateman, Lister and Siim's accounts of citizenship are notable.

T.H. Marshall (1950) has provided a classic theory of citizenship. He thinks that citizenship is comprised of three sets of rights: civil, political and social rights. In his account, civil rights include the right to freedom, justice, religious believes and to own property; political rights means the

right to take part in political activities such as voting; and social rights refers to the right to get security and live with dignity by taking part in economic activities. Marshall has noted that historically these rights evolved gradually in Great Britain in between the seventeenth and the twentieth century.

Marshall's classic literature of citizenship was severely criticized by Pateman, Lister, and Siim. Pateman's (1989) re-reading of the classic texts of 'social contract theory' shows that women are incorporated into the new social order differently from men. She has noticed that women are deprived from enjoying the same political rights and status as are enjoyed by men, due to a different sexual embodiment.

Lister (1997) thinks that Marshall's account of citizenship carries both inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms. This means that the citizenship status includes a group or groups of individuals into its benefit scheme when simultaneously it excludes the others. In the discourse of gender studies, the debate is much focused around the exclusionary mechanism of citizenship. Special efforts were made by the feminists to address both the historical exclusion of women from citizenship rights, and the contemporary inequalities between men and women in terms of citizenship status. How to include all individuals into citizenship status

irrespective of their age, gender, sex, race, ethnicity and other identities is the concern of the feminists.

Lister explains that the practice of excluding women from citizenship has introduced two issues: gender-neutral citizenship and gender-differentiated citizenship. On one hand, gender-neutral citizenship is demanded by the 'equality' theorists who seek to demand women's inclusion in the citizenship on the same scale as men. On the other hand, gender-differentiated citizenship is advocated by the 'difference' theorists who believe that this will duly recognize the domestic labor and add value to women's responsibilities and skills in the private sphere. However, the goal of both equal and difference theorists is distorted due to their underline dichotomous logic. Therefore, a new conception of citizenship is now under construction which combines elements of both the gender-neutral and gender-differentiated approaches.

Siim (2000) has noted that Marshall's model of citizenship is only based on the evidences of men's citizenship rights and obligations. Therefore, she has argued that his model of citizenship has failed to encapsulate the citizenship concerns of women.

Representation

Representation is a key issue of discussion in gender studies and political science. It is important not only because the images of women reflected to them may be objectionable, but also because it explains how women face difficulties in being represented in the public sphere. It encompasses the notions of gender, feminism and sexual politics. It talks about the relationship between the image and social reality. It is a political issue which is associated with the notion of power (Robinson and Richardson 1997). It has been observed that women cannot participate in the decision-making process without power. As a result, without power, they cannot represent their best interest.

It is to be noted that people are materially affected by the images they see because these images affect their attitude and behavior. Feminist literary criticisms captured these sexualized constructions of women's images or the representations of women in literature, media and politics. For an example, Kate Millett's classic *Sexual Politics* witnessed sexualized representation of women in novels by some of the key twentieth-century male writers such as D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer and Henry Miller. Millett extends definition of representation to embrace all relationships of power, particularly defined along gender and racial lines and particularly

those which are enforced through informal means such as through marital relationships (Millett 1977).

One of the key activities of early feminist criticism was to evaluate the ways in which women characters had been represented in past fiction by men and women, and how women writers might represent women in the future in order to give more positive role models for women readers. Much of this work identified what were regarded as 'stereotypes' of feminine behavior and physical appearance and this work extended to wider cultural criticism to show how women and men might be affected by the way gender is represented to them. The field of feminist literary criticism gradually expanded to include film theory and studies in popular culture as well as fine art and fashion. It has been observed that the feminist study of representation falls into two key areas: firstly, the study of negative representations of women and femininity; and secondly, the study of oppositional work by feminist practitioners. It has further been observed that the former area is by far the most documented, even to this day (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006).

The ways in which women's images are represented in the literature, media and society have an impact on women's representation in politics where the concept of representation becomes more problematized. It has

been observed that the way female politicians perceived themselves and are perceived by others is ineluctably shaped by the ways in which images of female politicians are constructed and communicated to the population at large. It has further been observed that these images reinforced dominant ideologies of gender difference.

Wrapping up the chapter

I would like to wrap up the chapter with this understanding that a truly representative government cannot be established unless gender equality is there in the political system of a country. Therefore, it is important to examine the state of gender in politics. The above explained theoretical framework will certainly help us in doing so. To this end, the next chapter will review relevant literature and presents reflections of this theoretical framework on Bangladesh politics.

Chapter Four

Literature Review

Androcentrism, cyborg, masculinity, patriarchy, and other elements of gender are present in Bangladesh politics in such a proportion and position that suggests a postmodern state of gender inequality. It is postmodern because some essence of gender inequality is uncertain and fluid and exist in a disorderly way in Bangladesh politics. For an example, although women have been ruling Bangladesh since 1991, they have assumed masculinity instead of instilling feminism into the politics. As a result, despite women ascending to the positions of the Prime Minister in the Cabinet and the Speaker and Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament, women's overall participation in Bangladesh politics especially, at the grassroots level is still marginalized. However, some other essence of gender inequality in Bangladesh politics are historical and they have crept into politics from the existing socio-economic conditions of the country. Therefore, in order to understand the state of gender in Bangladesh politics, it is a pre-requisite to understand the state of gender in Bangladesh society and culture.

Cultural and social dynamics

The cultural and social dynamics of the country indicate that the state of gender in Bangladesh politics is based on unequal power relationships between women and men in the society. It has been observed that women's position in the social structure of Bangladesh is influenced by patriarchy and class, whereby women as housewives constitute one class and men as husbands constitute another, by virtue of their different relations to the patriarchal mode of production. Therefore, in the context of Bangladesh, gender cannot be understood without reference to class and vice versa. Given that 'class is not in fact an economic relation per se but a social relation which involves forms of social organization and cultural modes of expression related to production and consumption processes' (Anthias 2001: 846). It is also important to understand the power that intersects class and gender. Against the backdrop, women's social roles are primarily domestic in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is still broadly expected here that women will only serve their duties as mothers, wives, sisters and as defined in other social relations. A great part of Bangladesh society does not welcome women to be involved in income generating activities outside of the family sphere. Despite the difficult social conditions, a good number of women in Bangladesh is now engaged with greater economic activities. In addition, many of them have developed strategies to manage unpaid housework and caring, alongside

their paid work in order to meet the domestic expectations. However, their socio-economic condition has not changed as many of them cannot become independent and have failed to achieve self-esteem. The overall status of women in Bangladesh society is not much different than it was in the slave age when women were dependent and without any self-respect although they were intrinsically involved with all aspects of production. Hartmann (1982) argues that man control the labor power of women and children in the family in a patriarchal system. This is pretty much visible in Bangladesh society.

Patriarchy

In Bangladesh, patriarchy creates gender discrimination which deters women to enjoy full human rights. On the top of that the existence of class system in Bangladesh society puts women in disadvantage positions in comparison to men. In this critical context, even paying equal attention to women and men in the national laws and policies can do a little in ensuring gender equality in politics. Therefore, the state of gender in Bangladesh politics needs to be assessed in the light of the existing patriarchy, culture and social structures.

The hierarchical organization and control what men learn and practice by controlling women and children in a family in Bangladesh society are

ultimately used in the context of politics. In this way a patriarchal political system has developed in Bangladesh that is molded by the social structures, political history and tradition of the country. Therefore, patriarchy plays a decisive role in Bangladesh politics in changing the very nature of the system. A looking back to the political history of women in Bangladesh will help us to better understand this corollary.

Women never get an opportunity for equal contribution and participation as men in the development of political history of Bangladesh. For an example, the 'period between 1940 and 1946 was a period of political movements aimed at mobilizing mass support behind the cause of Pakistan'. Although 'the mobilized sections of the Muslim population, i.e., the middle classes, participated in these movements', women could not play a vibrant role due to social restrictions. 'While the political movements publicized and popularized the cause of Pakistan, it was the election of 1946 that was regarded as a plebiscite on the Pakistan issue' (Jahan 2005: 201). Women were still facing a lot of challenges to play an active role in that election.

After the independence of Pakistan, Bengali women started violating social restrictions in order to be active in politics. The first vibrant visibility of Bengali women in politics of Pakistan was noticed during the

language movement of 1952. Later, Bengali women were actively participated in the liberation war of Bangladesh.

Women took part in the liberation war of Bangladesh directly and indirectly putting their lives at stake. Their direct involvement with the liberation war includes taking guerilla training and participating actively in the war as freedom fighters. Their indirect involvement with the liberation war includes formation of public opinion, providing with moral support and motivation to the freedom fighters, facilitating nursing and treatment of both male and female freedom fighters who got injured in the war, harboring and serving them food, providing the freedom fighter with intelligence information, working as voice and word soldiers by singing war songs, collecting financial and other aids for the liberation war, and last but not least playing role as war heroines or *Birangona* by sacrificing their chastity for the cause of the country (Reza and Khushi 2016).

Despite these significant efforts, women have never been treated equally in Bangladesh politics since the aftermath of the liberation war. For an example, the list of male freedom fighters was prepared but the list of war heroines or *Birangonas* could not be prepared even though more than 400,000 women were victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and torture including rape during the liberation war of Bangladesh by Pakistani

military forces and their allies (Ahmed and Ahmed 2008). Rather, the initial list of the *Birangonas* was destroyed by the instruction of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation as considering the social contexts of Bangladesh he thought that it would serve the greater interest of the *Birangonas* by facilitating their social cohesion. He understood that if the *Birangonas* were identified, Bangladesh society would not accept them normally. He honestly wanted to reintegrate those women to the family and society of Bangladesh. Therefore, he ordered to destroy the list (Ibrahim 1998).

The history of Bangladesh Parliament shows the marginal status of women both in electoral and representative politics. Since 1991, two women have been leading the parliamentary form of government in the country. However, the presence of female ministries in their cabinets was very insufficient. Generally, women ministers are allotted portfolios that are not regarded as crucially important. Women ministers tend to be associated with ministries that are regarded as feminine or, soft. Women mostly head ministries such as the ministries of social welfare, culture, primary and mass education. But changes had been noticed in 9th parliamentary elected government in where two hard core ministries such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs had been given to women. In view of the low representation of women in the

political process, the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh provided for 50 seats exclusively reserved for women (Article 65). Also, the Election Commission (EC) has advised political parties to increase the number of women representatives in various committees of their respective parties. In this regard, the EC has set a minimum standard and said that at least 33 per cent of women's representation in each political party must be ensured by 2012 (Bangladesh Election Commission).

The history of local government institutions in Bangladesh also shows the marginal status of women in politics. In 1973 election, only one woman was elected as the Chairman of Union Parishad among 4352 unions. Later, although women's participation in the local government bodies of Bangladesh has increased in number, the qualitative change has not visible substantially (Rahman and Ara 2006). For an example, although there is a growing participation of women at Pourashava or city corporation level, still women lag men because of political, cultural, and social stigma (Tasnim 2013). However, about the status of women, a significant development took place at the Union Parishad (UP) level in 1997, when for the first time three reserved seats for women in UP was directly contested. Several women also got elected from the general seats and as Chairman belying the myth that women were incapable of carrying out campaign in order to get elected directly.

The decision to allocate reserve seat for the women had been taken to promote women's participation in the decision-making process as a part of women's empowerment and development. However, after the Union Parishad election of 1997, it had been widely noticed that the female Councilors had been facing enormous problems to perform their roles in the Parishad. Even, in the hands of their male counterparts, they were severely criticized and dishonored and physically harassed just for being women. It is a clear reflection of women's status and position in the society that manifests inequality and gender disparity (Rahman and Ara 2006).

The Other

In gender studies, the concept of the Other is used to describe women's status in family, society, culture and politics. In this concept, the men are 'the One' and women are 'the Other'. In this concept, a woman is 'defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other' (De Beauvoir 1997: 16).

A reflection of the concept of the Other is clearly noticeable in Bangladesh politics. For an example, we can mention about the quota system whereby some seats are kept reserved for women in the Parliament and local

government institutions. The quota system was first introduced in Bangladesh politics in 1972 through Article 65(3) of the Constitution of Bangladesh. The aim of the quota system was to establish gender equality in Bangladesh politics. However, the aim has not been fulfilled yet as the entire quota system is based on the concept of the Other. At least two reasons can be cited to support this corollary. Firstly, as they are considered as the Other, the women of these reserved seats are not directly elected by the people but selected by the male dominated political parties who get a proportionate share of the reserved seats for women in the Parliament. Secondly, these female Members of the Parliament (MPs) do not have any constituency to represent. When the policy makers devised out the plan of the quota system, they thought that men—the One or the Subject or the Absolute were already there to represent their respective constituencies. Therefore, there was no need to assign constituencies to female MPs of the reserved seats, because women were considered as the Other.

Therefore, although the number of female MPs is increased in the Parliament due to the quota system, the issue of women's empowerment remains questionable. From gender perspective, female MPs of the reserved seats have weaker status than directly elected MPs who are mostly men who dominate inside and outside of the Parliament. Again,

due to the weaker status, their political role in the Parliament gets questionable too. For an example, during Ershad's regime, these female MPs were called as 'a set of ornaments in the Parliament' (Jay Jay Din 1986). Also, since these female members of the Parliament do not go through a competitive election process, they are taken less seriously by their directly elected colleagues who consider them more as a vote bank in the Parliament to pass the bills.

The status of female Councilors in the local government institutions in Bangladesh especially at the Union Parishad and Pourashava level is further problematic. Although female Councilors in the local government bodies in Bangladesh are directly elected by the people and have their own constituencies as opposed to female MPs of the reserved seats of the Parliament, they are still treated as the Other by the male Councilors and voters. At the Union Parishad and Pourashava level, a reserved seat is composed of three general seats which are individually represented by three members and who in most cases are men. Thus, an elected female Councilor of a reserved seat shares her constituency with three other Councilors of the general seats. This device is problematic because it makes the female Councilor as the Other. Councilors of the general seats are considered as the One or the Subject or the Absolute by the voters as well as by themselves. As a result, female Councilors of the reserved seats

get less scope to participate in politics. They are also deprived of financial allocations for development works of their respective constituencies. It has been noticed that the female Councilors are entrusted with the responsibilities relating to only prevention of women and children repression, while the male Councilors play the leading role in performing all other duties (Mahtab 2007). Practically, Councilors elected from the general seats work as the Chairpersons of different committees, while the Councilors elected from the reserved seats work as the advisors to the Chairpersons. Here, I have noticed the de Beauvoir's construction of the 'Other' where 'she' is defined with reference to, 'he'.

There are also differences between the male MPs and female MPs in Bangladesh in terms of their political background. Female MPs in the country are tended to have less experience with the party organization. Only a very few female MPs have this experience. Most female MPs are recruited to politics through their association with the social organizations. Only a few female MPs are involved with the party organization in any significant way (Jahan 2005). This difference in political background reinforces the notion of the Other to some extent.

In Bangladesh, men are regarded as the normal Subject of politics, while women are positioned as the Other by the masculine behavior and

attitudes in the fields of politics. However, the Other is not the experience of all women, always in Bangladesh politics. Also, women's experience as the Other is heterogeneous in Bangladesh politics due to difference, plurality and diversity among women.

Masculinity

In gender studies, masculinity is defined 'as a form of power relations both among men themselves and between men and women.' It is 'argued to arise from the social contexts in which men live, for example, from their positions in the various institutions and organizations of their society and/or in the context of the socially available discourses about gender' (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006: 83). As a concept, masculinity 'names patterns of gender practice, not just groups of people' (Connell 2000: 17). It is a form of power relations that resembles to authority, strength and physical toughness. It is a set of social practices and cultural representations associated with being a man. However, masculine behavior or attitudes can also be the social practices of women. Like patriarchy, it also defines women as the Other. Unlike patriarchy, it has a biological basis.

In many ways, masculine behavior and practices are part of politics in Bangladesh which is inherited a political system where mass movements

and elections are closely entwined. Movements and elections are not regarded here as substitutes for each other, rather they are looked upon as complementary, each strengthening the other. Normally, a period of successful movements is resulted into a successful election in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, political movements in Bangladesh are pretty much masculine in nature. As a result, they only draw the active participation of the mobilized section of the population but do not involve most of the immobilized masses, for an example, women. Therefore, although elections provide the silent majority with an opportunity to register their voice on the hotly debated issues and to participate in the critical political decision of the country, women cannot take the benefit due masculine type of movements which are preceded by elections. Thus, election legitimizes the masculine behavior, norms, values and practices in Bangladesh politics.

Due to masculine perception, Bangladesh society prefers to view a female candidate in election just as a woman, not as a candidate. The society gives a different status to a male candidate than a female candidate. As a result, the core political competencies get less importance during selection of a female candidate. Also, the political parties in Bangladesh do not pose liberal mentality in order to nominate a female as a candidate in election. Further, along with the existing social structures, the muscles power, black

money and violence in election create an extra obstacle towards female candidates to win an election in Bangladesh. Therefore, a female electoral candidate in Bangladesh always must work in an adverse masculine social condition even if she inherently comes from a political family. It has been observed that only those female candidates can do better in elections in Bangladesh who have a political background. This is resulted in considerably less representation of women in different committees of political parties, in the Parliament and other political institutions (Zaman 2016).

Masculinity always wants to win and be at the top of the power structure. A reflection of this masculine phenomenon is observed at the party level politics in Bangladesh. All political parties want their nominated members to get the votes and win the election. This emphasis on winning the votes refers to masculinity which wants to retain power by any means. Therefore, the electoral politics of Bangladesh is very much masculine in nature. Evidences can be drawn from the political history of Bangladesh about what extent the electoral politics of Bangladesh can assume masculinity. For an example, the ruling elite maintained many of the colonial restrictions on political freedom during the parliamentary rules of 1947-54 and 1956-58. The restrictions included strict control over mass media, repressive measures to limit the activities of the opposition

political forces, harassed and imprisoned opposition political leaders and workers, banning opposition newspapers etc. (Jahan 2005).

Androcentrism

If androcentrism means a situation where the experiences and interests of women are overlooked (Morgan 1992), then Bangladesh politics is based on an androcentric culture whereby all men have a privileged standpoint over all women. A common tendency to neglect the role of women and the significance of gender in making the fabrics of national politics is observed in the overall political culture of Bangladesh. A doctrine of male-centeredness is so visible in Bangladesh politics whereby the experiences of men are assumed to be generalizable and are seen to provide the objective criteria through which women's experiences can be organized and evaluated.

The presence of androcentrism in Bangladesh politics can better be explained by exploring men's perception on women's involvement in politics and examining the language or words attributed to female politicians. It has been observed that historically Bangladesh politics exhibits androcentric tendencies whereby the culture, knowledge, organizations and institutions reflect and reproduce the dominance and power of men. If one investigates the text and the spirit of the national

policy papers of Bangladesh and the way of the ratification of the international policy instruments, one can find that the issues important to men's interests and experiences are incorporated in the policies, while those important to women have been either overlooked or ignored in many cases. One simple example of this is the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the Government of Bangladesh on 6th November 1984 with reservations to Articles 2, 13 (a), 16.1 (b) and 16.1 (c). Later the Government withdrew reservations to Articles 13 (a) and 16.1 (b) relating to personal rights such as family benefits and guardianship of children. However, reservations to Articles 2 and 16.1 (c) remain as they conflict with men's interest.

Being a signatory of several UN Conventions like CEDAW, the Government of Bangladesh initiated several policy reforms aimed at ensuring greater women's participation in politics in local government bodies. One of the notable reform initiatives was the enactment of the Local Government Ordinance of 1976 and the Local Government (Union Parishads) (Second Amendment) Act of 1997. This Act has introduced quotas for women in local government bodies and allowed direct election in their reserved seats. Although the passage of the act played a crucial role to secure a growing number of seats for women at the Union Parishad

(the lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh) level, the spirit of the policy reform was blurred due to the presence of androcentrism.

Local government policy reforms are positioned against the backdrop of longer-term changes that have challenged the androcentric hold of women's opportunities in the country and reveals the excitement among women as candidates and as members of local constituencies. However, local male political leaders continue to behave in discriminatory ways toward their female fellow leaders. There is unequal distribution of specific resource allocations, which serve to differentiate among the opportunities enjoyed by female and male local leaders. Despite the large size of some women's constituencies, they still do not garner equitable access to institutional and community resources (Panday 2013).

An androcentric and male dominated societal structure makes it difficult for women to enter the political process. Thus, bringing changes to formal institutions and the power structure are imperative when it concerns enhancing the participation of women in the political process. As a result, the Act of 1997 has failed to ensure women's economic as well as social and personal freedom, to the extent that women still do not have control over the expenditure of their earnings or even their personal mobility. As a matter of fact, elected female members still suffer from a lack of

acceptance as political leaders, since there is a strong conservatism among most of the population. Despite an increase in their personal mobility, where they might have formerly not been allowed to leave the house at all, women still are required to be accompanied by male family members when they leave the house to do their work as Councilors. Overall, female members have not yet achieved equal status with their male counterparts in the Union Parishad meetings and work as they are not allowed equal shares in project distribution or committee membership, and their opinions in Union Parishad decision making are generally ignored (Panday 2013).

Although the constitutional principles and policy initiatives in Bangladesh talk about establishing gender equality in all spheres of life including politics, these principles and initiatives do not talk about breaking the androcentric values and discriminatory structures. Therefore, there is less possibility that gender equality will be achieved in Bangladesh politics by these principles and initiatives. In fact, it has been observed that in many cases women in Bangladesh cannot exercise their voting rights freely and independently as their voting rights are limited and controlled either by their respective husband or a male member of their family. It has further been observed that in some cases, women become disinterested to exercise their voting rights for androcentric social influences and pressures. It has

been noted that dependency on men, lack of economic freedom, confinement, lack of education and awareness are the main factors which partially seize the voting rights of women in Bangladesh. This situation is more applicable to village women in comparison to urban women (Zaman 2016).

Cyborg

In gender studies, cyborg is defined as a concept of a hybrid creature of partial identity which has a symbolic value for a postmodernist reconceptualization of social relations (Haraway 1991). This concept encourages a 'double focus' or a 'simultaneous recognition' of the ways in which women are positioned within existing power relations. It also 'refuges the binary separation into object and subject' (Geldalof 2000: 349). As the concept of cyborg has a mythical, symbolic or metaphorical value and a potentiality to conceptualize the social and political relations in a postmodernist way, it can be drawn in the analysis of the present reality of connections between women and men in Bangladesh politics. Therefore, it is a good fit to analyzing the relationships between women and men in Bangladesh politics and to theorizing their political identity and difference. In fact, it can be a central reference point to understand the state of gender in Bangladesh politics.

In doing so, the current state of gender in Bangladesh politics can be termed as 'cyborg' which simultaneously encourages masculinity and feminism and problematizes the differences between them by blurring their natural boundaries to some extent. For an instance, although Bangladesh has been governing under female leadership since 1991, the values and spirit of feminism are not sufficiently trickled down into the fields of politics. Such as, despite being women, neither Khaleda Zia nor Sheikh Hasina has made any attempt to groom and promote grassroots level female leaders to party hierarchy. They have taken no practical political strategies for diminishing social relations of domination. Rather, they have assumed masculinity. As a result, dualisms, divisions and differences continue to exist in the fields of politics.

It is often argued that since women are now taking up the higher political positions including the positions of Prime Minister, Speaker and Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament, women's cause should be well addressed and fulfilled. However, it is not happened as the reality is that women leaders need to work in a patriarchal political system surrounded by masculine political culture and values that do not encourage active participation of women in Bangladesh politics (Islam 2003).

As a result, the regimes of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina have reinforced the conventional gendered patterns of power and authority in Bangladesh politics. For example, during their periods of government, political parties have been relying heavily on black money and muscles power to mobilize support and capture vote because 'the stakes of winning or losing control of state power is too high for the personal and political fortunes of the competing leaders and their parties'. Moreover, the 'intolerant attitude towards political opposition has also continued. After losing an election, instead of participating as a loyal opposition in the parliament, both the major parties have started boycotting the Parliament thus making it ineffective and engaged in agitational street politics to topple the government' (Jahan 2005: 292-3). These political behaviors which are performed by both women and men, refer to masculinity. Therefore, the state of gender in Bangladesh politics is cyborg which has blurred the boundaries between masculinity and feminism.

This cyborgification in the political process of Bangladesh is a postmodern phenomenon where things are not certain, orderly and fixed, but are instead uncertain, disorderly and fluid. The impact of postmodernism has been significant across a wide range of political issues in Bangladesh. For examples, increasing plurality in political representations of women and men has been observed in Bangladesh

politics. It problematizes the traditional gender segregation and the question of 'the Other'. As a result, women in Bangladesh politics remain as the Other but the characteristics of the Otherness has been changed. Gender segregation is still there in Bangladesh politics, but the forms of segregation have been modified. Minority and diversity are increasingly getting attention in Bangladesh politics although their causes remain unresolved.

Cyborgification destabilizes the dichotomous gender categories and traditional status of women in Bangladesh politics on one hand; on the other hand, it recognizes the differences between women and men in politics. It gives the existing gender inequality in Bangladesh politics a new image. For instance, the Government of Bangladesh has taken a series of policy initiatives in line with feminism in order to address the gender inequality. This includes signing of the international Conventions and Protocols including CEDAW and forming or reforming national laws and policies including the National Women Development Policy. These policies, however, could not establish feminism in Bangladesh politics but therefore, the process of cyborgification has already started.

Gender segregation

'Gender segregation occurs when women and men are located separately from one another, while otherwise participating in a broadly similar set of activities' (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006: 64). A complex range of factors contribute to gender segregation including power inequalities between women and men and naturalistic beliefs about gender. Gender segregation is visible almost in all spheres of life including family, society and politics in Bangladesh. In family context, married women must perform domestic chores for their husbands, in-laws and children in Bangladesh. In social context, several examples of gender segregation can be cited. For an instance, reference can be made to the choice of co-education system which is highly discouraged in Bangladesh society. Even in the educational institutions operating under co-education system, sitting arrangement for women and men is segregated as per gender identity. As a result, gender segregation occurs in the field of education in Bangladesh. It is observed that there are interrelations among family, society and politics in terms of gender segregation. This is to say, gender segregation in the family has resulted the same in the society that ultimately reflects in the politics.

Gender segregation in Bangladesh politics means that it is men who hold, and exercise greater political power compared to women in the overall

politics of the country. It also means that in general Bangladesh society considers men better fit for politics and thereby provides with greater support compared to women. A complex range of factors contribute to gender segregation in Bangladesh politics where the gender segregation is the outcome of intentional patriarchal strategies against women. Although women are not completely separated from politics in Bangladesh, a range of evidence shows that women and men tend to engage in different types of responsibilities at different levels within party hierarchies.

Following Hakim's (1979) model, gender in Bangladesh politics can be segregated both horizontally and vertically. In the horizontal segregation, women and men are found in different types of political responsibilities. It can be illustrated by the concentration of women and men in different political roles. In the vertical segregation, women and men hold different positions in political hierarchies, with men tending to be at the higher and women at the lower levels. An important reference point in the discussion of gender segregation in Bangladesh politics is again the quota system or the provision of reserved seats for women in the Parliament and local government institutions. Although this has resulted in a little bit of decrease of gender segregation at the horizontal level of Bangladesh politics, the result is offset by an increase of gender segregation at the

vertical level of politics in the country. Therefore, the quota system or the provision of reserved seats for women in the Parliament and local government institutions could bring no overall significant changes to the existing gender segregation in Bangladesh politics.

Other observations

The above discussion on the state of gender in Bangladesh politics indicates that there is gender inequality in Bangladesh politics. As a result, the political empowerment of women is being hampered because it is linked to the notion of gender equality. Therefore, it is not possible to ensure gender equality in all spheres of life without achieving political empowerment of women as politics is the key of all means that facilitates important decisions and policy initiatives in a democratic country. Given that women's political empowerment means active participation of women in the fields of politics where women can make policy decisions and apply their power.

Among other factors, political participation of women plays an important role in achieving political empowerment of women. However, for that to happen, the political participation of women must be a qualitative participation and should not be only a quantitative participation. Otherwise, political marginalization of women may occur instead of

political empowerment of women. To some extent this is the case for Bangladesh. Although political marginalization of women is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh politics, in the course of time the perspectives of this phenomenon have been changed. In a nutshell, the actual political empowerment of women is not achieved in Bangladesh yet despite having an increase in women's political participation in terms of number in both the local government and national level political institutions. This is because of the existing social conditions and patriarchal values and culture. In fact, women will never be politically empowered based on number until or unless they actively participate in politics and a due political environment is created in the society. It has been observed that in a patriarchal political culture like Bangladesh, women's political participation is gained attention only in order to remove the quorum crisis. This resulted in disempowerment of women in politics instead of contributing to the political empowerment of women as women still struggling to reach at the positions of policy and decision-making levels. Therefore, women's position in Bangladesh politics remains marginal (Haque and Chowdhury 2016).

If we assess the history of women's political participation in Bangladesh, we can see the levels and challenges of women's political empowerment in Bangladesh. As far as the levels are concerned, we see that women's

political participation has significantly increased in Bangladesh since its independence in terms of number. However, still there are fewer female politicians than male politicians in the major political parties including Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Overall, the percentage of women in the respective central executive committee of all political parties is ranging only from 2.7 to 15 (Haque and Chowdhury 2016). It is difficult to either encourage or force political parties in this regard due to lack of practicing democracy in internal party politics. We further see that women's participation is not as much achieved in the decision-making process as it is achieved in the fields of slogan, demonstration, rally and other fields of politics. Therefore, although women's participation in Bangladesh politics has proportionately been increased in the course of time, the actual political empowerment of women is yet to be achieved as women are still striving in order to reach to a desired level in the process of decision making. It indicates that the political participation of women just in terms of number is not enough to ensure their political empowerment.

The above described phenomenon of women being sidelined in politics is a true case for all political institutions in Bangladesh ranging from the local government institutions to the Parliament. Although the nature and context of this phenomenon have been changing in the course of time, the

actual women's empowerment in Bangladesh politics is yet to be achieved. This slow progress of gender mainstreaming in politics is not good for democracy. Therefore, in order to change the phenomenon, we must create a conducive political environment and ensure an active participation of women in Bangladesh politics. We must remember that it is not possible to ensure gender equality in politics without the actual political empowerment of women, and the overall gender equality in a country cannot be achieved until gender equality in politics is achieved as all important decisions are taken and executed through the means of politics.

For challenges, we see that patriarchy is posing as the main challenge against women's political empowerment in Bangladesh. Inherently, Bangladeshi society is a patriarch society. Therefore, the patriarchal values and culture are automatically reflected in the political system of the country. Due to patriarchy, this system is in favor of men and against women. Patriarchy has created at least two obstacles against women's political empowerment in Bangladesh. Firstly, it treats women as a set of ornaments in the field of politics. It thinks that women are encouraged in politics just in order to enhance the beauty of political parties and institutions. Secondly, it patronizes the religious fundamentalism which discourages women's political participation.

The state of gender in Bangladesh politics also needs to be assessed in the context of family and social relationships where women and men do not have equal status, rather women are subordinate to men. Recalling that when there were mostly extended families in Bangladesh, it was difficult for a woman to participate in politics. Now a days, when extended families are breaking down and nuclear families are emerging, the chances for a woman to participate in politics are getting critical. Because, in many cases the newly emerged nuclear families in Bangladesh are not purely nuclear but a complex family where a son stays with their parents along with his wife after getting married at least for a few years. This is now a common phenomenon in urban context in Bangladesh.

These family structures have an impact on the overall political system in Bangladesh. It has been observed that there are division of status and power among different relationships of women in Bangladesh society. For example, a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law do not have similar status and power in a family in Bangladesh writ large. It has also been observed that in most cases a son takes his mother side when any family conflicts arise between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law in Bangladesh. This condition makes a woman not only subordinate to a man but also to another woman.

The position of a woman is much more complex in Bangladesh society which is patriarchal in nature that makes a man subordinate to his father. In the middle of these complex family relations, a woman, who desires to pursue a political career, needs to get approval at least from three persons: husband, mother-in-law and finally father-in-law. Any objections from any of these persons will destroy her political career. Therefore, it is actually very difficult for an ordinary woman in Bangladesh to participate in politics.

Another reason of women's marginalized position in Bangladesh politics is their socially assigned family responsibility which creates various obstacles to their motion in politics. It has been observed that on one hand, domestic responsibilities and duties keep women very busy at home and thereby provide them with no space to be mobilized in politics. On the other hand, men get the fullest opportunity to be mobilized in politics as they are mostly free from domestic responsibilities in Bangladesh society. Therefore, the source of gender inequality in Bangladesh politics lies in family and social relationships of women and men.

It is not an unusual phenomenon that women are marginalized in Bangladesh politics although they are significantly contributing to all sectors of the society. The underlined reason of this phenomenon is

patriarchy where the overall political activities of the country are controlled by men. For decades, the political system of Bangladesh is built on patriarchy and from masculine ideology and perspectives (Islam 2002). As a result, the actual political empowerment of women is not happened in Bangladesh despite women taking the positions of Prime Minister, Speaker of Parliament and head of opposition. Therefore, it will make no difference even if the highest authority of the country is a woman, until the entire political system is based on patriarchy which is always in favor of men and against women.

Wrapping up the chapter

In sum, the state of gender in Bangladesh politics is largely marked with a watershed of patriarchy for the period from 1971 to 1975, masculinity from 1975 to 1990 and cyborg from 1991 to present. During the patriarch and masculine periods, the status of women in Bangladesh politics was 'the Other'—the incidental or inessential as opposed to the men. Thus, a dichotomous identity or polarized distinction between women and men was there in Bangladesh politics during those periods. Whereas, although that dichotomous distinction has been blurred in the current period, the actual feminism is far to establish in Bangladesh politics. Therefore, the current period of Bangladesh politics can be termed as 'cyborg' from a gender perspective. In an overall note, female politicians work in

adversarial circumstances in Bangladesh in which most people including their peers, families, and constituents, appear to be their opponents. However, despite the existence of different barriers impeding women's participation in politics, there are still reasons to be optimistic. For that the historical mutual relationships between the private space with women and the public space with men need to be erased.

Chapter Five

Research Findings

Gender equality in politics plays a pivotal role in development and helps to maintain peace and security in a country. It has a critical importance in all contexts including in times of peace and of conflict and at all stages of political transition. Despite this fact, any attempt to assess gender equality in politics and bring 'equal political and economic rights has seemed to cause controversy, disinterest, and denial everywhere' (Giele and Asmock 1977). Against the backdrop, this chapter investigates the inside of Bangladesh politics and assesses whether there is gender equality or inequality in Bangladesh politics. It provides a comparative discussion between women and men in terms of their political rights and scopes to represent in politics and participate to the decision-making process. The existing cultural, economic, religious and social factors in Bangladesh are taken into consideration by this thesis.

Context of the study

Bangladesh has been led by two female Prime Ministers almost over the last three decades. It is unique in the world politics that two women, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, have been leading two major political parties, Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP),

respectively. On top of that women have been heading some strategically important Departments and Ministries of the Government of Bangladesh.

Also, Bangladesh has developed a model called a 'peace model'. The central message conveyed in the model emphasizes on empowering people including women and vulnerable groups through ensuring 7-inter linked issues such as empowering people through eliminating hunger and poverty, empowering women by providing them skills, education and training, by including the excluded people, by eliminating all sorts of discriminations, by providing decent jobs, empowering women to have their participation in governance and by ending terrorism (GoB 2012).

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees equality of men and women within the broad framework of non-discrimination on grounds of religion, race or gender. The Government has adopted National Policy for Women's Advancement and National Plan of Action. There is also a committee called the Women's Development Implementation Committee, headed by the Minister for Women and Children Affairs. The result of these initiatives is highly positive. Just to cite an example, enrolment of girls at both primary and secondary level schools exceeds that of boys, helped by waiver of tuition and provision of stipends for girls in secondary level (GoB 2012).

The Government has enacted laws for protecting women against domestic violence and is currently implementing several innovative projects for developing capabilities of women. In order to involve women in decision-making process, government has adopted quota system for women in the national Parliament as well as in the recruitment of the country's civil service jobs alongside the direct election and open competition. It also expanded its effective gender-based budgeting in twenty ministries of the country. It has been providing micro financing mostly to women and has started providing small business enterprise loans to women SME, at preferential rate (GoB 2012).

Moreover, Bangladesh has made necessary provision for recruitment of women in police and military. For instance, Bangladesh deployed two full contingents of all Female formed Police Units or FPUs, one to the UN peacekeeping operations in Congo and the other in Haiti. It shows that the country is committed to continue with its contribution of women for maintenance of global peace and security. Bangladesh, therefore, has been making its best efforts to ensure women's empowerment and participation in all spheres of its lives (GoB 2012).

This thesis, however, would like to critically examine the above-mentioned success of Bangladesh towards achieving gender equality in

politics. This thesis would like to explore the actual scenarios of gender equality in Bangladesh politics, especially in the politics at the grassroots level. In order to do so, a field study or an empirical research has been conducted under this thesis. The details of the research methodology were explained in chapter two. Below please find an overview of the research findings:

Educational qualifications of the respondents

Education is one of the very important factors in politics. It creates images and perceptions about a politician and thereby determines her or his position in politics. It has also an impact in achieving gender equality in general as entailed in several text by Rokeya. For an example, in *Stree Jatir Abanati* she says that 'women's education is required to enlighten the enslaved mind of the women so that their slavery like situation can be removed and gender equality put in place' (Rahman 2014: 103). Therefore, it is important to know the difference in educational qualifications between female and male politicians in Bangladesh. In this context, the below table shows the status of our respondents.

Table 4: Educational qualifications of the respondents

Level of Study	Gender	Number	Per cent (%)
No education	Female	0	0
	Male	0	0
Primary education	Female	3	3.125
	Male	0	0
Secondary education	Female	24	25
	Male	27	28.125
Higher secondary education	Female	3	3.125
	Male	3	3.125
Tertiary education	Female	15	15.625
	Male	21	21.875
	Total	96	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows that all the respondents are educated. It is good to notice that there is no one who has not received a formal education. However, according to the table all male respondents studied at least up to the secondary level or higher levels whereas a slightly more than three per cent of female respondents studied only up to the primary level. Also,

there is a significant inequality between female and male at the tertiary level of education. These along with other trends indicate that male politicians have better educational qualifications than the female politicians.

Family expenditures (monthly) of the respondents

Family expenditure indicates a person's socio-economic status which is another important factor in politics, especially, now-a-days, when politics is increasingly being dependent on economy. Therefore, it is important to know the difference in monthly family expenditure between female and male politicians in Bangladesh. In this context, the below table shows the status of our respondents.

Table 5: Family expenditures (monthly) of the respondents

Amount (BDT)	Gender	Number	Per cent (%)
10,000-19,999	Female	10	10.41666667
	Male	12	12.5
20,000-29,999	Female	18	18.75
	Male	12	12.5
30,000-39,999	Female	5	5.208333333
	Male	7	7.291666667

40,000-49,999	Female	1	1.041666667
	Male	7	7.291666667
50,000-above	Female	12	12.5
	Male	12	12.5
	Total	96	100

Source: Primary data

Table 5 illustrates the trends of monthly family expenditures of the respondents. It shows there is a significant difference in monthly family expenditure between women and men at the 40-50 thousand range. While more than seven per cent of male respondents claimed this range as their monthly family expenditure, only one per cent of female respondents said so. However, the table shows that overall the family expenditures of women are slightly lower than men. Therefore, there is no significant difference between female and male respondents in the percentage of monthly family expenditure against different range limits. But intensive interviews with the respondents revealed the fact behind this scenario. It is because female respondents get financial support from their family members, in most cases from their respective husbands. As a result, it also makes them dependent to male members of their family. The thesis has noted that this dependency has a negative impact on the political life of

women. The primary data of this thesis has further indicated that women in Bangladesh in general do not have the liberty to spend their own money. A male member of their family normally decides how the money should be spending. It impacts negatively to female politicians.

Gender issues around the quota system

The quota system refers to the 45 reserved seats for women in the Parliament. We know that currently there are 300 constituencies in Bangladesh. Accordingly, there are 300 general seats in the Parliament. Although the reserved seats are additional to the general seats, the overall position of women in the parliamentarian politics of Bangladesh cannot be defined unless the reserved seats for women are taken into consideration. It is to be noted that the women members occupying the reserved seats are not directly elected by the people; rather, the parties in the Parliament got proportionate share of the women's reserved seats. In this context, this thesis has considered the demand by the feminists for direct election to the reserved seats in the Parliament.

The quota system also refers to the three reserved seats for women in Union Parishad. The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act of 1997 introduces the provision. As opposed to the Parliament, women members are directly elected to the reserved seats in Union Parishad. This provision

ensured a considerable representation of women at least in terms of number at the grass-root level in Bangladesh. However, it has always been a question that how much freedom and scopes women must participate in the actual decision-making process at the local level. This thesis made an extensive inquiry into it.

This thesis went through the inside of this quota system in details in order to examine the actual position of women in politics. It assessed the implications of the quota system at the field level. For an example, this thesis has observed how much gender sensitized is our male politicians, and to what extent the actual representation of women in politics is guaranteed by the quota system. It observed the obstacles that bar women members to have equal access to the decision-making process like their male counterparts.

It is to be noted that apart from the reserved seats, women can always compete in election for the general seats too. But it has been observed that only a few women do so. In order to find out the reasons, the respondents have been asked why there are few members in the general seats. A summary of their answers reveals three reasons. Firstly, the general seats are viewed by the society as men's seats. Women are not considered suitable for these seats. An example can be cited in this context where one

of the male respondents has made the following comment (source: primary data):

Women are weak. They cannot do the hard work as men can do. As a result, they fear to compete with men in general seats.

Secondly, due to the social perception, political parties do not normally give women nomination to the general seats. Thirdly, it requires black money and muscles power to compete for general seats. Therefore, the socio-economic background of women hardly encourages them to compete for the general seats.

In another question, all the respondents have been asked if there is existence of power conflicts and other work-related problems between members of the reserved seats which all are represented by women and members of the general seats which are mostly represented by men. In reply to the question, seventy per cent of the respondents came up with yes answer. The below pie chart describes it.

Pie Chart: Power conflicts between members of

reserved seats and general seats
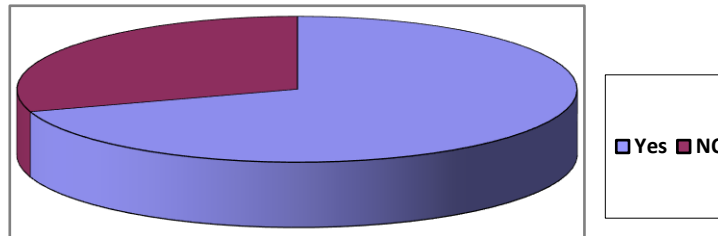
Source: Primary data

The respondents have also been asked about the types of problems they face while working with opposite sex. A summary of their answers reveals that the types of problems face by women are not identical to the types of problems face by men. In this context, women have mentioned about three types of problems. First, the mentality of men who consider women as less qualified for politics. Even in some cases men think that good women do not participate in politics. Second, men always try to dominate women. As a result, in some cases they do not even ask for the opinion of women. Last of all, in some cases women face sexual harassment and exploitation by men. In this context, men have mentioned about two types of problems. Firstly, women cannot give proper time and attention to their political responsibilities due to their domestic responsibilities. Secondly, women

do not have the required political skills and qualifications. All men have mentioned about women's lack of skills. One of them has made the following comment (source: primary data):

> *Women cannot do their political job properly. In most cases they seek assistance from men to complete their political responsibilities. For an instance, we always must accompany them in a mediation process on land related issues. As women are weak in mathematics, they are never confident in facilitating a mediation process on land.*

This thesis has observed that the statement given by men validates to a significant extent the first grievance of women against men, i.e., the negative mentality of men.

This thesis has further observed that there is a formational defect with the quota system. As a result, it seems to be an additional and unnecessary system. Recalling that the main objective of the quota system was to increase an effective participation of women in the political institutions. As in general women are under-represented in the political institution, it was hoped in theory that the quota system would bring an effective change in the political participation of women. In practice, however, it has turned into an ornamental system which just increases the beauty of the political institutions. The problem lies at the heart of the style of the formation of the quota system, as noted by this thesis. For an example, we can talk about the quota system at the Union Parishad level. It has been a mistake

to create an addition three reserved wards which consist of the nine main or general wards. Due to this formational defect, on one hand power conflicts have arisen between the members of the reserved seats and general seats; and on the other hand, the main objective of the quota system is not realized.

Gender issues around party politics

Although the respondents of this thesis were chosen from three political institutions, all of them inherently represent their respective political parties which play a key role in a democratic political system of government like Bangladesh. Parties nominate candidates for the parliamentary and other elections. These candidates then contest under their respective party banner. The party, who gets most seats in the Parliament, form a government. Therefore, adequate representation of women and men in a party is necessary to ensure gender equality in politics. This thesis, however, has noted that there is an inadequate representation of women in the political parties in Bangladesh. It has tried to find out the reasons by critically observing what kind of social biases and situational barriers are working behind it.

In this regard, the thesis has noted that the lack of incentives and proper guidance for party works discourage women especially the new entrants

to participate in party works. For instance, the field observation has revealed that the representation of women in the Executive Committee of the major political parties at the grassroots level is very insignificant. This thesis has noted that in the absence of set rules and definite objectives, the party works has become uninteresting for women. In reply to a research question while hundred per cent of male respondents have said that their party is promoting them, only thirty per cent of female respondents have said so. It gives an indication that the political parties are not actually promoting women in the overall politics of the country.

Gender issues around leadership and political participation

This thesis has observed that on one hand, men's leadership and political participation are promoted both at the center and grassroots level politics in Bangladesh. On the other hand, women's leadership and political participation are compromised in Bangladesh in various ways. It noted that women in every part of the country continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women. For example, women are under-represented as in leading positions in elected offices. This occurs despite their proven abilities as

leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance.

This thesis has further observed that women face two kinds of obstacles to participating in political life in Bangladesh. The first one can be treated as structural barrier where the discriminatory practices still limit women's options to run for office. An example can be given in this context where one of the female respondents has made the following comment (source: primary data):

> *In order to destroy my political career and stop me from taking part in politics in future, during the last election, my brothers-in-law visited the neighboring villages and told people not to vote me as they thought my participation in politics would create trouble in their family.*

The second one can be treated as capacity gaps where women are less likely to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders than men.

Gender issues around elections

The national and local elections in Bangladesh do not support women's political participation in true sense due to the existence of the barriers of gender discrimination. Women candidates normally face gaps in capacities or resources that prevent them from competing effectively. An

example can be cited based on primary data. The respondents were asked if they had to spend extra money beyond the officially approved limit. All of them said yes. Naturally the men were benefited by this practice as we have seen from the analysis of the family expenditure that men spend more money than women. Moreover, in many cases the polling stations are in remote or unsafe areas. As a result, women voters are reluctant to go there for voting purposes. It gives an impression that the electoral management bodies in Bangladesh are either unaware of these hindrances to women's political participation or unwilling to resolve them. Also, the greater society in Bangladesh do not respect women who want to take part in election. For an example, one of the female respondents has made the following comment (source: primary data):

> *When I took part in election for the first time, people called me a woman with bad character. Still some people say so as I need to move with men who are not my family members.*

The above situation is certainly not the case for a man in Bangladesh.

Gender issues around social factors

This thesis has noted how the exiting cultural, religious and social ideologies and other social factors such as deeply rooted patriarchal traditions, norms and attitudes create inequalities between women and men in the field of political participation in Bangladesh. It has been

observed that these social factors create a traditional gendered binary in Bangladesh politics that suggested that women are incapable of political tasks or holding political positions of greater responsibility because of their sex. For an example, in reply to a question on what you think about equal rights of women and men in politics, 50 per cent of the respondents including women has said that it should not be equal. Because, they believe that women do not have the same intellectual and rational qualities as men. In support of their argument, they refer to religion. They think that Allah makes women inferior to men. Therefore, they do not understand how the rights of women and men be the same, especially in the field of politics which is a challenging job even for a man. One of the male respondents has made the following comment (source: primary data):

> *Women are the symbol of mother. Therefore, we must respect them. However, we should not give them equal rights. How can they be equal? They cannot do what men can do.*

Other 50 per cent of the respondents believe in equal rights. However, 12 of them have mentioned that biological difference has a significant effect on the social capabilities of men and women in Bangladesh.

In reply to another question on whom you promote in politics among your children if you ever get a chance, 75 per cent of the respondents has said

that they will promote their sons, not daughters, due to the prevailing social factors which create many relations of domination by men. Only 12.5 per cent of the respondents wanted to promote their daughter in politics. The rest of the 12.5 per cent of the respondents did not want to involve their children in politics at all. In this regard, one of the female respondents have made the following comment (source: primary data):

> *Politics is not clean now a days. Politicians are burdened with false litigations and subject to the politics of vengeance. I therefore, do not want that any of my children be a victim of this nasty politics.*

Gender issues in public policy

An effective gender policy is vital to promote gender equality in politics. In this context, Bangladesh government has adopted the National Women Development Policy in line with the Constitution of Bangladesh and relevant international instruments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-2015, the UN General Assembly Resolution on Women's Political Participation of 2011 (A/RES/66/130), the UN General Assembly Resolution on Women's Political Participation of 2003 (A/RES/58/142), the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, the UN Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979.

The international policy instruments call on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and to embody the principle of gender equality in their constitutions. These instruments also call on States Parties to act to realize the principle of gender equality across all aspects of the States' legal systems, including by changing discriminatory laws, adopting statutes that advance gender equality and women's empowerment, and ensuring that legal practices uphold both women's and men's rights.

It is expected that all the male politicians and female politicians in Bangladesh must know at least about the national policy on women's development. Ideally, the female politicians should be well acquainted about the policy. However, in reply to a research question, 25 per cent of the total respondents including women have told that they do not know anything about the policy. It reveals a shocking fact that many female politicians at the grassroots level in Bangladesh do not even know about the policy. Rest of the 75 per cent of them knows about the policy. However, they do not know the policy in detail.

An assessment of the research findings

Gender theories in political science provide us with indicators to measure gender equality in politics. These indicators are included but not limited to the notions of patriarchy, double standard, division of domestic labor and representation. Below please find an assessment of the research findings based on these indicators.

Patriarchy

Although Bangladesh has been led by two female Prime Ministers almost over the last three decades, feminist approaches are yet to be incorporated in Bangladesh politics in true sense. Rather, deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes, norms and traditions are there in Bangladesh politics. This observation is based on the existing political climate in the Parliament, local government institutions and political parties at the center and grassroots levels in the country. It has been noticed through a field study for this thesis that male politicians both at the center and the grassroots levels believe that they are more capable than women politicians in dealing with political issues. They believe so because most of them possess black money and muscles power. Due to this mindset and black money and muscles power, male politicians in the country frequently violate the gender norms. Since our politics is dominated by black money and muscles power and since the male politicians are habituated to flex

their muscles and know the art of using black money, women politicians at the grassroots level can hardly draw the attention of the decision makers of their respective political parties.

This thesis has noted that despite being equally qualified, women get less opportunity in politics than that of men due to the prevailing patriarchal practices which are fueled by other social factors. For examples, socially and economically women have yet to reach to a position from which they can successfully contest the elective position and secure at least minimum representation against their male counterpart. Also, factors such as economic dependence, socio-cultural embargo on free mobility of women combine to keep their contacts with voters low and links with political personalities of the community weak.

Double standards

The notion of double standards refers to two different types of criteria: one is used for women and the other for men. This thesis has observed that instead of a single standard of behavior for all, there exists double standards in Bangladesh politics, one relating to women and the other related to men. This thesis has further observed that in the context of Bangladesh politics, double standards always benefit men rather than women.

It is to be noted that in Connell's (1995) analysis of the gender hierarchy of power, a form of masculinity is suggested as the dominant force in the production and reproduction of double standards. However, in the context of Bangladesh politics, multiple forms of masculinity play role in attributing the standard of behavior and action for women. For an instance, some of the respondents' comments indicate that there is a general understanding in Bangladesh society that good women do not participate in politics although the same society has accepted the central leadership of women in politics. When corresponding questions were raised to the respondents during the interview in order to understand this self-contradiction of the society, they could not give a clear answer. However, other observations of this thesis indicate that the reason is the existence of multiple forms of masculinity in Bangladesh politics.

This thesis also would like to use the notion of double standards to describe a disparity between the experiences of women and men in public relations and political communications in Bangladesh. It has been observed that in the context of Bangladesh society, the activities of public relations and political communications are mostly done in informal ways or forums beyond the office hour and outside of political offices, say for an example, in the evening gossiping or chatting in a market or a tea stall or a coffee shop. Due to social norms and domestic responsibility or

division of domestic labor, female politicians in Bangladesh cannot easily take part in this social forum. Also, the way the society accepts a man's running for public offices, it does not accept the same way for a woman in Bangladesh. This thesis has noted that men are hugely benefited in establishing new political contacts or revitalizing their existing public relations and political communications by this disparity in Bangladesh.

Division of domestic labor

Domestic labor refers to the household responsibilities and tasks between women and men. This thesis has observed that there is an unequal division of domestic labor load between female politicians and male politicians in Bangladesh. It has been revealed through a field study. In reply to a research question on whether the family responsibilities have any impact on their political life, 100 per cent of male respondents said 'no' but 100 per cent of female respondents said 'yes'. Female politicians have also mentioned that they must spend a significant amount of time, such as, at least 30 to 40 hours per week at their domestic works (source: primary data).

Based on these replies and other field observation, this thesis on one hand has noted that normally male politicians do not have to spend as much time as the female politicians do at domestic works. An example can be

cited in this context where one of the male respondents has made the following comment (source: primary data):

> *I could not attend my political office only for four days during the delivery of my wife. Otherwise, I never had any conflicts with my domestic responsibilities. All the household activities are always done by my wife or other female members of my family. I need to do nothing.*

This thesis, on the other hand, has noted that female politicians in Bangladesh undertake the greater volume of domestic labor than male politicians by carrying out the primary responsibility for household works and family maintenance activities. As a result, overall women in Bangladesh get very little time and scope for politics as oppose to men. This situation allows men to give much more attention and focus to their political activities.

Representation

Theories on representation indicate that the way women perceive themselves and are perceived is ineluctably shaped by the ways in which images of women are constructed and communicated to the population at large (Pilcher and Whelehan 2006). This thesis has observed that the above statement on representation is also applicable to men. For an example, the general seats of the Union Parishad and Pourashava are perceived by the population at large as the men's seats. This thesis has

further observed that this political atmosphere has been created due to the way the images of female counselors are constructed by the male counselors and perceived by the female counselors themselves and finally communicated to the voters. The fact has been revealed during the field study conducted under this thesis. When the respondents were asked which type of seat they considered as suitable for women. 100 per cent of the counselors, including all the female counselors, among the total respondents gave their opinion for the reserved seats terming the general seats as men's seats.

Therefore, the way the images of women and men are constructed is impacted on their political representation and participation. This thesis has noted that opportunities for political representation are not equal for women and men in Bangladesh. In most cases political parties promote men. The thesis has further noted that on average less than five per cent of women represent different committees in political parties in Bangladesh. This thesis has also noted that women's representation in the national legislature and local government bodies has inched upward in Bangladesh since its independence, but it is still far from reflecting women's share in the society. The disparities are widely spread in all walks of life, and the discrepancy directly infringes on women's political rights, which in turn restricts their rights in other areas too. In this way,

women get under represented in the political decision-making process in comparison to men in Bangladesh. Women are also under represented in comparison to men in Bangladesh politics as, among other reasons, the political institutions are not gender friendly. Rather these institutions oppose the recruitment of women to the positions of political leadership, in many cases. The other reasons include but not limited to poverty and the culture of female subordination to men. To this end, this thesis has convinced and would like to echo with the statement given by Mahtab (2007: 132) that 'women's involvement in political participation in Bangladesh needs to be addressed in the context of country's poverty, culture of the female subordination, and weak political institutions.'

Wrapping up the chapter

In sum, gender equality in politics requires certain conditions. For instances, on one hand, it requires that there must be a presence of equal division of domestic labor between female and male politicians in their respective families, and equal representation by women and men in the political institutions and decision-making processes. On the other hand, it requires that there should be an absence of the elements of patriarchy and an existence of single standard in politics. The above assessment, however, has revealed that those are certainly not the conditions in Bangladesh politics. Therefore, in the light of the above-mentioned

conditions, this chapter has reached to the conclusion that there is gender inequality in Bangladesh politics. In fact, Bangladesh politics assumes male experiences and norms at its heart. The next chapter will discuss why this is the case while there is prevailing policy in Bangladesh to promote gender equality.

Chapter Six

Policy Implications

In the concealment of the fact that gender policy exists in Bangladesh, a critical feminist issue gets neglected: to what extent the existing policy provisions of gender equality are reflected in the overall politics of the country. Against the backdrop, this chapter throws light on women's persisting inequality in Bangladesh politics despite the gender policy put in place. It finds three broad reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly, what are mentioned in the policy are insufficient to promote gender equality in politics. Secondly, there are gaps between the existing policy provisions and the implementation mechanisms. Therefore, the extent to which the policy is followed in Bangladesh is not enough to ensure gender equality in politics. And finally, some of the major challenges to gender equality in Bangladesh politics have not been addressed in the current policy.

It is to be noted that the prevailing gender policy of Bangladesh is not available as a single complete written document. Although some parts of the policy are mentioned in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and in the National Women Development Policy, a substantial part of the policy is unseen, and its uses depend upon the actions of the policy makers. This thesis pays attention to that part. It tries

to ask what is being problematized and what is left unproblematized in the policy.

Recalling that the letters and spirit of the gender policy of Bangladesh is derived from the international instruments. Therefore, a critical examination of the relevant international instruments, the Constitution of Bangladesh and the National Women Development Policy is required in order to draw any conclusions on this issue. In connection to this let us see first what is mentioned in the international instruments of which Bangladesh is a State Party.

The most prominent international instruments on women's leadership and political participation are: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-2015, the UN General Assembly Resolution on Women's Political Participation of 2011 (A/RES/66/130), the UN General Assembly Resolution on Women's Political Participation of 2003 (A/RES/58/142), the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, the UN Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979. I have observed that these instruments uphold women's right to participate in public life, call for removing barriers to equal participation in politics and measure progress towards gender equality in politics. The below

discussion on CEDAW and UN General Assembly Resolution on Women's Political Participation of 2011 (A/RES/66/130) will explain how they do it.

CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW) was adopted on 18 December 1979 by the UN General Assembly and is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Bangladesh signed on the CEDAW in 1984. Later, Bangladesh also signed on the Optional Protocol on CEDAW in 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit.

The Convention defines discrimination against women as follows (UN 1979):

> *...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.*

By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;

- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and

- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

For instance, the CEDAW is convinced that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields including politics. Therefore, it calls upon States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women in the political, social, economic and cultural fields (Article 3). CEDAW particularly pays attention to the need of gender equality in politics in its Article 7 which says (UN 1979):

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

UNGA on Women's Political Participation

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution no. A/RES/58/142 titled 'Women's Political Participation' in 2003. It stipulates that Member States should take steps including to: monitor progress in the representation of women; ensure that measures to reconcile family and professional life apply equally to women and men; develop mechanisms and training programs that encourage women to participate in the electoral process and improve women's capacity to cast informed votes in free and fair elections; promote the participation of young people, especially women, in civil society organizations; and develop programs to educate and train women and girls in using the media and information and communication technologies (UN 2003).

This policy is in line with other international instruments which provide strategic guidance to the governments on gender equality in politics. For examples, the UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15 calls on governments, political parties, trade unions, and professional and other

representative groups to adopt a 30 per cent of minimum proportion of women in leadership positions, with a view to achieving equal representation. And, the Beijing Platform for Action reiterates resolution 1990/15 and calls for an increase in women's representation in Strategic Objective G2.

It is to be noted that the implementation of the policy recommendations contained in an UN GA resolutions/decision is the responsibility of each Member State (PMoS 2017). Therefore, as a Member State of the UN, Bangladesh government must take all necessary steps to implement the provisions of the General Assembly resolutions. However, practically speaking, the letters and spirit of the international policy instruments only have a little impact on achieving gender equality in Bangladesh politics. I think the reason is the lack of political commitment of Bangladesh government to these instruments. Since Bangladesh is a State party to the major international instruments on gender issues, the government should take steps to implement them more effectively in order to ensure gender equality in Bangladesh politics.

UNGA on Women and Political Participation

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution no. A/RES/66/130 titled 'Women and Political Participation' on 19 December 2011. This policy

stresses its critical importance in all political contexts. It calls on UN Member States to take a variety of measures, including (UN 2011):

- To review the differential impact of their electoral systems on the political participation of women and their representation in elected bodies and to adjust or reform those systems where appropriate;

- To strongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, to develop their capacity to analyze issues from a gender perspective, and to adopt policies, as appropriate, to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making within those political parties;

- To promote awareness and recognition of the importance of women's participation in the political process at the community, local, national and international levels;

- To investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office, create an environment of zero tolerance for such offences and, to ensure accountability, take all appropriate steps to prosecute those responsible; and

- To encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, including indigenous women, women with

disabilities, women from rural areas and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority, in decision-making at all levels, and address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making at all levels.

It has a long preamble which contains 13 paragraphs. The preamble of the resolution reaffirms the obligations of all States to promote and protect human rights including the political rights of women as stated in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It recognizes the critical importance of women's political participation, women's empowerment, and gender equality, especially, gender equality in politics. It expresses concerns that 'women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women' (UN 2011).

The resolution is consisting of 14 Articles. The letters and spirit of the resolution are unique in calling upon all States to eliminate the

discriminatory laws, enhance the political participation of women on equal terms with men, and comply fully with their obligations under the international instruments. It urges all States to appoint women to posts within all levels of their governments, commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, and accelerate the implementation of strategies that promote gender balance in political decision-making. It encourages all States to take measures to eliminate prejudices that are based on the idea of inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, recognize the importance of women's participation in the political process, and develop mechanisms to encourage women to participate in the electoral process.

It reaffirms that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy. In this respect, it provides separate guidelines to the States, political parties and civil society. For example, it calls upon 'all States to eliminate laws, regulations and practices that, in a discriminatory manner, prevent or restrict women's participation in the political process;' (Article 2). It also urges States to enhance the political participation of women by promoting and protecting their human rights with respect to engaging in political

activities, taking part in the conduct of public affairs, associating freely, assembling peacefully, and expressing their opinions and seeking, receiving and imparting information and ideas freely (Article 3). On another note, the resolution further encourages 'States to appoint women to posts within all levels of their Governments, including, where applicable, bodies responsible for designing constitutional, electoral, political or institutional reforms;' (Article 8). The resolution strongly encourages 'political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women' (Article 6c). It encourages 'relevant civil society organizations to support programs that facilitate women's participation in political and other leadership activities, including peer support and capacity development for new office holders, and to promote public/private civil society partnerships for women's empowerment;' (Article 10).

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the fundamental guide for organizing governance structures and establishing agreed legal principles is the Constitution of the country. I have noticed that Articles 9-10 and 37-39 clearly proclaim that steps should be taken to ensure gender balance in all spheres of life. Also, Articles 27, 28, 29 and 65 of the Constitution of Bangladesh express commitment to establish gender equality in the country. Specially, Article

28 holds four Clauses that create scopes to protect women against discrimination on the ground of gender. These are as follows (GoB 2015):

> *(1)   The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.*
> *(2)   Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life.*
> *(3)   No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution.*
> *(4)   Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens.*

The Article 29 (3) reads: The state shall not be 'prevented from making special provision in favor of any backward section of citizens for the purpose of securing their adequate representation in the service of the Republic.' In the light of this provision, the system of indirect election to the reserved seats in the Parliament was introduced (Article 65, Clause 3) in order to bring more women into politics and minimize the gender gap in the political life.

Therefore, the special provision of the Constitution with relevance to gender equality in Bangladesh politics is the provision of reserved seats for women in the Parliament (Article 65, Clause 3). As per the Constitutional provisions, there are 300 general seats for the Members in the Parliament of Bangladesh who are representing 300 constituencies of

the country. On the top of that, there are currently 50 reserved seats only for women in the Parliament. It is to be noted that these female Members do not have any constituencies and they are not directly elected by the people but nominated by their respective parties. The parties in the Parliament get proportionate share of the reserved seats for women.

The gender relations in the Parliament cannot be examined unless the history of reserved seats for women in the Parliament is taken into consideration. It is to be recalled that the 1972 Constitution provided 15 reserved seats for women members and this provision was to remain in force for ten years. Then in 1979, through the 5th amendment the number of reserved seats was increased from 15 to 30 and the period of this provision was extended from 10 to 15 years effective from 1972. This period expired on 10th December 1987 and therefore, the 4th Parliament did not have any reserved seats for women. Then, there were debates and discussions both in the Parliament and outside of the Parliament whether such a reservation was necessary. Then, it was decided to keep such reservation for another 10 years. To that end, the 10th amendment bill of the Constitution was passed on 12th June 1990. This amendment reinserted Clause (3) to Article 65 providing 30 reserved seats for women for a ten-year period. Until then, the 30 women members were elected by 300 general Members of the Parliament through a secret ballot. After

expiration of that period, the 8th Parliament passed the 14th amendment bill of the Constitution in 16 May 2004. This amendment brings some new insights into the provision for reserved seats: a) the number of reserved seats was increased from 30 to 45; and, b) the political parties in the Parliament got proportionate share of the women reserved seats. Finally, the number of reserved seats was raised to 50 on 30th June 2011 by the 15th amendment of the Constitution.

This thesis noted that the gender equality provisions in the Constitution of Bangladesh are in line with those in the international instruments. However, the extent to which the Constitutional principles of gender equality are reflected in Bangladesh politics is not enough. The reason, I think is that there are dissimilarities between the vision of the Constitutional principles of gender equality and the existing practice of promoting gender equality in Bangladesh politics.

National Women Development Policy

Apart from the Constitutional laws, the government of Bangladesh holds an official gender development policy titled the 'National Women Development Policy' (GoB 2011). This policy is particularly targeted to women since they are the marginal gender group in the society. It was originally developed by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in

1997 with a view to improve the overall condition of women in the country. Before finalization, the draft policy paper was not widely shared and discussed with the academics and experts working in the field of gender. Later the policy was amended by the government in 2004 which raised controversy among the experts and women rights activists. In general, women rights activists were against this amendment. They argued that the revision was in favor of patriarchal social values. In this context, it was further amended in 2008. The latest amendment was made to the policy in 2011.

Now allow me to focus on the content of the National Women Development Policy of Bangladesh. The current policy consists of three Sections and forty-nine Articles. The first Section is basically the premise of the policy which includes the first fifteen Articles. The second Section describes the aims and objectives of the policy which includes the next twenty-six Articles. The third Section, which includes the last eight Articles, delineates the organizational management and implementation strategies of the policy.

The first impression of this thesis about the policy is that its provisions are insufficient to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics. For example, Article 16 of the policy reads that one of the aims of the policy

is to establish equal rights between men and women in all spheres of life including the state affairs in the light of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (Article 16.1 and 16.12). However, my point here is that it is talking about the equal rights in politics, but it is not talking about ensuring the equal participation of men and women in politics. It has been noticed that Article 32 of the policy specifically reads about women's political empowerment in Bangladesh but leaving out the fact aside that gender equality in Bangladesh politics needs to be ensured first in order to achieve women's political empowerment. It has further been noticed that the policy encourages political parties and media to take actions for promoting women's participation in Bangladesh politics at an increasing rate (Article 32.1) but not at an equal rate. It has been observed that the policy is saying about 33 per cent of women's representation in the political parties (Article 32.3) but it is not saying about 50 per cent of women's representation in the political parties. It has also been observed that it is encouraging the political parties to nominate female politicians for different political positions at an increasing rate (Article 32.4) but it is not encouraging them to do so at an equal rate. Another observation about the policy is that it is inspiring women's active participation in politics (Article 32.6) but not equal participation in politics.

The final impression of this thesis about the policy is that whatever mentioned in the policy document even that has not been implemented properly in real life situations. For example, the policy says about 33 per cent of reserved seats for women in the Parliament and direct election to these reserved seats (Article 32.7). It means that there should be at least 99 reserved seats for women in the Parliament. But, currently, there are only 50 reserved seats for women in the Parliament, which is just half of the number recommended by the policy. This example indicates a gap between the policy provisions and its implementation mechanisms: an absence of a monitoring body. Although Article 42 describes the monitoring and implementation mechanisms of the policy and in connection to that it assigns different roles and job responsibilities to different units of the government, it does not mention who will implement the policy provisions with regard to politics and who will monitor its implementation rate and to what extent it should be done by a particular institution. Legally, all political parties must implement the policy provisions with relevance to women's representation in the political institutions, women's participation in political activities and women's leadership in Bangladesh politics. Ideally, the Election Commission of Bangladesh should monitor that whether the political parties are properly implementing the policy. The Election Commission should also impose sanctions against any political parties who are found guilty in proper

implementation of the policy. However, this thesis assumes that the current Election Commission of Bangladesh is not empowered enough to do so.
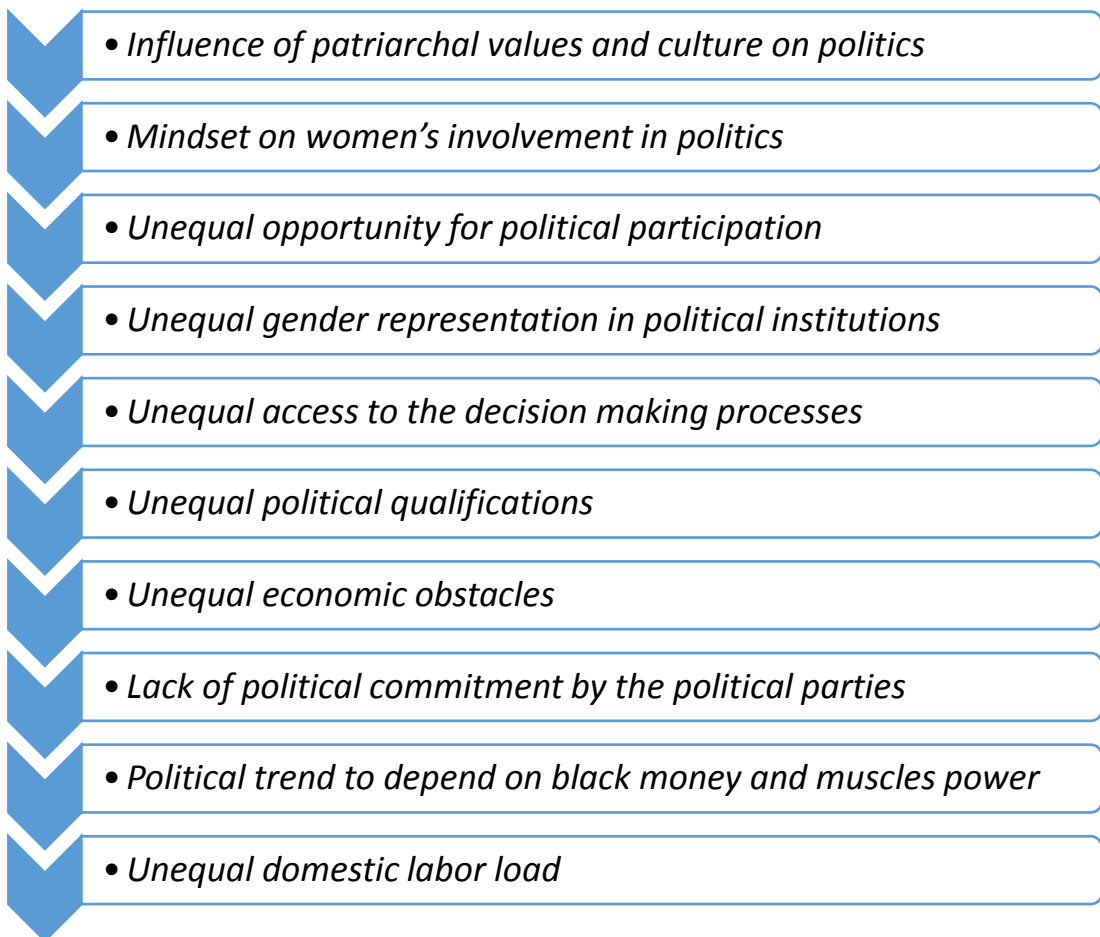
It is to be noted that after the promulgation of the National Women Development Policy in 1997, several amendments were made to it. The latest amendments were made to the policy in 2011. No doubt that a further amendment to the policy is required so that it addresses all the challenges to gender equality in Bangladesh politics. Alongside that, the existing policy provisions relating to gender equality in politics also need to be implemented properly. The government should take necessary measures to that end soon.

It has been observed that the current gender policy of Bangladesh expresses its willingness to ensure women's social, economic, and administrative empowerment in the country; but it has not adequately addressed the challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics. Specially, the social process, which shapes female politicians' lives and eventually which makes them unequal in politics, remains unchallenged in the policy. Therefore, the gender policy of Bangladesh pays an insufficient attention to the obstacles women face when trying to enter in the field of politics.

Challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics

Based on the research findings, this thesis has identified ten challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics. These can be presented in the below diagram.

Diagram 5: Challenges of Gender Equality

- *Influence of patriarchal values and culture on politics*
- *Mindset on women's involvement in politics*
- *Unequal opportunity for political participation*
- *Unequal gender representation in political institutions*
- *Unequal access to the decision making processes*
- *Unequal political qualifications*
- *Unequal economic obstacles*
- *Lack of political commitment by the political parties*
- *Political trend to depend on black money and muscles power*
- *Unequal domestic labor load*

Source: Research findings

The above challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics are discussed below:

1. Influence of patriarchal values and culture on politics

Bangladeshi society is predominantly a patriarchal society. As a result, Bangladesh politics is influenced by the patriarchal values and culture. In a nutshell, patriarchy in Bangladesh considers politics as a masculine public activity and wants to treat female politicians as subordinate to male politicians. Also, it tends to under-acknowledge the full extent of women's political potentiality.

2. Mindset on women's involvement in politics

Due to the trickle down of the patriarchal values and culture, the 'stereotyped customary expectations both held by men and internalized by women' (Connell, 1987: 33) in Bangladesh about women's involvement in politics are that women may take up political roles which are less demanding in terms of skills and time commitment so that they can fulfill their domestic responsibilities with utmost priority. For an example, most people in Bangladesh still do not support women's politics. Women are tolerated in Bangladesh politics but not wanted.

3. Unequal opportunity for political participation

Due to several structural barriers such as, patriarchy, mindset and involvement of muscles power and black money in politics, women and men in Bangladesh do not enjoy the equal opportunity for political

participation. For an example, if we investigate the Parliament and local government institutions, we see that very few female members are elected in a general seat. The reason is that they have no other opportunities but to compete only for the reserved seats; because, on one hand, the general seats are considered by the society as men's seats, and on the other hand, it requires black money and muscles power to win in a general seat.

4. Unequal gender representation in political institutions

Unequal opportunity for political participation has resulted into unequal gender representation in political institutions in Bangladesh. Therefore, women's role in the political process of Bangladesh, especially, at the local government politics of the country is not significantly visible. For an example, male politicians are dominating all local government institutions almost monopolistically. Consequently, women's political empowerment in Bangladesh gets a slow pace.

5. Unequal access to the decision-making processes

Men and women do not have equal access to the decision-making processes in Bangladesh. Although women are in the central power in Bangladesh since 1991, female politicians in the local government institutions are almost excluded from the decision-making processes. For an example, it has been observed that in many cases policy decisions at

the local government institutions are practically taken by the Mayor of Pourashava and the Chairman of Union Parishad and by the male Councilors where female Councilors are requested just to sign on the written resolution at a later stage.

6. Unequal political qualifications

Female politicians and male politicians in Bangladesh do not have the equal political qualifications which are required for the involvement in the power structure as thought by Dahl (1961), such as, control over politics, control over the mass media and information, social standing, knowledge and experiences, popularity, esteem and charisma etcetera. It has been observed that due to social hindrances and unequal opportunity to political activities, these qualifications are better reflected to male politicians than female politicians in Bangladesh.

7. Unequal economic obstacles

Female politicians and male politicians in Bangladesh are facing unequal economic obstacles. For an example, it has been observed that most of the female politicians in Bangladesh do not have any earning sources. Although a few of them have an income source, they do not have the authority to spend the money according to their own will. It is the husband or the son or any other male member of their family who decides where

the money should be spent. It infers that female politicians in Bangladesh are facing more economic obstacles in comparison to male politicians.

8. Lack of political commitment by the political parties

Political parties in Bangladesh are not committed enough to promote gender equality in politics. This lack of political commitment by the political parties in Bangladesh is more clearly reflected into the grassroots level politics. For an example, there are an insignificant presence of female politicians at upazila and district levels committees of the political parties including the major ones: Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and Jatiyo Party. It has been observed that in theories political parties in Bangladesh make promises to promote gender equality in politics, but in practice they normally promote only male politicians in politics.

9. Political trend to depend on black money and muscles power

It has been noted that recently a trend has developed in Bangladesh politics whereby winning in an election depends on black money and muscles power. This trend throws two challenges to the greater section of female politicians in the country, especially who are working in the local government institutions, and who believe in equality and fair politics, and therefore who never try to wield black money and muscles power. The

first challenge is that the political dependence on money and physical might put the women politicians in a less demanding position in their respective political parties, because of the polluted political environment. The second challenge is that the political dependence on the use of black money and muscles power poses a threat to the lives and security of the women politicians when they try to confront the political vice. This is not only driving women in general out of Bangladesh's politics at the grassroots level but also ruining the entire political system by encouraging muscle-flexing and uses of illegal money. Therefore, a wide spread gender disparity is visible in all the political institutions in Bangladesh.

10. Unequal domestic labor load

Patriarchy in Bangladesh unequally distributes the load of domestic labor between women and men. As a result, Bangladeshi female politicians must take the greater load of the domestic labor in comparison to the male politicians. In this way, female politicians in Bangladesh get more confined to the household activities than the male politicians, which resulted into women's considerably smaller presence in politics than that of men. In this regard, Mahtab (2012) has a similar observation too. She has noted that most of the female politicians in Bangladesh must carry out a duel responsibility: family maintenance and augmentation of household income, which leave them with very little time and scopes for politics.

The above discussion on gender policy has revealed that at least two policy factors are hindering women's effective participation in Bangladesh politics. Firstly, women's engagement in political leadership of Bangladesh is not much encouraged in the policy. For example, direct election to the Parliamentary reserved seats for women has remained elusive despite lobbing of majority women's network. Noting that the mobilization around the issue took great impetus after the existing provision for reserved seats in the Parliament for women members lapsed in 2001. Recalling that the previous provision allowed for 30 women to be nominated by elected members of the Parliament. However, later the women's demand for direct election to the reserved seats was turned down by increasing the number of reserved seats in the Parliament for women from 30 to 45. The other policy factor which is hindering women's effective participation in politics is the lack of provisions in the policy for equal number of positions for both women and men in the party hierarchical structures. It has been observed that women are given limited leadership positions in the political parties although they are conveniently used during election campaign, organizing meetings, rallies, etc. The challenge is to have farsighted policy interventions.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion and Recommendations

This thesis has studied the reflections of various gender issues on Bangladesh politics through an empirical research. The research findings have explored the state of gender in Bangladesh politics. It has been observed that there are differences and inequalities between women and men in Bangladesh politics in terms of responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. It has particularly been observed that elected female MPs from the reserved seats in the Parliament and female councilors from the reserved seats in the Union Parishad and Pourashava face various difficulties from their male counterparts who are elected from general seats. For an instance, the male representatives of the general seats think that they are better qualified than the female representatives of the reserved seats. Therefore, in many cases, they do not want to coordinate their works with female representatives. Rather, male representatives prefer to dominate female representatives. It has further been observed that there is a smaller number of women than men in the general seats. It is because, the social attributes and opportunities normally go in favor of men. In fact, on the ground, the general seats are considered as men's seats

as many people including several women think that only reserved seats are suitable for women.

It has been noted that the existing religious, social and cultural values are not conducive towards female politicians because these values offer different rights and opportunities to women and men. These values also assign different gender role to women and men. As a result, female politicians are expected to discharge their domestic responsibilities first. This burden of domestic responsibilities is not equally assigned between women and men. As a result, in many cases it has a negative impact on the works of female politicians. For example, sometimes they miss important meeting or public gathering due to domestic responsibilities. Therefore, the domestic responsibilities create some extra challenges to a female politician what a male politician perhaps never face. The religious, social and cultural values of the country also create a negative perception among people about women's participation in politics. Therefore, many people in Bangladesh not only discourage women to participate in politics but also create obstacles towards women's participation in politics.

It has also been noted that the different interests, needs and priorities of women and men are not equally taken into consideration in Bangladesh society. Because, many people in Bangladesh do not actually believe in

gender equality, i.e., equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys. Therefore, naturally the social stand on gender is reflected in the field of politics. As a result, even a female politician in Bangladesh creates difference between her own children and therefore wants to promote her son, not her daughter, in politics.

Against the backdrop, this thesis has studied the policy implications for promoting gender equality in Bangladesh politics through a policy review. It has investigated the reasons of gender inequality in Bangladesh politics. It has particularly paid attention to the policy issues and tried to explore the reasons of gender inequality in Bangladesh politics despite having a national policy to promote gender equality. In the course of doing so, the thesis has observed that several important policy steps have been taken to address gender issues in Bangladesh. For example, the country ratified the CEDAW, adopted a National Women Development Policy and drafted a National Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security in line with the UN Security Council resolution no. 1325. Indeed, these policy initiatives have some success in promoting gender equality in the fields of education, employment and other sectors. Nonetheless, they did not bring much success in the field of politics. In fact, the policies have failed to mainstream gender in Bangladesh politics. As a result, women continue to remain unequal in Bangladesh politics.

This thesis has particularly identified three broad reasons behind the failure of the national women development policy of Bangladesh. Firstly, this thesis has noticed that the existing provisions of the policy are insufficient to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics. In other words, there is a lack of strength in the provisions of the national policy to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics. For an example, very few provisions of the policy are relevant to politics and politicians.

Secondly, it has further noticed that there is a gap between the existing policy provisions and its implementation mechanisms. In other words, there is a lack of willingness by the administrators in proper implementation of the policy. For an example, although several attempts were made to amend the existing gender policy in Bangladesh, no significant attempts to implement the policy provisions have been seen that particularly meet the needs of female politicians and contribute to achieve gender equality in politics. Therefore, the extent to which the policy reflects in Bangladesh politics is not enough to ensure gender equality.

And finally, some of the major challenges of gender equality in Bangladesh politics are not addressed in the current gender policy, this thesis has noted. In other words, there is a lack of relevancy of some of

the policy provisions to the existing social and cultural realities. We must not forget that Bangladesh society endorses androcentrism, masculinity and patriarchy. Sometimes the society even cherishes them. These facts must be taken into consideration before drafting any gender policy in Bangladesh, especially if it wants to address gender inequality in politics. But it was not done so during drafting the policy. Civil society and academics were not widely consulted. Also, grassroots level opinions were not properly incorporated into the policy. Hardly any community consultations were held across the country in order to hear the concerns at the field level. Even after endorsement of the policy, appropriate measures were not taken to trickle down the policy information at the grassroots level. As a result, ironically, many politicians at the grassroots level even do not know about the policy.

Before concluding the thesis, once again I would like to refer to the political history of Bangladesh. It is observed that historically Bangladesh politics is characterized by androcentrism, masculinity and patriarchy. During the foundation period of Bangladesh politics, i.e., in the aftermath of the liberation war, the political leaders were struggling hard with ensuring internal security and installing economic and political systems in the country. Literally, at that time they had very little scopes to think about gender issues. Since 1991, there has been a dramatic change in the upper

case of the power structure. However, the overall characteristics of Bangladesh politics remain the same. It has been observed that instead of instilling feminism, the top female leaders rather assume androcentric approaches and masculine behavior and cherished patriarchal political system.

Recommendations

'The vehicle in which one tier is bigger (husband) and another is smaller (wife) cannot move far, rather circles in a same area' (Rahman 2014: 95) It is mentioned in *Ardhangi* (wife), a text by Begum Rokeya, the pioneer feminist writer and activist of Bengal. This statement of Rokeya infers the importance of gender equality, which is applicable to all spheres of life including politics. With this viewpoint, based on the field findings, this thesis has drawn ten recommendations in order to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics. This thesis believes that if the Government of Bangladesh follow these recommendations in the light of the UN General Assembly resolution no. A/RES/66/130, the Government will be able to address the unmet challenges of the policy implications to promote gender equality in Bangladesh politics. This in turn will strengthen the democracy, preserve the human rights, ensure the effective use of human resources and bring a pace to the overall development of the country.

The recommendations of this thesis can be presented in the below diagram:

Diagram 6: Recommendations

- *Gender awareness raising programs should be launched*
- *Equal opportunity for political participation should be created*
- *Attitudinal change programs should be initiated*
- *Quota policy should be revised*
- *Scopes should be given to women for taking decisions*
- *Special training programs should be launched for female politicians*
- *Inheritance law should properly be applied*
- *Political parties must commit to promote gender equality*
- *Political trend to depend on black money and muscles power should be eradicated*
- *Gender policy should address the need of equal distribution of domestic labor load*

Source: Research findings

The above recommendations for promoting gender equality in Bangladesh politics are discussed below:

1. Gender awareness raising programs should be launched

It may be very difficult to eliminate the patriarchal values and culture from Bangladesh politics, but it is not impossible. However, in order to do that the government, development partners and media should take some measures in concert. In this context, three steps can be recommended. Firstly, they should design various types of gender awareness raising programs. Secondly, they should pay attention in proper implementation of those programs. And finally, modern and traditional mass media should be mobilized by all actors in concern to support these initiatives. Then hopefully in the long run, we will be able to eliminate the existing patriarchal values and culture from Bangladesh politics.

2. Equal opportunity for political participation should be created

The policy makers of Bangladesh should take necessary steps to remove all sorts of structural and situational barriers in order to create equal opportunities for both women and men for political participation. Also, female Parliamentarians, Councilors and other politicians in Bangladesh should join hands together in this respect to create pressure on the government for doing so. Further to that political parties in Bangladesh must reform their respective party constitutions so that female politicians from each political party get same opportunities and scopes to participate in party politics as their male counterparts do get.

3. Attitudinal change programs should be initiated

Once a general awareness about women's political rights and abilities is created in Bangladesh, attitudinal change programs should be initiated nationwide to alter people's mindset on women's involvement in politics. It will help to direct people's attitudes positively towards women's involvement in politics. As a result, greater number of women in Bangladesh will get opportunities to participate in political activities. It is to be noted that this attitude formation for political behavior must form a part of both childhood and adult socialization. Further, this initiative should be supported by all concerned quarters in Bangladesh including political parties, development organizations, trade unions and others.

4. Quota policy should be revised

In order to ensure equal gender representation in the political institutions in Bangladesh, women's representation in these institutions must be increased. A revision to the existing quota policy will help to support that corollary. Therefore, the policy makers of Bangladesh should take measures to redress the current quota system. This revision particularly should follow three steps. Firstly, the number of reserved seats for women should be increased in the Parliament, Union Parishad, and Pourashava and must be equal to the number of general seats. Secondly, all reserved seats should have their own constituencies which are not shared with

general seats. Finally, some Chair and Mayoral positions of the local government institutions must also be kept reserved only for women.

5. Scopes should be given to women for taking decisions

Lindblom (1980) argues that concerted attempts should be made to increase access for less powerful groups in the decision-making processes. In order to create equal access for Bangladeshi women to the decision-making processes and to allow them to take active role in these endeavors, scopes should be given to them by all concerned quarters. For an example, when local decisions are taken by the Mayor or Chairman and male Councilors, female Councilors must be asked to give their opinions. Also, the policy makers of the country need to understand that the decisions which are taken by women on public affairs have a feminist touch and caring principles.

6. Special training programs should be launched for female politicians

The government of Bangladesh and development partners should launch various leadership training and educational programs for female politicians in order to make them equally qualified like male politicians in all terms. Supportive services should also be provided to them in order to allow them to participate in these training courses. Further, academic curriculum in schools and colleges should address gender issues so that

future female politicians and male politicians know about their roles, responsibilities and rights from the very beginning of their lives. On the top of that female politicians should always try to develop their own strengths and skills.

7. Inheritance law should properly be applied

The reasons of unequal economic obstacles between female politicians and male politicians in Bangladesh are many folds including the socio-economic deprivation of female politicians from basic amenities and entitlements, such as deprivation from getting the inherited property. Many women in Bangladesh even do not claim for their entitled inherited property due to social practice and other reasons. Female politicians of the country should become the pioneer for claiming their inherited property as per the prevailing law. It will help to minimize the unequal economic obstacles between female politicians and male politicians in Bangladesh, if the existing inheritance law is properly be applied.

8. Political parties must commit to promote gender equality

All political parties in Bangladesh must commit to promote gender equality in politics. They can express this commitment by taking three steps. Firstly, they need to confront proactively the systemic barriers in their rules and practices which are against the principle of gender equality.

Secondly, they should increase the number of positions for female members and putting them to senior positions in their respective parties. Thirdly, they should also increasingly nominate female politicians as members of the Parliament and in the Chair and Mayoral positions in the local government institutions of the country.

9. Political trend to depend on black money and muscles power should be eradicated

Gender discrimination in politics and the political trend to depend on black money and muscles power are correlated in Bangladesh. Therefore, in order to promote gender equality in politics, political parties in Bangladesh must stop using the black money and muscles power in politics. Specially, they must stop patronizing the terrorists. The Election Commission of Bangladesh should have the power and ability to ban or impose legal sanctions on any political parties who have a proven record of patronizing terrorism or who have been found guilty of using black money and muscles power in politics. In order to ensure that the government needs to reshuffle and empower the current Election Commission of Bangladesh.

10. Gender policy should address the need of equal distribution of domestic labor load

The National Women Development Policy does not address the need of equal distribution of domestic labor load between women and men. To fill in the gap, the policy makers of Bangladesh should insert a clause in the current policy document which addresses the need of equal distribution of the domestic labor load between women and men. According to the politically rational approach of policy making, this attempt may not work to solve the problem immediately but will work to improve the present situation in the long run. And, once the situation gets improved, female politicians in Bangladesh will get equal time and energy to spend in politics as their male counterparts do get.

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The State of Gender in Bangladesh Politics

গবেষণা প্রশ্নপত্র

নাম:	জেন্ডার:
বয়স:	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:
রাজনৈতিক পদবী:	পারিবারিক ব্যয় (মাসিক):
আসন নং:　　　ধরন: (ক) সাধারণ 　　　　　　　 (খ) সংরক্ষিত	অফিসিয়াল ঠিকানা ও ফোন নম্বর:

১।　সাধারণ/সংরক্ষিত আসন থেকে নির্বাচিত সদস্যের সাথে কাজ করতে কি কোন সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হতে হয়? হলে, তা কি ধরনের?

২।　সাধারণ/সংরক্ষিত আসন থেকে নির্বাচিত সদস্যের সাথে কাজের সমন্বয় কীভাবে করেন?

৩।　সাধারণ আসনে মহিলা সদস্য সংখ্যা কম কেন?

৪।　মহিলাদের জন্য আপনি কোন ধরনের আসন ব্যবস্থাকে উপযুক্ত বলে মনে করেন এবং কেন তা মনে করেন?

৫।　আপনাকে কি নির্বাচনী ব্যয়ের নির্ধারিত সীমার বাইরে অতিরিক্ত অর্থ খরচ করতে হয়েছে? হলে, কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে তা করতে হয়েছে?

৬।　রাজনীতিতে আপনার ভবিষ্যৎ উজ্জ্বল করার ক্ষেত্রে আপনার রাজনৈতিক দল আপনাকে কতটা এবং কীভাবে সহায়তা করছে?

৭।　বিরাজমান ধর্মীয়, সামাজিক বা সাংস্কৃতিক মূল্যবোধ আপনার কাজের ক্ষেত্রে কতটা এবং কীভাবে সহায়ক বা প্রতিবন্ধক?

৮।　পারিবারিক দায়-দায়িত্ব বা সাংসারিক ঝামেলা আপনার রাজনৈতিক কাজের ক্ষেত্রে কি কোন প্রভাব ফেলছে? ফেললে তা কি ধরনের?

৯।　সুযোগ হলে আপনার সন্তানদের মধ্যে আপনি ছেলে বা মেয়ে কাকে এবং কেন রাজনীতিতে উৎসাহিত করবেন?

১০।　রাজনীতিতে নারী পুরুষের সম-অধিকারের বিষয়টিকে আপনি কীভাবে দেখেন?

১১।　জাতীয় নারী উন্নয়ন নীতি রাজনীতিতে জেন্ডার সমতা আনয়নের ক্ষেত্রে কতটা সহায়ক?

১২।　কাজের ক্ষেত্রে আপনাকে এমন বিশেষ কি চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হতে হয়, যা আপনার সহকর্মী পুরুষ/মহিলা রাজনীতিবিদকে সম্মুখীন হতে হয় না?

১৩।　বাংলাদেশের রাজনীতিতে জেন্ডার সমতা আনয়নের জন্য কি কি পদক্ষেপ নেয়া যেতে পারে?

Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh

National Women Development Policy 2011

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
March 2011

National Women Development Policy 2011

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
March 2011

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National Women Development Policy 2011
Part I

1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, women constitute a great majority of the population. Women development is, therefore, pre-condition to national development. It is imperative to establish equal opportunity and rights to ensure national development. The erstwhile Awami League government in accord with the promise made in the national election held on 12 June 1996 formulated for the first time National Women Development Policy in 1997. The main objective of this policy was to promote the cause of larger women society that had suffered abuse and neglect for ages. In 1997, the policy was formulated in wide consultation and exchange of views with the leaders of the society of women in this country reflecting long struggle to establish rights of women of this country.

Later in 2004 the four party alliances along with BNP-Jamaat government made changes in the said policy and formulated their Women Development Policy. During caretaker government Women Development Policy 2008 was made in revised form but that could not be put to effect.

Bangladesh Awami League in its electoral manifesto of 2008 reiterated its promise to reinstate the Women Development Policy formulated by the erstwhile Awami League government in 1997 to ensure women empowerment, equal rights and opportunities. To implement electoral promise and to ensure women development and empowerment, the present government led by the humble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been formulating the National Women Development Policy 2011.

2. Background

Our womenfolk had been exploited and neglected for ages together. They were always suppressed under religious bigotry, social stigma, narrow-mindedness and discrimination in a male dominated society. The talent and labor spent by our women in their household chores were never properly evaluated. Begum Rokeya, pioneer of women's movement made clarion call for awakening of the women saying, "you just educate your daughters and let them make their own livelihood." There clear directives in this call of her as to how win their rights. The women responded to the call in the last leg of the 19th century that reverberated centering round generally the education. In addition, the women became conscious of wresting their rights by participating in the anti-British Movement. The participation of women in the Language Movement of '52, mass revolution of '69 and self-determination movement was important milestone to this end.

Bangladesh emerged as an independent state through the blood bath of War of Liberation under the leadership of the Father of the Nation, Bangobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971. Alongside men, the womenfolk of this country made a great contribution in the War of Liberation. Our mothers have left us a great legacy of patriotism and sacrifice by contributing to the War of Liberation in various ways including active participation in freedom struggle and sending their husbands and siblings to war fronts. In the War of Liberation more than 100 thousands of our mothers and sisters lost their honor in the hands of Pakistani hordes. The heinous crime against human rights can never be

forgotten. Our women started becoming self-reliant from the direct experience of War of Liberation. Great reawakening was there among them who expected to receive education and have employment. The illiterate women in the countryside evince keen interest to become self reliant. It became a paramount need that women participate in the national production. Development plan adopted to ensure empowerment of women in independent, sovereign Bangladesh. After the cruel killing of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15 August 1975 along with his family members, undemocratic and autocracy had its way on the exercise of ruling power in Bangladesh and the sound democratic practice was hampered for long time. However, the role of the movement of the women organization during this period was pioneering one. The NGOs too continued with their various programs improve socio-economic lot of in the outreach areas of the country. The Women's organizations alongside the political parties participated direct and indirectly in the struggle for establishing democracy in the country. And they became very much conscious about establishing their socio-economic and political rights that created a grand prospect in development of women in the country.

3. Development Planning and Women

A program was undertaken for rehabilitation of women who suffered loss during the War of Liberation and the uprooted one in the 1st 5-year plan (1973-78). For the first time the issue of women development received emphasis for education, health and family planning and attaining economic self reliance of various nature aimed at ultimate social welfare. So program was undertaken with overseas assistance for the same object in mind with allocation of financial resources. In 1972 the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to commemorate in respect the sacrifice of mothers and sisters who lost their honor at the hand of Pakistan Army during the War of Liberation decorated them with title: *Birangana* -- the brave ladies. The Government of Bangabandhu had adopted widespread programs to rehabilitate the mothers who could be rescued from the abuse and molestation of Pakistani occupation forces. The government of Bangabondhu made provisions for employment and allowance in particular for wives and daughters of those who embraced martyrdom in the War of Liberation. The government of Bangabondhu founded the Bangladesh Women Rehabilitation Board in 1972. The terms of reference of this board that deserve mention are: (a) conduct survey to collect correct information about the women and children abused and to arrange for their rehabilitation; and, (b) impart various vocational training of these victimized women. In addition marriage was arranged for such 10 women Biranganas under personal initiative of Begum Fazilatunnessa and rehabilitation of majority of such of them on family and social levels.

As the scope and responsibility of Women Development Board expanded steadily, this board was reorganized in 1974 into Women Rehabilitation and Welfare Foundation. This foundation had myriad programs including (1) build up physical infrastructure targeted at development of women in all the districts and sub-divisions of the country; (2) impart vocational training for broad based employment of women; (3) establish showroom and sales Centers for productive employment of women; (4) extend day care facilities for those women engaged in productive and training activities; (5) render treatment facilities to war affected women; and (6) introduce scholarships and stipends for education of the children of women affected by the War of Liberation which function is currently conducted under the name and style of "Vulnerable Women and Children Welfare Fund."

Inter-sector initiative was undertaken for the first time to engage women in income generating activity in the First Five Year Plan. The Ministry of Social Welfare had introduced vocational training Program (Women's Club). The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development started Mass Education Program. Later this program was converted into Women's Co-Operatives Program with assistance from the World Bank. The implementation of "Agro-based Program for the Rural Women" had begun also on 33 bigha land of Women Affairs Department at Savar in 1973.

Program for increasing employment and skill of the women was taken up under the Two-Year (1978-1980). Same program was taken in the 3rd 5 Year Plan (1985-90).

Inter-sector initiative was adopted with an eye to mainstreaming it identifying women development as part of the socio-economic development in the 4th Five Year plan (1990-95). Notable in this plan included: ensuring increased participation of women in education, health, agriculture, industry and commerce, service and other sectors, elimination of poverty, improvement of skill, self-employment, expansion of credit facilities, increasing gender awareness and expansion of supportive facilities like hostel, child daycare centre and giving legal aid.

Under the 3-year recurring plan and Annual Development Plan, programs included : self-employment, resistance to women abuse, non-formal and vocational training, establishment of day care centers, assistance to women program, establishment of career women's hostel, food aid program for vulnerable program, food for education program, compulsory primary education, free education of the rural girls at secondary level, health are services and immunization program.

In the fifth 5-year plan the efforts at mainstreaming of women in development was further strengthened and there was strong reiteration of firm commitment for elimination of all forms of discrimination to women charter, Beijing Platform for Action and implementation of national plan for women development. The gender perspective was given to the micro chapters concerning agriculture, rural development, industry, health and family planning, education, minerals, transport, labor and employment and information and communication (IT).

4. World Perspective and Bangladesh

The erstwhile government of Bangobandhu played an effective role from the early Seventies in the international arena. Bangladesh actively participated in the first World Women congress in Mexico in 1975. The women movement that was being waged outside the country resulted in mainstreaming of Bangladesh women Movement. The base of the present level of women development in Bangladesh was formed with this initiative. The United Nations declared 1975 as "Year of the Women" for empowerment and development of women in affairs of state, society, politics and economics. 1976-1985 was declared as Decade of Women' in the first World Women Convention in 1975. The decade aimed at equality, development and peace. The 2nd Women Convention was convened in Copenhagen in 1980 in which, the progress made in the first phase of 5 years (1976-1985) was reviewed and three additional objectives - education, health and employment were identified. The 3rd World Women Convention was held in Nairobi, Capital of Kenya in 1985 and advanced strategies were adopted for women development

based on equality, development and peace. As preparatory to 4th World Women Convention in 1994 at Jakarta Declaration and Work Plan was adopted at the 2nd Asian and Pacific Region ministerial meeting concerning women development. The Declaration said, there exists sharp gender inequality in the matter of power distribution and decision making and so, the concerned governments were urged to take initiative to eliminate this inequality and limitations. The Commonwealth prepared a gender and development work plan in 1995. The SAARC countries too have made work plan for women development. Beijing Declaration and Work Plan were adopted in 4th World Convention of Women in Beijing on 4-15 September in 1995. 12 particularly important areas in women development have been identified in Beijing Work Plan. The areas include : increasing poverty of the women; unequal opportunity in the matter of education and training , unequal opportunity in getting health care services; abuse of women; women- victim of armed violence; limited rights in matter of claims over economic resources; inequality in decision-making and participation in power, inadequate institutional framework in women development, violation of human rights of women, negative reflections of women in the mass media and their inadequate participation; limited rights of women in the preservation of environment and natural resources and discrimination to female children. Bangladesh is committed to the implementation of all international declarations and work plans.

The Environment and Development Work Plan adopted in the Earth Convention held in Rio de Janeiro held in 1992, the Vietnam Declaration in 1993, the population and Development Work Plan adopted in the International Conference held in Cairo in 1994, and the Work Plan adopted in the World Social Summit held in Copenhagen in 1995 - all had given utmost importance to woman and child development and their rights. Bangladesh initialed in all these charters and Work Plans and committed to their implementation. Bangladesh in one of the signatories to Child Rights Charter in 1989 to ensure fundamental rights of the children adopted in the United Nations General Assembly.

4.1. Charter on Abolishing Discrimination against Women

Convention of th Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Woman (CEDAW) was adopted in the United Nations in December 1979 to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women in the state, economy, family and in each area of family and social life and it came into effect on 3 September 1981. This document identified as the International Bill of Rights is considered to be a full dress and self contained standard for the preservation of rights of women. In 1984, Bangladesh ratified this charter and protected in four sections: [2, 13(a), 16(a) and (f)]. Later, protections were withdrawn from 13(a) and 16.1 in 1996. Bangladesh submits report to the United Nations every 4 year as ratifying state to the Charter. The latest 6th and 7th periodic reports were sent to the United Nations in 2009 and the report of GoB was presented at CEDAW Committee on 25 January 2011.

Bangladesh has actively participated in almost all the fora in the international arena and involved her in the global thoughts in the matter of women development by signing

important international charters and documents. Bangladesh expressed her commitment in the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as it participated in the Millennium Summit Session held in 2000. And at the same time Bangladesh signed also the optional protocol on CEDAW. Bangladesh ranked as one of the first 10 countries in signing the protocol. In addition, Bangladesh has expressed her commitment in undertaking multilateral steps in areas of women development as a ratifying and signatory state to various other important regional charters.

5. Human Rights of Women and the Constitution

The Constitution was written for the newly formed state of Bangladesh in 1972. The Constitution made under the directives of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Mujibur Rahman ensured human and fundamental rights of women. In article 27 of the constitution has it that, "all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law". The article 28(1) says, "the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth" The article 28(2) says, "women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and public life." The article 28(3) has it that, no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution." Article 28(4) says, "Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making special provision in favor of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens." Article 29(1) contains, `` there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the republic." Article 29(2) has it that `` no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office in the service of the republic." In the article 65(3) there are 45 seats reserved for women and under article 9 the representation of women in the development of local government institutions.

6. Current Scenario

The government under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has undertaken various programs to materialize Vision 2021 for establishing rights of women, their empowerment and mainstreaming them in the overall development.

The Ministry of women and Children Affairs have been implementing different programs to alleviate poverty of women, stop abuse of women, stop trafficking of women, and ensure safety in all areas including their workplace with a view to ensuring full and equal participation of women in socio-economic activities. Under the safety net for women the programs like allowance for the widow and husband abandoned women, lactating mother program in the urban areas, VGD program for the food security of the distressed women and poverty alleviation loan programs etc. Then broad based programs for women in farming, sewing, boutique, handicrafts, beautician ship, computer operation and various income generating activities are being implemented and extensive training given to increase the skill of the beneficiaries, creation of employments, broader participation in

labor market, credit facilities under simple terms and without collateral amongst the small and medium term entrepreneurs and other types of patronization to ensure economic empowerment of the women.

Numerous programs have been included in the National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (NSAPR-II) aimed at poverty alleviation of the women and mainstream them into the macro economy in this age of globalization. Five strategies have been identified in this Strategy Paper that includes social security and human resources development for the vulnerable groups alongside macro-economic management for poor friendly economic growth. In the five strategies the most emphasis has been participatory empowerment in development activity. The special program for alleviation of the poverty of women in the strategy paper provides for ensuring empowering the poorest of the poor or dead poor women by expanding their safety net. The program for distribution of allowance to the widow and distressed women began in 1998. Now it covers 9,20,000 such women. Under this program a widow receives Tk.300.00 as allowance per month. In addition, they also receive maternity allowance. A total of 88,000 poor mothers get Tk.350.00 per month under the program. In addition, old age allowance and allowance for the disabled is continuing from which the women have share of the benefits. Under the poverty alleviation program for women without living means are distributed each with 30kg rice or 25kg. pusti atta per month as food security to 7,50,000 women. There is provision in the strategy paper to impart women with different types of training and income generating training and training in farming and computer operation etc. in particular to make them self-reliant and self-sufficient. Measures have been taken to give the small and medium women entrepreneurs' loans on easy terms and interest to assist them. In addition, steps have also been taken to remove bottlenecks of marketing produce and to extend financial assistance. Emphases have been given in particular for promoting home based micro industries by assisting in the growth of textiles, handicrafts and weaving. Increased access of women in the labor market, employment generation and skill enhancement has also been given importance. The matter of building women as skilled human resources by giving them training has been stressed much on the rural non-farm activities and included in the strategy paper.

Measures have been taken to formulate long term perspective plan (2010-2021) and sixth Five Year Plan (2010-2015) in consistence with this strategy paper.

7. Women and the Law

A number of existing laws has been amended and new legislations made to prevent woman and female child abuse in Bangladesh. Notables among these legislations are : dowry prevention act, prevention of marriage of minor girls, Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 etc. Women Abuse Prevention Cell and rehabilitation centers for abused women have been established to give legal assistance and counseling for prevention of women and children abuse. Over and above, the District and Sessions Judge has fund to defray the cost as legal fee and other costs.

7.1. Donestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010

Donestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010 was passed for establishing equal rights of women and children as prescribed in the constitution of Bangladesh for ensuring protection of women and children from family violence as also a signatory state to the UN Charter on Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination to Women,1979 and the Child Rights Charter 1989.

7.2. Citizenship Act (amended), 2009

The provision for giving citizenship by mother to child was made by the national parliament by amending the citizenship act in 2009.

7.3. Mobile Court Act, 2009

The executive magistrate was given power to take steps by linking Section 509 of the Bangladesh Penal Code in the schedule of Mobile Court Act to resist and prevent eve teasing and sexual harassment of the girls and women.

8. Prevention of Abuse of Women

There is a number of legislation to resist and prevent abuse of women. The crimes and offenses like abuse of women, murder of women for dowry, women and child kidnapping and trafficking, rape, acid throwing, family violence, sexual harassment and other women related crimes are still being committed. Extra-judicial punishment is still being carried out in the name of misinterpretation of religion and fatwas in the garb of village arbitration. Enough forensic facilities to investigate the cases of abuse of women have not been in place as yet. Notable in this area has been a National DNA Laboratory and 5 divisional DNA Screening Lab under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs are assisting in identifying the offenders. In many cases, the related cases are never filed with law enforcing agencies and justice is delayed for different reasons. In the divisional towns, Women Support Centers have been commissioned to assist women and child daughters' victim of abuse. The victim women get shelter, legal advice free of cost and get assistance in conducting cases against the offenders. One Stop Crisis Center (OCC has been set up in 6 divisional towns and through this from one place co-ordinated health care facilities, legal services, police support, shelter and rehabilitation of the victims are arranged. The victim women are given psycho-social counseling services through the National Trauma Counseling Centre at the Women Affairs Department. Alongside these, opportunities are offered for self reliance by imparting them training on various vocations. The assistance is also rendered through the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Women Affairs Department; Women abuse Prevention Cell in the National Women Organization and helpline. Three Victim Support Centers have been set up under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Women Abuse Prevention Committees have been set up respectively at district level led by the Deputy Commissioner, at upazilla level led by the UNO and at UP level led by the UP Chairman. The District Women Affairs Officer and Upazilla Women Affairs Officer act as member secretary to these committees. 44 women

and Children Abuse and Repression Tribunals have been set up all over the country for the prevention of abuse of women and children.

9. Women Resources

There is no substitute for skilled human resources for ensuring sustainable national development accelerating economic growth. Education, healthcare, training and psycho-cultural developments are pre-conditions to create skilled human resources. The government is prioritizing education sector in its efforts to change women into skilled human resources. Primary education has been made compulsory realizing its importance. The stipends for the female students program continues advance the cause of female education as special priority sector. This program has been very effective in increasing enrollment of female students at school and also in reducing the rate of drop outs. The government has plan on the card to make education of women up to degree level of cost. In addition, the efforts continue to make the women self-reliant through different vocational training. The government is trying also to give equal opportunity to women in education, training, science and technology and technical areas. Some positive influence is already felt because of multilateral steps of the government in education extension of the women. Measures have been taken to start community clinic all over the country for improvement in health care of the women. The government is making attempts to bring down the rate maternal death rates by ensuring treatment of expectant mothers through maternity allowance and voucher schemes. The government has established 10 women friendly hospital to ensure health care services for the women.

10. Politics and the Administration

In 1972 the government of Bangoabondhu had taken maiden step to streamlining the women with development i.e. their administrative empowerment and inclusion of women in the decision making. The restrictions on the females in the matter of government employment were waived and a 10 percent quota was reserved for them opening their free participation in all areas of employment. Two women were included in the Cabinet in 1973 and one woman was appointed DG of Bangla Academy in 1974..

The government has also stressed increased participation of women in all areas of society and state administration along with ensuring political empowerment of women. The participation women at the policy level of the government have been positive one. The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and Parliamentary Deputy Leader all are women. 6 in the cabinet, 19 of 345 MPs are women and directly elected. 45 women have been elected in the reserved seats of women in the parliament. The matter of political empowerment of women at the parliament and at the grass-root level is quite visible. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made the legal provision for 3 elected women members in the local government including Union parishad. Under the government of Sheikh Hasina appointments of women were made to the positions of Secretary in the Administration, Deputy Commissioner, and officers in the Police, Army, Navy and Air Force. Later at the Upazilla level, a post of elected woman Vice Chairman was created.

Currently, 3 as Secretary and one as Additional Secretary in Administration i.e. a total of 4 women are holding responsibility. A new milestone has been added to the women empowerment with appointment of first woman as Justice of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, highest seat of justice in the country. In addition, there are five women justice in the High Court Division and there are women members in Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, Right of Information Commission. There is a fixed entry leve15% quota at the gazetted and equivalent levels and Class III and IV levels. In the matter of appointment of new primary school teachers 60% of the posts are reserved for women. A police unit totally formed with women in UN Peace-Keeping Mission (female formed Police Unit, FPU) has been discharging its duties and responsibilities for the first time in Haiti.

11. Poverty

Out of 40% population of Bangladesh living under the poverty line, two-thirds of them are women and female headed families are greater in number among them. The economic evaluation of many jobs done by the women is yet to be done. The job costing of labor of women in family house contributed to the household domestic chores and in farm activity is important for poverty alleviation. In these areas the right evaluation of women has not been made as yet. The dead poor women are being assisted through including them in social safety activity.

12. Organizational and Institutional Transition in Women Development

The government formed Women Rehabilitation Board in 1972, Bangladesh Women Rehabilitation Welfare Foundation in 1974, National Women's organization in 1976 and Ministry of Women Affairs in 1978 with the objective of women development. The Women Affairs Directorate was formed in 1984 and it was upgraded to Department of Women Affairs in 1990. The Women Affairs Ministry was renamed as ``Ministry of Women and Children Affairs' in 1994 in which Children Affairs was included. National Women Training and Development Academy, Career Women's Hostel, Children's Daycare center, Farming Training center for Women and Begum Rokeya Training enter have been set up under the Women Affairs Department. Programs have been taken up in all districts and Upazilla concerning non-formal education, vocational training and widespread awareness raising activity.

The National Women Organization is implementing Women Development Program in 64 districts and 50 Upazillas. Bangladesh Shishu Academy was founded in 1976 for the socio-cultural and mental growth of the children. 44 focal points have been nominated with a view to co-coordinating the women development activity in various ministries and organizations. Over and above, a 50 member National Council for Women and Child Development (NCWCD) has been formed with PM in the Chair for review of the socio-economic development of women at national level, policy making and implementation of development programs. An inter-ministerial women and child abuse prevention committee has been formed to establish rights and resist abuse of women. Woman and Child Abuse Prevention Cell and WomenAabuse Prevention Committee at district and

Upazilla levels have been formed in Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Women Affairs Department and National Women Organization have been formed. An integrated initiative has been taken to work together aimed at women development at both public and private sector levels. The government is actively extending cooperation to NGOs in this respect.

13. Co-ordination and Cooperation between GO and NGO programs

Development activity implementation is being carried out in co-ordination and co-operation between government and NGOs The women's organizations are playing important role in this areas of activity.

14. Resources and Finance

Limitation of resources is there in attaining the desired target of women development. However, prospect exists in getting assistance from the programs taken up at the international level for women development. A number of international conventions and conferences including 4th World Women Convention recommended to the governments and international finance agencies to allot money at increasing rate aimed at women developments in different countries. A separate organization under the name and style of UN Women has been set up by the United Nations for empowerment and development of women at global level. The government of Bangladesh is aware of it and taking necessary steps for receiving assistance from the international arena and UN Women.

15. The Responsibility of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

One of the responsibilities of the Ministry of women and Children Affairs has been making policies aimed at development of women under the rules of business of the government. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to discharge the functions has formulated the National Women Development Policy based on deliberation with all the concerned ministries, organizations and NGOs in the light of fundamental rights of women recognized in the constitution, international charters i.e. CEDAW, CRC, Beijing Declaration and Plan of Work. One of the functions of the ministry has been making code of ethics for the women and children, taking up programs for the welfare of the women and children, issues concerning legal and social rights of the women and children, women's empowerment along side job creation for them, the program of National Women and Children Council, co-ordination of WID Focal Program, coordination of the activity of the women's organizations and civil society, registration and regulation of voluntary women's associations, program concerning prevention of woman and child abuse, observance of International day, celebration of the birth anniversary of the Father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Begum Rokeya Day, awarding Rokeya Medal and continuing communications with international organizations including Unicef.

Part II

16. The Objectives of National Women Development Policy

The Objectives of National Women Development Policy are as follows.

16.1.   To establish equal rights of men and women in areas of state and public life in the light of the constitution of Bangladesh.

16.2.   To ensure security and safety of women in all areas of state, social and family life.

16.3.   To ensure the socio-economic, political, administrative and legal empowerment;

16.4.   To establish human rights of women.

16.5.   To ensue full and equal participation of women in the mainstream socio-economic development.

16.6.   To bring up women as educated and skilled human resources.

16.7.   To deliver the women from the curse of poverty.

16.8.   To remove existing male-female disparities.

16.9.   To give appropriate recognition to women's contribution in socio-economic areas.

16.10.   To eliminate all forms of abuse of women and female children.

16.11.   To eliminate discrimination to women and female children.

16.12.   To establish gender equality in politics, administration, other areas of activity, socio-economic activity, education, culture, sports and in all areas of family life.

16.13.   To innovate and import technology favoring the interest of women and prohibit anti-women technologies.

16.14.   To ensure taking appropriate steps to ensure sound health and nutrition of the women.

16.15.   To ensure priority of women in provision for proper shelter and housing;

16.16.   To arrange rehabilitation of the women affected in natural calamities and armed conflicts.

16.17.   To extend overall assistance to ensure rights of the disabled women and women belonging to the smaller ethnic groups.

16.18. To arrange safety of the widow, aged, guardianless, husband abandoned, unmarried and childless women.

16.19. To reflect gender perspective in the mass media including positive image of the women and female children.

16.20. To assist in flowering of Talented, genius women of their creative potentials.

16.21. To provide necessary support services for development of women.

16.22. To provide overall assistance in ensuring the growth of women entrepreneurs.

17. Ensuring Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom of Women

17.1. To eliminate all forms of discriminations to women in recognition of the fact that man and woman are all equal in all the areas of human rights and fundamental freedom, such as, socio-political, economic and cultural freedoms.

17.2. To take necessary steps to publicize and implement the Convention of the Eliminatin of All Forms of Discriminatin Against Women (CEDAW).

17.3. To revise and amend existing law and make necessary legislation to ensure the human rights of women.

17.4. Abolishing all discriminatory laws and ensure participation of women legal experts in the commission or committee formed with the objective of making legislation and reforms.

17.5. Refraining from giving any statement or doing similar something or taking any initiative based on wrong interpretation of any religion, any tenets against the interest of women at the local or state levels.

17.6. Not legislating any discriminatory law or not allowing growth of any discriminatory social custom.

17.7. Ensure equal rights in all the levels of quality education, employment, technical training, equal emoluments, workplace health and safety, social security and health care.

17.8. Giving lessons on legislations concerning human rights and women and increasing sensitization.

17.9. To arrange identification of siblings by the name of both father and mother i.e. while giving out personal name in birth registration, all certificates, voter list, form, application form for employment and passports etc.

18. Development of Female Child

18.1. Stern enforcement of legislations against minor matrimony, rape of female child, abuse and repression and trafficking.

18.2. To make discrimination free treatment and put special emphases in meeting demands of female children such as, food, nutrition, health, education, sports and culture and vocational training.

18.3. Ensuring necessary rights to the proper physical and mental growth of the female children.

18.4. Elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment and ensuring gender equality in all areas including family.

18.5. Ensuring regular attendance of the female children in educational institutions.

18.6. Ensuring necessary measures against female children suffer no sexual harassment, pornography, physical and mental abuse in different situations such as educational institutions and in the streets.

18.7. Ensuring facilities to the female children for their safe and quality excursion and recreation, sports and cultural practices.

18.8. Eliminating discriminatory treatment to disabled female children and their security in all areas.

19. Elimination of All forms of Abuse against Women

19.1. Elimination of all forms of violence to women including physical and mental abuse and sexual harassment, rape, dowry, family abuse and acid throwing in family, society and in the workplace.

19.2. To amend and if necessary legislate new laws to make the conventional laws concerning prevention of abuse of women making them adapted to the age and circumstances.

19.3. To extend legal support to women victim of abuse.

19.4. To stop trafficking of women and rehabilitation of the affected ones.

19.5. Elimination of abuse of women and to make enforcement of justice in these cases ensuring participation of women at levels in increasing manner in the Police force.

19.6. To train the judiciary and the police department in the matter of legislations pertaining to women and to make these departments gender sensitized.

19.7. To simplify the adjudication procedure to complete trial of offense relating to women. Female children and their trafficking.

19.8. To give necessary support and assistance through the one-stop crisis centers(OCC) at the divisional towns and through women support centers in prevention of abuse of women and to take necessary steps to expand OCC at the district level. To increase activity of National Trauma Counseling Centers to give the women victim of abuse mental support and assistance. To extend necessary assistance through the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, National Women Organization and Department of Women Affairs.

19.9. To raise widespread awareness in prevention of abuse of women in all the levels of the society through integrated initiative with the NGOs and take appropriate initiatives in bringing about changes the male dominated thought process.

19.10. To create widespread public awareness in the mass media in prevention of abuse of women.

19.11. Involving male and youths in building up mass awareness in prevention of abuse of women.

20. Armed Conflict and the Situation of Women

20.1. To create awareness against the increased victimization and affectation of the women in the armed conflict and in ethnic wars in the international level.

20.2. To increase participation women in bringing end to the conflict and establish peace.

20.3. To include women representative in the international peace mission.

21. Education and Training

21.1 To increase education of women, to eliminate discrimination in education rate and opportunities between man and woman and to follow the Education Policy 2010 aimed at mainstreaming women in the development.

21.2. To continue all out efforts to eliminate illiteracy of the women and in particular, to give utmost importance to educate and train the female children and women in technical, technological and scientific pursuits.

21.3. To continue with stipends for the female students to ensure participation in education of the female children.

21.4. To take steps to make female education free up to honors level.

22. Sports and Culture

22.1. To ensure greater participation of women in sports.

22.2. To build separate sports complex for the women at the local level.

22.3. To ensure increased participation of women in the cultural arena.

22.4. To arrange to make government grants to encourage women in making dramas and movies.

23. Ensuring Active Role of Women and Their Equal Rights in All the National Economic Activity

23.1   To increase participation of women at the level of decision making in financial institutes.

23.2. To ensure equal rights in economic policy making (Trade and Commerce Policy. Monetary Policy and Taxation Policy) and their implementation.

23.3. To establish macro economy policy and to consider about the need and self interset of women in consideration of employment of women.

23.4. To build social security net (safety net) in favor of the women to ward off hostile reaction in the application of macro-economic policy.

23.5. To give equal opportunity and partnership in resource utilization, employment, market and business.

23.6. To remove degradation of women in the educational curriculum and books and to raise the image of women.

23.7. To ensure gender equal rate of wages, increase participation of women in the labor market, equal opportunity at the workplace, ensured security and removal of disparities in employment.

23.8. To give recognition to women for their contribution to institutional and non-institutional sectors by institutionalizing participation of women.

23.9. To take effective measures in all institutions including Statistical Bureau of Bangladesh to reflect contribution women in the national economy.

23.10. To ensure correct reflection and evaluation of all women labor including their labor in farming and in the household in the national accounts of the government, national development and economic growth.

23.11. To arrange for taking all other necessary and making special provision including transportation, housing accommodation, rest rooms and separate toilets and day care centers where women are employed in larger numbers.

24. Poverty Elimination of Women

24.1. To include the dead poor women inside the social safety net, make allowance for the widow and distressed women, aged allowance, disability allowance, provide

for maternity allowance and continuing food security for the women without means(VGD) programs.

24.2. Mobilizing poor women to increase their skills and creating alternative socio-economic opportunities through giving them training.

24.3. Involving the poor women in productive activity and in the mainstream economy.

24.4. To increase budget allocation to meet all the demands of women including those of food, clothing, home, health care and education.

24.5. Supporting and inspiring the UN agencies, development partner agencies and voluntary organizations in taking necessary measures for eliminating poverty of the women.

25. Economic Empowerment of Women

The essential issues for economic empowerment of the women are, such as ;

25.1. To give full and equal opportunity to women in health, education, training, life long education (continuing education), technical education, income generating training, information & technology etc.

25.2. To give women the rights to wealth and resources earned through income, succession, loan/credit, land and market management.

26. Employment of Women

26.1. To undertake all out initiative for employment of the educated and illiterate women labor.

26.2. To increase quota at entry at all levels to ensure increased employment of the women and ensuring its effective implementation.

26.3. To motivate all employment agencies to give women all kinds of equal opportunities under government quota and employment policy.

26.4. To undertake programs for imparting special training and credit facilities to for women entrepreneur class.

26.5. To create necessary environment to promote access of women to employment arras at increasing rate, their position as such and continue their advancement.

26.6. To make necessary reforms of all concerned law, rule and policy for wider employment of women.

27. Making Gender Responsive Budget and Gender Disaggregated Database

27.1. To continue with gender responsive budget making program to ensure women development.

27.2. To implement duly the gender responsive budget and under the mid-term budgetary framework i.e. in the matter of state budget making continuing with following Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB).To strengthen the implementation and monitoring framework to ensure best use of budgeted amount and its proper utilization.

27.3. To take steps to gender disaggregated collection and insertion of information/data and arrange their regular publication. The GO and NGO research canters, Bureau of Statistics and primary information/data collection unit of the educational institutions should build up gender disaggregated database concerning status and role of women. Gender-based information/data collection, preservation and publication. Similarly all the concerned ministries/office, corporation, bank and financial institution should collect gender based information/data, preserve them and arranged their publication from all their activities.

28. Support Services

Support services like child care facilities, workplace day-care center for the children, housing for the old, infirm, disable women, health care and recreational facilities, extension and improvement aimed at effective participation women in all economic activities and development process.

29. Women and Technology

29.1. To reflect gender perspective in the matter of innovation, import and application of new technology.

29.2. To take initiative to purge the harmful elements, if any, from the technology by conducting research on it if the application of such innovated technology affects adversely the interest of the women.

29.3. To make necessary legislations and reform them for achieving he aims in favor of the women in the field of technology.

30. Food Security of Women

30.1. To strengthen the government food distribution system keeping an aye on the need of distressed women.

30.2. Ensuring participation women in planning, supervision and distribution in the process of achieving food security.

30.3. To accord recognition and make evaluation of the toil, role and contribution of the women in ensuring the food security.

31. Women and Farming

31.1 The role of agriculture in the agro-based economy in achieving food security, employment and economic growth is important. The direct and indirect labor in agriculture and participation of women is recognized worldwide. So the women labor as farming hands contributing in the national economy need recognition which has to be done.

31.2. To extend all kinds of support and assistance in eliminating bottlenecks created due to climate change and disaster.

31.3. To take initiative to ensure equal wages for the same job and to remove wages discrimination to women in agriculture.

31.4. To take steps to ensure the farming women have equal opportunity in having agricultural inputs like fertilizer, seed, farmer's card and credit facilities etc.

32. Political Empowerment of Women

32.1. To make all our efforts to motivate political parties including the mass media to ensure increased and active political participation of the women.

32.2. To implement awareness raising program to make people conscious of the achievement political rights of women and its benefits.

32.3. To ensure 33 percent representation in phases inside the political parties.

32.4. To inspire the political parties to nominate women at increased rate in the election.

32.5. To raise awareness about secure the political rights of women and to urge conscious voting with this end in view. Implementing voter training program from grassroot to national level.

32.6. To motivate NGOs including women's organizations to participate in publicity campaigns to press for active participation of women in politics.

32.7. To raise number of women's seat in the Parliament to 33% and to take initiative to direct election in the extended seats for women.

32.8. To arrange direct poll in the extended seats at all levels of local governments.

32.9. To appoint substantial number of women in the higher levels of decision making.

33. Administrative Empowerment of Women

33.1. To make contractual and later access (Laternal entry) of women easier to the government at higher levels of the administrative framework.

33.2. To appoint women at increased rate in the administrative, policy making and constitutional posts.

33.3. To appoint/nominate women in the various UN branches and subsidiaries and in other international organizations at state representative or candidate.

33.4. To increase quota for women at all level and gazetted or non-gazetted positions at entry points aimed at empowerment of women.

33.5. To continue with quota system till the fixed quota for the women is fulfilled in all areas.

33.6. To make applicable the same quota system in the autonomous and statutory bodies and also to encourage to follow the same policy in the NGOs and voluntary organizations.

33.7. To take all out efforts to appoint women in the 30% posts to ensure women's equal and full participation at the decision making levels including policy making positions in accord with the recommendations of the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

34. Health and Nutrition

34.1 To ensure rights to nutrition and to have physical and mental health of highest standard all through the life cycle of women i.e. in the childhood, adolescence, during pregnancy and in old age.

34.2. To strengthen primary health care for the women.

34.3. To reduce maternal and child death rates.

34.4. To conduct research to combat the fatal diseases of AIDs and health of women during their pregnancy in particular and publicize health information and raise awareness.

34.5. To educate and train in nutrition.

34.6. To keep in view the matter of reproductive health of the women and reproductive rights in planning population and its implementation.

34.7. To give particular importance to the need of women concerning safe drinking water and sewerage system.

34.8. To ensure participation of women in all the aforesaid services planning, distribution and preservation.

34.9. To ensure equal gender rights in making decisions as to family planning and taking baby.

34.10 To take appropriate actions in favor of the benefits of breast milk for also ensuring health of the women, physical and mental growth of the child, assistance in birth control and increasing mother's capacity to work at her workplace.

34.11 To legislate and implement law to allow mothers to enjoy a leave for 6 months after the delivery of the child to ensure that the new born has it right to mother's breast milk (only six months for breast milk) and to arrange necessary maternity leave.

35. Housing and Shelter

35.1 To include women perspective in the housing plan and shelter arrangement in the countryside and the urban areas;

35.2. To put special emphasis on affording adequately safe home and accommodation facilities to single woman, Woman headed family, working women, professionals, apprentice and under training women;

35.3. To arrange special privileges like hostel, dormitory, old age homes, temporary accommodation facilities and to make provision to make reserve in the Housing and Urbanization Plans for the poor, distressed and working women.

36. Women and the Environment

36.1. In recognition of the contribution of women in the management of natural resources conservation and a safer environment to give them opportunity of equal participation in environment preservation policy and programs reflecting a women perspective.

36.2. To ensure participation of women in decision making regarding environment management and pollution control and program implementation.

36.3. To encourage women in farming, fisheries, cattle raring and afforestation and give them equal opportunity.

37. Pre-disaster, During Disaster and Post-disaster Protection of Women and Children

37.1. To take special measures for overall safety and security of the women and children in pre-disaster situations and to arrange for making them prepared through widespread awareness training and programs to deal the upcoming disaster.

37.2. To rehabilitate the women and children affected by river erosion and natural calamities.

37.3. To take appropriate steps for ensuring security of the women on priority basis in preparation of dealing the disaster and post-disaster rehabilitation. And to have special consideration in this cases for the disabled women.

37.4. To take appropriate actions aimed at security of the female children during emergencies like natural disaster. To take appropriate measures to ensure availability of health materials and effective sewerage system.

37.5. To extend needed psycho-social support along side material assistance to them by stressing the women's capability to overcome disaster emergency.

37.6. To make social security prom more women friendly and to introduce safety work strategy.

37.7. To take initiative to ensure the need of women in food distribution activity during the time of disuster.

37.8. To put special emphases on the health of women along side food during post disaster emergency.

37.9. To make special arrangement for the expectant mothers, post natal woman and the new born like maintaining a breast feeding corner.

37.10. To involve in the program for distressed women welfare of the community in which the women live during and after the disaster.

38. Special Program for Small Ethnic and Backward Group Women

38.1. To ensure all the rights of the small ethnic and backward groups of people for the development and growth of their womenfolk.

38.2. To take initiative for the development of small ethnic group women by sustaining their own heritage and cuture.

38.3. To undertake special program aimed at development of backward women.

39. Special Program for the Disabled Women

39.1. To ensure rights to recognition and to live with honor and dignity according to UN disadvantage right convention.

39.2. To have the disabled women unified with the mainstream society and ensuring their active participation in all the areas of life including education. To give importance to the differenciation of disability in aspect of education.

39.3. To consider special type of education in only those areas where they could not be mainstreamed for reasons obvious.

39.4. To undertake appropriate institutional program for education, treatment, training and rehabilitation of the disabled women.

39.5. To undertake program to prevent disability and its determination and extending special co-operation to their families for taking care and growth of the disabled women.

39.6. To make the framework, facilities and services accessible to all so that on women only because of disability are not deprived of any kind of rights, facilities and services endowed under the National Women Policy.

40. Women and Mass Media

40.1. To undertake positive initiative for right role of women in the mass media, ensuring their access to it, elimination of discrimination in participation and projection of women and children issues.

40.2. To arrange publicity campaign to stop defamation, negative, archetype reflection of women and to stop violence against women.

40.3. To create equal opportunity in the management of different media and formal training for women.

40.4. To integrate gender perspective in media policy.

41. Women distressed in special circumstances

To take measures and program if some woman falls into distressed under special circumstances to give her support considering her need.

42. Institutional Arrangements and Strategy

The implementation of women development policy and work plan is the basic responsibility of the Government. This responsibility can be discharged on a sound basis through building up a well organized and broad based institutional system. Efforts shall be made to include women development perspective in all the GO and NGO activity. The following measures shall be taken with these objects in view :

42.1. National Level

a) Institutional Framework for Development of Women: The national framework such as the administrative frameworks of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Women Affairs Department, National Women Organization and Bangladesh Shishu Academy shall be strengthened. The manpower and resources for these organizations shall be ensured. The administrative framework of these institutions shall be expanded at all divisions, districts, Upazilla and Union levels in phases. The power and authority of these institutions shall be increased for making all programs, program implementation and monitoring for development of women.

b) National Women and Child Development Council (NCWCD): A 50-member National Women and Children Development Council have been formed with the Prime Minister in the Chair. The terms of reference of this council have been the following:

(1) Policy making and co-ordination of development programs of different ministries, divisions, departments and organizations in order to ensure participation of women in socio-economic development activity.

(2) Making recommendation for legislation of new laws and rules for timely amendment and changes of the existing laws if need be for over all policy making and conservation of rights with a view to protect the interests and rights of the children.

(3) Monitoring and evaluation of work plans formulated for development of women and children.

(4) Review and monitoring of Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Child Rights Convention.

(5) Policy making concerning legal rights of women, women development and prevention of abuse of women.

(6) Taking necessary decisions to implement the steps undertaken for preserving interest of the women in their workplaces, their participation and improvement of their lot.

(7) The council shall meet every 6 (six) months.

(c) Parliamentary Committee: The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Development of Women formed by the Bangladesh Parliament shall advise the government to take specific initiatives for advancement of the women after a review of women development program.

(d) Focal point in Women Development: Various focal points in Ministry/Division/ Organization shall adopt program, make projects and implement them in the light of the National Women Policy. To properly implement the women development program in various Ministries/Division/ Organizations, officials holding ranks of at least Joint Secretary/Joint Chief shall be nominated as focal point in those agencies. For regulator monitoring of the women development program these topics shall be reviewed and discussed at the monthly Ministry/Division/Organization's ADP meeting and monthly coordination meetings. In addition, to ensure reflection of the gender perspective in the programs of focal point Ministry/Division/Department/Organizations and specific and adequate information are included in the various reports and documents necessary initiatives shall be undertaken.

(e) A Women Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee shall be shall be formed comprising representatives of the focal point ministry and GO and NGO women development organizations identified in women development presided over by the Minister, Women and Children Affairs. This committee shall review, co-ordinate and evaluate the women development related program. The committee shall advise for the accelerated implementation of the future program by identifying the problems of he concerned ministry and organizations.

42.2. District and Upazilla Levels

The activity/program of the district level administration, Zilla Parishad, Municipality, Local Government, office of the concerned ministry shall be co-ordinated and progress of women development program reviewed for advancement and empowerment of the women. District Women Affairs Officer. Upazilla Women Affairs Officer in co-ordination with other concerned officials shall discharge heir responsibilities in implementation of all the programs undertaken for the development of women.

42.3. Grassroots Level

At the grassroots levels i.e. in village and union the women shall be organized as self sustained group. To strengthen these groups shall be transformed into a registered organization under different government organizations. Tapping resources from the GO and NGO sources, banks, other financial institutions, an intimate relationship of these organization with Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad, Zilla Parishad, Municipality and City Corporation shall established and their activity co-ordinated. Over and above, the inclusion of local development perspectives of all the grassroots organizations shall be encouraged and assistance given.

43. Co-operation with the NGOs and Social Organizations in Women Development

Women Development in its true sense is a great task. In it efforts shall be made to coordinate the activity of the GO and NGOs so that participation of all sections of people could be ensured and made possible. The following steps shall be taken to involve NGOs and social organizations:

a. The voluntary and social organizations playing special role in development and establishing rights of women in all stages of women development at the village, union, upazilla, district, division and national levels shall be involved and coordinated with their activities. Support services shall also be rendered aimed at women development and empowerment. Their co-operation in all government activity shall be ensured. Programs shall be adopted and implemented with assistance from these institutions to change social attitude to women to play proper role in the process of women empowerment.

b. The women organizations implementing women development from national level to the grass roots, protection of rights of women, creating awareness, prevention of abuse of women, giving legal assistance and similar programs shall be given support and assistance to strengthen them. The women's organizations making such programs and implementing shall be given support and co-ordinated.

44. Women and Gender Related Research

Measures shall be taken to increase efficiency and skill to conduct wider research in the matter of women development and gender equality. All research institutions shall be encouraged to conduct research in the issues pertaining to women development, empowerment and women and children's rights. Separate gender research and educational institutes shall be set up wherefrom necessary information inputs shall be supplied to the policy makers.

45. Women Development Training Institute

Training centers at division, district and Upazilla shall be set up in addition to strengthening of the existing Women Development Training Institute at Dhaka. These centers shall impart technical and vocational training and training rights of the women, their education and related awareness.

46. Work Plan and Program Strategy

46.1. Other Ministries/Divisions/Departments/organizations including the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and also the GO and NGOs at the district, upazilla and union level shall undertake work plan to implement the National Women Development Policy with the time limit fixed.

46.2. Gender perspective shall be reflected in the respective work plans of all the ministries/divisions/departments/organizations to protect balanced rights and interests in all sectors.

46.3. A fixed time frame shall be set for implementation of all work plans and programs.

46.4. The progress of all work plans and programs shall be reviewed at fixed interval for monitoring and evaluation.

46.5. The official making work plans and programs shall be given appropriate training at PATC, Planning Academy and other institutes on topics of gender and development to ensure correct reflection in work plans and programs of the different ministries/Departments/ organizations. With this end in view, gender and development issues shall be included in curricula and courses.

46.6. Special importance to be given to the social awareness program for development of women. The awareness program shall include among other things : (1) removal of defamatory statements and remarks to women from the legislations and rules and other documents;(2) awareness of executives of ministry and corporate bodies, officials of the Law and Justice Department, policy makers, officials of law enforcing agencies, and officials of the NGO's; (3) inclusion into curriculum the gender relationship, rights, issues pertaining to women development and training shall receive special importance.

46.7. Sensitization of women program specially formulated at all levels of the society shall be regularly conducted on sound financing. This shall be drawn to the notice of administration and in particular, law enforcing agencies, judiciary and GO-NGO officials. The sensitization Women Issue Program shall be gradually integrated into current training program run by both GO and NGOs.

46.8. Particular emphases shall also be given to prevention of women abuse program for development of women. Different Go and NGOs shall be motivated to adopt well planned program. To serve the purpose, the programs shall include: awareness, legal advice and education, punitive measures i.e. filing cases to court of law, safe shelter and rehabilitation for conducting the case so filed, financial assistance etc. In this area, the central women and children abuse prevention cell in addition to other women and children abuse prevention cell activity jurisdiction shall be expanded and strengthened.

47. Financial Condition

47.1. Financial allocation shall be made to Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad and Zilla Parishad at the grassroots level for women development.

47.2. Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) shall be appropriately implemented and gender responsive budget process shall be continued to be observed in state budget making under mid term budget framework. The implementation and monitoring framework shall be strengthened to ensure best and proper use of budget money.

47.3. Gender responsive policies shall be followed in the matter of adopting development projects.

47.4. At the national level, revenue and development budget allocation of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs shall be increased. Addition budget allocation shall be made on identification of target for women development in the ministry engaged in women development and organizations such as, health and family welfare, local government, rural development and co-operatives, labor and man-power, agriculture, industry, education, science and technology ministries.

47.5. Planning Commission makes financial allocations in all sectors, particularly in education, industry, housing, water resources, health and family planning, training, skill development, employment and in other sub-sectors for man and woman separately after identifying physical and financial resources.

47.6. Economic Relations Division shall take initiative to have fresh and additional financial co-operation from international sources for women development.

47.7. Commercial banks, Bangladesh Bank and other financial institutions shall offer financial assistance to small and medium entrepreneurs for development women.

48 Co-operation between the GO and NGOs

Possible links of co-operation between the GOs and NGOs starting from the grassroots levels to national level for implementation of the women development policy. The private sector voluntary institutions shall extended appropriate and timely assistance from the government. The give and take through regular contacts and meetings and workshops shall continue between Go and NGOs. In some areas, women development program under public-private joint partnership.

49. Empowerment of Women and International Co-operation

International, regional and sub-regional co-operation shall be encouraged through bilateral and multilateral financial and technical co-operation and exchanges of experience and technology aimed at empowerment of women.

Foot Note:
- Notwithstanding anything contained in this policy, during enactment of the law, anything contrary to the Holy Quran and Sunnah shall be void.
- Bangladesh Government shall have the ratification of CEDAW convention with reservation on the Article 2 and 16(1)(c).

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 March 2012

Sixty-sixth session
Agenda item 28 (*a*)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2011

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/66/455 and Corr.1)*]

66/130.   Women and political participation

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the obligations of all States to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms as stated in the Charter of the United Nations, and guided by the purposes and principles of human rights instruments,

Reaffirming also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[1] which states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his or her country directly, or through freely chosen representatives, and the right of equal access to public service,

Guided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[2] which affirms human rights and fundamental freedoms and equality for women around the world, and which states, inter alia, that States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country,

Reaffirming the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[3] and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",[4]

Recognizing the central role of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in leading and coordinating action to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women within the United Nations system, as well as in supporting all countries' efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women,

Recognizing also the important contributions that women have made towards the achievement of representative, transparent and accountable Governments in many countries,

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[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

[2] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

[3] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[4] Resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

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Stressing the critical importance of women's political participation in all contexts, including in times of peace and of conflict and at all stages of political transition, concerned that many obstacles still prevent women from participating in political life on equal terms with men, and noting in that regard that situations of political transition may provide a unique opportunity to address such obstacles,

Recognizing the essential contributions that women around the world continue to make to the achievement and maintenance of international peace and security and to the full realization of all human rights, to the promotion of sustainable development and economic growth, and to the eradication of poverty, hunger and disease,

Reaffirming that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy,

Highly concerned that women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women,

Recognizing the importance of empowering all women through education and training in government, public policy, economics, civics, information technology and science to ensure that they develop the knowledge and skills needed to make full contributions to society and the political process,

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding and the need for Member States and the United Nations system to increase the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and the rebuilding of post-conflict societies, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and its subsequent follow-up resolutions, as well as other relevant United Nations resolutions,

Noting with appreciation the establishment by the Human Rights Council of the Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice,

1.   *Reaffirms* its resolution 58/142 of 22 December 2003 on women and political participation, and calls upon all States to implement it fully;

2.   *Calls upon* all States to eliminate laws, regulations and practices that, in a discriminatory manner, prevent or restrict women's participation in the political process;

3.   *Also calls upon* all States to enhance the political participation of women, to accelerate the achievement of equality between men and women and, in all situations, including in situations of political transition, to promote and protect the human rights of women with respect to:

(*a*)   Engaging in political activities;

(*b*)   Taking part in the conduct of public affairs;

(*c*)   Associating freely;

(*d*)   Assembling peacefully;

(*e*)   Expressing their opinions and seeking, receiving and imparting information and ideas freely;

(*f*)   Voting in elections and public referendums and being eligible for election to publicly elected bodies on equal terms with men;

(*g*)   Participating in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, holding public office and performing public functions at all levels of government;

4.   *Calls upon* States in situations of political transition to take effective steps to ensure the participation of women on equal terms with men in all phases of political reform, from decisions on whether to call for reforms in existing institutions to decisions regarding transitional governments, to the formulation of government policy, to the means of electing new democratic governments;

5.   *Urges* all States to comply fully with their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[2] urges States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to do so, and urges States parties to the Convention to consider signing, ratifying or acceding to the Optional Protocol thereto;[5]

6.   *Also urges* all States to take, inter alia, the following actions to ensure women's equal participation, and encourages the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, within their existing mandates, to enhance their assistance to States in their national efforts:

(*a*)   To review the differential impact of their electoral systems on the political participation of women and their representation in elected bodies and to adjust or reform those systems where appropriate;

(*b*)   To take all appropriate measures to eliminate prejudices that are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women and that constitute a barrier to women's access to and participation in the political sphere, and to adopt inclusive approaches to their political participation;

(*c*)   To strongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, to develop their capacity to analyse issues from a gender perspective, and to adopt policies, as appropriate, to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making within those political parties;

(*d*)   To promote awareness and recognition of the importance of women's participation in the political process at the community, local, national and international levels;

(*e*)   To develop mechanisms and training to encourage women to participate in the electoral process, political activities and other leadership activities, and empower women to assume public responsibilities by developing and providing appropriate tools and skills, in consultation with women;

(*f*)   To implement appropriate measures within governmental bodies and public sector institutions to eliminate direct or indirect barriers to and enhance women's participation in all levels of political decision-making;

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[5] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2131, No. 20378.

(*g*) To accelerate the implementation of strategies, as appropriate, that promote gender balance in political decision-making, and take all appropriate measures to encourage political parties to ensure that women have a fair and equal opportunity to compete for all elective public positions;

(*h*) To improve and broaden women's access to information and communications technologies, including e-government tools, in order to enable political participation and to promote engagement in broader democratic processes, while also improving the responsiveness of these technologies to women's needs, including those of marginalized women;

(*i*) To investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office, create an environment of zero tolerance for such offences and, to ensure accountability, take all appropriate steps to prosecute those responsible;

(*j*) To encourage greater involvement of women who may be marginalized, including indigenous women, women with disabilities, women from rural areas and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority, in decision-making at all levels, and address and counter the barriers faced by marginalized women in accessing and participating in politics and decision-making at all levels;

(*k*) To encourage the promotion of programmes geared towards the sensitization and orientation of youth and children, in particular young women and girls, on the importance of the political process and women's participation in politics;

(*l*) To ensure that measures to reconcile family and professional life apply equally to women and men, bearing in mind that equitable sharing of family responsibilities between women and men and reduction of the double burden of paid and unpaid work can help to create an enabling environment for women's political participation;

(*m*) To promote the granting of appropriate maternity and paternity leave in order to facilitate women's political participation;

(*n*) To take proactive measures to address factors preventing or hindering women from participating in politics, such as violence, poverty, lack of access to quality education and health care, and gender stereotypes;

(*o*) To monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women in decision-making positions;

7. *Encourages* States to ensure an expanded role for women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict and in mediation and peacebuilding efforts, as called for in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent relevant resolutions;

8. *Also encourages* States to appoint women to posts within all levels of their Governments, including, where applicable, bodies responsible for designing constitutional, electoral, political or institutional reforms;

9. *Further encourages* States to commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary, including, inter alia and as appropriate, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all governmental and public administration positions;

10.   *Encourages* States and relevant civil society organizations to support programmes that facilitate women's participation in political and other leadership activities, including peer support and capacity development for new office holders, and to promote public/private civil society partnerships for women's empowerment;

11.   *Invites* States to exchange experience and best practices on women's political participation in all phases of the political process, including in times of political change and reform;

12.   *Notes with interest* the focus, inter alia, on the political participation of women, including the issues raised in the present resolution, in the work of the Human Rights Council Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice;

13.   *Encourages* States to disseminate the present resolution among all relevant institutions, in particular national, regional and local authorities, as well as among political parties;

14.   *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, and encourages Governments to provide precise data on the political participation of women at all levels, including, where appropriate, information on the political participation of women in times of political transition.

89th plenary meeting
19 December 2011

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979

entry into force 3 September 1981, in accordance with article 27(1)

The States Parties to the present Convention,

Noting that the Charter of the United Nations reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women,

Noting that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex,

Noting that the States Parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights have the obligation to ensure the equal rights of men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights,

Considering the international conventions concluded under the auspices of the United Nations and the specialized agencies promoting equality of rights of men and women,

Noting also the resolutions, declarations and recommendations adopted by the United Nations and the specialized agencies promoting equality of rights of men and women,

Concerned, however, that despite these various instruments extensive discrimination against women continues to exist,

Recalling that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,

Concerned that in situations of poverty women have the least access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs,

Convinced that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards the promotion of equality between men and women,

Emphasizing that the eradication of apartheid, all forms of racism, racial discrimination, colonialism, neo-colonialism, aggression, foreign occupation and domination and interference in the internal affairs of States is essential to the full enjoyment of the rights of men and women,

Affirming that the strengthening of international peace and security, the relaxation of international tension, mutual co-operation among all States irrespective of their social and economic systems, general and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control, the affirmation of the principles of justice, equality and mutual benefit in relations among countries and the realization of the right of peoples under alien and colonial domination and foreign occupation to self-determination and independence, as well as respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, will promote social progress and development and as a consequence will contribute to the attainment of full equality between men and women,

Convinced that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields,

Bearing in mind the great contribution of women to the welfare of the family and to the development of society, so far not fully recognized, the social significance of maternity and the role of both parents in the family and in the upbringing of children, and aware that the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination but that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole,

Aware that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women,

Determined to implement the principles set forth in the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and, for that purpose, to adopt the measures required for the elimination of such discrimination in all its forms and manifestations,

Have agreed on the following:

PART I

Article 1

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

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, to this end, undertake:

(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women; (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 3

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to en sure the full development and advancement of women , for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Article 4

1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

Article 5

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Article 6

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

PART II

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;

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

Article 8

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

Article 9

1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband. 2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

PART III

Article 10

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particulary those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

(g) The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;

(h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

(f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph I of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Article 13

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to family benefits;

(b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;

(c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;

(c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;

(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

(e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;

(f) To participate in all community activities;

(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

PART IV

Article 15

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.

3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.

4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

Article 16

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same right to enter into marriage;

(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;

(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

PART V

Article 17

1. For the purpose of considering the progress made in the implementation of the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) consisting, at the time of entry into force of the Convention, of eighteen and, after ratification of or accession to the Convention by the thirty-fifth State Party, of twenty-three experts of high moral standing and competence in the field covered by the Convention. The experts shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution and to the representation of the different forms of civilization as well as the principal legal systems.

2. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States Parties. Each State Party may nominate one person from among its own nationals.

3. The initial election shall be held six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Convention. At least three months before the date of each election the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to the States Parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. The Secretary-General shall prepare a list in alphabetical order of all persons thus nominated, indicating the States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties.

4. Elections of the members of the Committee shall be held at a meeting of States Parties convened by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters. At that meeting, for which two thirds of the States Parties shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those nominees who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.

5. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. However, the terms of nine of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election the names of these nine members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.

6. The election of the five additional members of the Committee shall be held in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of this article, following the thirty-fifth ratification or accession. The terms of two of the additional members elected on this occasion shall expire at the end of two years, the names of these two members having been chosen by lot by the Chairman of the Committee.

7. For the filling of casual vacancies, the State Party whose expert has ceased to function as a member of the Committee shall appoint another expert from among its nationals, subject to the approval of the Committee.

8. The members of the Committee shall, with the approval of the General Assembly, receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly may decide, having regard to the importance of the Committee's responsibilities.

9. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Convention.

Article 18

1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:

(a) Within one year after the entry into force for the State concerned;

(b) Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests.

2. Reports may indicate factors and difficulties affecting the degree of fulfilment of obligations under the present Convention.

Article 19

1. The Committee shall adopt its own rules of procedure. 2. The Committee shall elect its officers for a term of two years.

Article 20

1. The Committee shall normally meet for a period of not more than two weeks annually in order to consider the reports submitted in accordance with article 18 of the present Convention.

2. The meetings of the Committee shall normally be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee.

Article 21

1. The Committee shall, through the Economic and Social Council, report annually to the General Assembly of the United Nations on its activities and may make suggestions and general recommendations based on the examination of reports and information received from the States Parties. Such suggestions and general recommendations shall be included in the report of the Committee together with comments, if any, from States Parties.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall transmit the reports of the Committee to the Commission on the Status of Women for its information.

Article 22

The specialized agencies shall be entitled to be represented at the consideration of the implementation of such provisions of the present Convention as fall within the scope of their activities. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities.

PART VI

Article 23

Nothing in the present Convention shall affect any provisions that are more conducive to the achievement of equality between men and women which may be contained:

(a) In the legislation of a State Party; or

(b) In any other international convention, treaty or agreement in force for that State.

Article 24

States Parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 25

1. The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.

2. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention.

3. The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

4. The present Convention shall be open to accession by all States. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 26

1. A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any State Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. The General Assembly of the United Nations shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such a request.

Article 27

1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

2. For each State ratifying the present Convention or acceding to it after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 28

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession.

2. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.

3. Reservations may be withdrawn at any time by notification to this effect addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then inform all States thereof. Such notification shall take effect on the date on which it is received.

Article 29

1. Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court.

2. Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of the present Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph I of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by that paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation.

3. Any State Party which has made a reservation in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article may at any time withdraw that reservation by notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 30

The present Convention, the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts of which are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned, duly authorized, have signed the present Convention.