

**EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN BANGLADESH IN  
THE CONTEXT OF STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS  
(1990-2020): A STUDY OF SELECT DIMENSIONS**

**(Synopsis)**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (ARTS)**

**BY**

**DEEPANJANA HALDER MAJUMDER**

**Registration No- AOOIR1201718**

**DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY**

**KOLKATA**

**2023**

**Introduction: A Conceptual Framework**

Empowerment refers to both women and men where they control their lives, set their own agendas, acquire skills and have their own knowledge recognized and self-confidence enhanced. It also spreads through problem solving, and developing micro-dependencies. It is both a process and a result at the same time. Women's empowerment as a strategy refers to a critical interpretation of women's skills in strategic life where this power was previously denied. Empowerment of women emphasizes empowerment of women over their own lives, including awareness raising, confidence building, expanding choices, strengthening and stabilizing inequalities and inequalities involved, and increasing control and access to resources and activities to transform structural entities. They gain awareness in life. The empowerment process is as important as the goal. The empowerment process consists of two levels: (1) individual power levels to observe individual attitudes and abilities, and (2) group abilities.

In Bangladesh, the lowest dignity of girls has seen in their marriage, education, religion and social life. It is believed that the outside world, there is no need to contagion with girls. They kept confined within four walls. The practice of marriage is a matter of economic bargaining here. In this case men are family heads, rulers, scriptures and religion promoters; basically all the power is in men's hand. A man needs a wife to maintain him and to survive as a worker. Wife is one of the

husband's properties. He can use his wife freely for his own maintenance and enjoyment. The relationship between married men and women is more widespread and

obligatory than the relationship between the worker and the boss. The absorption of girls is wider than that of workers. The range of these relationships extended from career life to personal and sex life.

Although the role of women in social progress and civilization is significantly significant, women in any society are still oppressed, deprived, neglected and backward. Women are still largely deprived of their social, economic, political, religious and cultural rights. It is not just a picture of a poor developing country, but a general picture of the whole world, regardless of the advanced. It is important to note that due to the economic prosperity of the advanced countries leading the tread and commerce, the social status of women has improved as the education rate of women has increased but the attitude of men towards women has not changed significantly. Because the male-dominated domination did not change the traditional notion that women felt this domination did not change. In Bangladesh's social system, like in developing countries, women's family, socioeconomic and political backgrounds are far behind men in all walks of life. Even today women's lives are largely chained by patriarchal values and social customs.

### **Statement of Problems**

Gender inequality in terms of access to education and employment has remained as serious problems affecting democratic norms of governance. Inequality in terms of education, employment, participation in the content of political process particularly in the field of decision making and the outcome of extreme poverty scenario and traditional gender norms revolves around

the practice of patriarchal societal system. The religious practice of (Islamic) veiling and adherence to the Purdah system had seen as a practice of discrimination in the way of empowering the women and the girls. Women are generally unseen outside the domestic sphere particularly in case of rural areas. Women are unequal in the areas of employment, education, income, arrests, health and the role they play in family and societal life. These broader aspects of discrimination are some content related to this status and position in capturing political power and social prestige accorded to them leading to their participation in decision-making power within the family and to the community.

Through the constitution of Bangladesh recognized the principle of equality among men and women, and substantial acts has been pressed affecting women equality in the field of health, education, empowerment and participation both at grass roots and national level, the societal and political practices witnessed gross inequality and violence against women.

Since 1990s women participation in the political fields has increased substantially. Despite the societal barrier and undemocratic religious practices (Personal Law), the system of women reservation interns of the provisions of Quotas has extended women representation in national Parliament and local government. Despite such aspect of development violence against women has increased as a means of political expression intimidation by conservative parties and religious and socio-cultural norms that are used to intimidate women. Besides, domestic violence in different form, incident of rape and the cruel practice of acid violence against women have been substantially increased. The mechanism of Non-state actors in the form of NGOs dedicated to protection of women education, health, employment provision are substantially ineffective on account of different reasons.

## **Research Objectives**

The proposed research would tend to address the following objectives.

- 1)** To have broader understanding and knowledge about different unequal practice among men and women in Bangladesh.
- 2)** To know about how the religious practice is antithetical to women empowerment both at societal and governmental spheres.
- 3)** To highlight different constitutional and legal provisions meant for women equality and participation in the decision-making in the family life as well as both at local and national level.
- 4)** To understand the nature of functioning of NGOs wondering for the protection and promotion of women rights and various challenges there in.

- 5) To have knowledge about the nature and level of women participation in the electoral process and at the level of decision-making.

## **Research Questions**

To fulfill the purpose of the study the following questions are farmed to be answered.

1. Why the government policy on educating the girl child is not substantial in Bangladesh?
2. What are the nature and causes of women discrimination in both socio-economic and political sphere?
3. What are the government's initiatives for women's education, economic and political development?
4. To what extent market economy is marginalizing the importance of women in (social, economic and educational) sphere?
5. How the government is approaching the issues of domestic violence against women?

6. How far the NGOs are successful in addressing the problems associated with women empowerment?

## **Research Methodology**

The proposed research would take into account both the application of qualitative and quantitative methods representing quality of governance and the value and content of democratic development and women participation in it.

The research work is based on primary level and secondary data collection. In case of Primary data collection, I haven't used the survey method during COVID-19 period. The Q&A included both open and closed questions based on the research questions and the objectives of the research work. Despite having most of the open questionnaires since language was a barrier to understanding most of the closed questionnaires. It should also be noted that the sampling was done on the basis of two sections- first the interview was conducted by people from the private sector who were directly involved as NGOs and who were directly involved in the matter and government officials on the other hand with women's empowerment; Second, the interviews were also taken from ordinary people who were in favour of women's development and those who did not support them. An extensive survey as well as numerous interviews were be conducted with the beneficiaries as well as non-beneficiaries in order to get a holistic perspective. Additional primary information was being gathered through observation and group discussion. Moreover, some key informants were be selected for providing the elaborate information about the research topic. During COVID-19, the Government of Bangladesh published all their activities through official gazettes and notices. I have collected a lot of information from there. Through the video calling process I can get in

touch with various NGOs about all the work activities in the COVID-19 situation of NGOs in Bangladesh and gather a lot of relevant information through Q&A process.

In the case of Secondary data, the sources of study materials such as books, newspapers, journals, articles, dissertations, documents, district gazetteers and report were used. These secondary data were be used to construct and explain the important concepts and ideas relevant to the issues of women empowerment and their participation in Local Government Politics. It is necessary to state that much more secondary data were collected than factual data.

For more information on the subject I should be taking help of **Jatiya Mohila Songstha & Department of Women Affairs**, both are under the [Ministry of Women and Children Affairs](#), Govt. of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Government website and other government websites where detailed report of the work done, expenses can be found.

## **Review of Literature**

Increasing freedom around the world, especially women freedom, is one of the hallmarks of the current wave of globalization. The economic and socio-political conditions of women in South Asia are not unique. Within the regions, Sri Lanka emerged as a pioneer of sorts in terms of the process of women empowerment. However, Bangladesh too has made significant strides in recent years. It has outshone some of its South Asian neighbors, including India, as far as women empowerment is concerned. The achievements of country in this regard are unparalleled in the Muslim world, bar Indonesia.



Dr. **Afroza Begam** discussed this matter on his book named “*Government-NGO Interface in Development Management: Experiences of selected Collaboration Models in Bangladesh*”. Based on the available economic literature and anecdotal evidence, we show that women access to education played a key role in Bangladesh successful population transition. A tripartite effort by the government, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and donor agencies has been the key catalyst in educating the female population of Bangladesh. These efforts have also been extended to making healthcare more accessible for the women in the country. NGOs like the

[Friends in Village Development Bangladesh](#) and Nari Uddog Kendra concentrate on variables like participatory decision-making, awareness building, capacity building and increasing economic solvency to contribute to women empowerment in Bangladesh.

Author **Pranab Kumar Panday** discussed this matter on his book named “*From a Bottomless Basket to an Emerging Economy*”. According to him, Bangladesh’s successful revolution in the area of microfinance, which provides alternative employment and income opportunities to the female population, is another area that has increasing global appeal. Bangladesh’s success in balancing its gender gap offers some policy lessons for other South Asian, as well as a number of African countries. The nexus between female education and successful population transition might have particular importance for Pakistan and Afghanistan. That said, the purpose of this paper will be twofold. **Firstly**, it identifies the critical factors behind women empowerment in

Bangladesh. **Secondly**, it examines how the country’s success in balancing its gender gap could play a significant role in helping the economy move towards a higher growth trajectory. The paper will presents some data concerning the gender gap and women empowerment in Bangladesh. In particular, a comparative picture with its South Asian neighbors and other developing countries could help us understand where Bangladesh stands from a regional perspective.

Struggle for modernity, tradition, men-women equality, social dignity, security and for multilateral pressure the position of women in the family is very complex. Here men and women do not participate in social development is not equal. Many indoor and outdoor activities of women are not treated as work. The devaluation of women labor in labor market also hinders women right. In **Nazmunnessa Mahtab's** book "*Women in Bangladesh: From Inequality to Empowerment*" I noticed, in market economy women of Bangladesh are always facing new challenges. Though women work in educational institution, medical, factories, police, even in the uneven areas, women are neglected, tortured and persecuted. In the society of gender disparity it is difficult for women to stay parallel and enjoy the right of equal participant.

Democracy without women is not a democracy. One of the aspects of "democracy with women" is ensuring women participation in the decision making institutions of a democratic polity. Balanced representation of women and men at all stages of decision making process guarantees better governance. Parliament is one of the formal and important political institutions. In all Parliaments of Bangladesh (except the Forth and the Sixth), women MPs worked with their male counterparts. One of the main objectives of the study was to highlight how far women MPs, as representatives of the womenfolk, have served the interests of the women community.

Author **Jalal Firoj** discussed this matter on his book named "*Women in Bangladesh Parliament*". According to him, "Generally women members in the reserved seats are elected from those belonging to upper class families and who lived in cities. There is a common impression that they are not aware of the day-to-day problems encountered by the poor and rural womenfolk. A few questions were included in the questionnaire to get information about their level of interaction with

the common women. ‘What are the major problems faced by the womenfolk in Bangladesh?’ We found women MPs have marked off various points as the main problems of the women community. 43.86% respondents mentioned ‘economic backwardness’ as the principal problem of the general women. 22.80% have perceived ‘educational backwardness’ was the main problem. To 21.06% respondents ‘fundamentalist politics’ and

10.53% members ‘insecurity’ are the principal problems.

In **Abeda Sultana’s** book “*Sthaniyo Sarkar Byabosthar Bibantan o Nari Pratinidhityo: Evolution of Local Government System and Women’s Representation*” I noticed, the local autonomous government of Bangladesh is known as the local government. Then she analyzed the historical evolution of the Union Council as local government. Women are allocated money for various five-year plans and national budgets in Bangladesh. This allocation for women’s development is not gender-sensitive and is not conducive and strong to play a positive role in women’s empowerment. Examine the area to see how all women representatives of the Union Council are able to truly implement their role. Analyzing the information, most women members said that they were asked for their opinions on less important issues and that they expressed their views freely. But in the council meeting the male members have given them the embarrassment.

Decision is to be asked to keep the method, not for decision making or implement.

Author **Rashida Khanam** discussed on his book named “*Somaj o Nari*” discussed the role of women in building social progress and civilization is unacceptable, however women in society are still backward, abandoned, oppressed, abused and deprived. Women’s family system in the society of Bangladesh, like the development of the country, social, economic, politically backward than men in all walks of life. Religion has a negative impact on women’s lives in the society depicted

in the literature is observed. This is why Hindu, Veda, Christianity and Islam in text on this book on the various topics of religion have been compiled and the cardamom compilation is the core of the book of the purpose to establish a democratic society based on equality of men and women.

Author **Dr. Shahidur Rahaman Chowdhuri** discussed on his book named “*Kshudrarin o Narir Kshamatayan: Microfinance and Women Empowerment*”. The book examines the impact of microfinance on women’s empowerment designed based on research work. The book discusses the concept and relevance of microfinance and women’s empowerment, debtor women’s in socio-economic status, participate in loan activities, the use of small loans, impact of microfinance on women’s empowerment and recommendations on problems and solutions. The book addresses the need for quality training in addition to education and social awareness activities along with micro-credit.

Author **Dr. Julia Moin** discussed on his book named “Empowerment of Women and Their Participation in Local Government Politics”. The book examined there are rural and urban-based local government institutions in Bangladesh. People of the rural areas are found very much enthusiastic in the matter of women’s participation in local government politics. As a result some of the respondents got financial support from the people of locality, which was lower in the urban areas. On the other hand, the trend of getting financial help provided by the political parties was higher in urban areas than the rural areas.

Author **Ferdous Jahan**’s book named “*When Women Protect Women*” draws on theoretical debate as well as empirical evidences from political science and criminology to understand

women's legal empowerment and justice seeking behavior. It attempts to understand theories of equality and empowerment through a practical lens. Based on in-depth ethnographic interviews, the book investigates which of four legal/alternative dispute resolution institutions (formal courts, indigenous traditional dispute resolution structures, Lok Adalat, and non-governmental organization sponsored dispute resolution structures) best empower women in South Asia who are victims of domestic violence.

In **Syeda Lasna Kabir's** book *"Women's Participation in South Asian Civil Services: A Comparative Analysis of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh"* I noticed, the proposed study describes woman's participation in South Asian (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) civil services. Women have little or unequal access to public employment in Bangladesh. Fewer women are employed by governments in civil services and they figure prominently in jobs set aside for them, while executive positions are generally occupied by men. A very insignificant number of women occupy key decision making positions in public services. The book also outlines some of the suggestions made by respondents to increase women's participation in the civil service in these three countries. Despite the government's efforts to stimulate the entry and upward dynamism of women administrators, the overall figures are not impressive. Female

administrators, especially at higher levels, are still very few in number. One of the more common problems is the existing pattern of gender roles. Most female government employees feel that they have been discriminated against.

A study on women politicians in Bangladesh conducted by **Khurshid Jalal**, the findings of which are presented in the article entitled "*Women in Politics*". The study has investigated the socio-economic background of women in active politics, their attitudes towards various social and political issues related to women. It has also focused on the problems women confront in having active political career. But the study does not show the changing patterns of women's participation in politics.

In the article "*Women in Politics*", **Najma Chowdhury** has analyzed the importance and relevance of women's political empowerment in the prevailing situation of Bangladesh. She has drawn attention to the themes and actions of different international strategies such as, FLS (Forward – Looking Strategies), PFA, and CEDAW working for ensuring women's empowerment. To manifest the situation of women's political empowerment in Bangladesh in relevant issues (i.e. constitutional parameters of women's political participation, participation in different power bases) are taken into consideration.

Another article entitled "*Women's Participation in Politics: Marginalization and Related Issues*" by **Najma Chowdhury** shows the pattern of exercising women's political rights, needs of women's participation in politics, trends of their low participation in politics both of in global and national context. But this study does not deal with women's participation in local level politics and is also based on secondary sources.

In the article on "*Paths to Empowerment: Women and Political Participation*", **Marilee Karl** has opined that political participation is a major means to women's empowerment that increase their

decision-making power and greater ability to influence that affect others' lives in the community and larger society. She has discussed women's participation in electoral politics, identified major obstacles to women's political participation in the world context.

Author **Mokbul Morshed Ahmad** briefly discussed that how northern donor agencies and

NGOs understand the needs and problems of southern NGO clients in his book named *"Understanding the South"*. NGOs in Bangladesh did not originate from the Grassroots Organization (GRO) in civil society. Rather it sets up groups of NGO workers, after which clients join to get microfinance and other services. Most Bangladeshi NGOs are completely dependent on foreign funds. The amount of foreign funds in the private sector in Bangladesh has increased over the years and currently stands at just under 16% of all foreign 'assistance' in the country in FY 1995-96. Funding of NGOs is very important, with the top 15 NGOs distributing 84% of all allocations to NGOs in 1991-92 and 70% in 1992-93. The NGO's reliance on donor grants has kept the whole activity with higher subsidies. For example, the annual operating costs of BRAC's branch-label units are three times higher than their locally generated income. The emergence of microcredit programs over the past three decades, sponsored by both states and NGOs, stems from a variety of factors: capital deficits, inability of previous systems to effectively reach the landless poor, and limited access to the informal market financial (IMF) to meet the needs of the people. As these opinions from the literature compose what the NGO field workers say, the author has studied four types of NGOs (international, national, regional and local) for his PhD research.

**Rowshan Qadir's** article *"Participation of Women in Local Level Politics: Problems and*

*Prospects"* gives an idea about the factors of women's political participation and its theoretical explanation, reasons of women's low participation in politics, nature of their participation in rural local government organizations.

**Aditi Falguni** briefly described the historical milieu of different women's emancipation movements and the struggles for establishing political rights in the Indian sub-continent in the article *"Narir Rajnaitik Kshamatayan: Bangladesh Prekshapat" (In Bengali) [Women's Political*

*Empowerment: Bangladesh Context*]. She sketches the stages of expansion of female education and their participation in different movements including national liberation movement.

Education enabled the females to be self-confident and politically conscious, which made the Bengali women spirited fight for the freedom of their country.

**Abeda Sultana** in her article entitled “*Rajniti o Prashasanik Shiddhanta Grahane Nari:*

*Pariprekshit Bangladesh*” (in Bengali) [*Participation of Women in Political and Administrative*

*Decision Making: Bangladesh Context*], has tried to identify the context and nature of women’s participation in political administrative decision making bodies. To demonstrate the situation of women’s political participation, she has selected political parties, parliament, cabinet, top administration and Union Parishad as the unit of her study. But this is not an in-depth study and is done on the basis of exclusively secondary data.

## **Organization of Chapters**

### **CHAPTER - 1**

#### **1.1. Role of religious practice in Bangladesh:-**

Women are still deprived of their socio-economic, political, religious and cultural rights not only in poor developing countries but in the entire world regardless of the developed world. Although



the social status of women has improved in developed countries, the traditional concept of male supremacy has not changed, so men's attitudes towards women have not changed. Men try to assert their dominance in all areas of the family. A man freely uses his wife as his own property and also for his own sustenance and enjoyment.

## **1.2. Impact of Religious Practices on Women in Bangladesh:-**

### **Women and Islamism-**

Islam has accorded a status to women in the three major spheres of life-humanitarian, social, legal-fully suitable for them. In spite of this, it is seen that the women of Bangladesh are deprived of their rights. In a patriarchal society, men have to take the initiative for women's liberation and it has to start from their own families. The constitution was amended 15 times to clarify the position of secularism and Islam as the guiding principle of the state. Religious constitutional amendments to the constitution have largely been linked to the agenda of the ruling political party.

Islam does not prevent women from exercising their right to vote. Recognizes women's participation in law making because knowledge is important in law making. And Islam considers the acquisition of knowledge as the duty of both men and women. Islam has given women the right to choose their livelihood according to their needs according to Islamic law.

### **Hinduism-**

According to Manusanhita, Swami is to be recognized as God, Guru, Dharma and Tirtha. Although no one who reads the Manusanhita today honestly lays down rules for family behavior, the code arguably seeks to bind women in various chains. As divorce is not legal according to Hindus, women cannot take any legal action in this case. Women cannot inherit property. Widow marriage has not yet become a normal practice. Dowry is a curse in Hindu society. Both the rich and the poor have to settle a heavy dowry in the marriage of a daughter. And in this regard there is a lot of potential for domestic violence. Ravi Tagore's Haimanti and Denapaona is a classic example in this regard. They are still applicable to Hindus in Bangladesh as the earlier laws were never amended in the post-independence period. Polygamy is common for Hindu men in Bangladesh and there is no system of marriage registration. And with the practice of having only one husband, women cannot get out of a bad marriage. Moreover, although widow remarriage was allowed under the Hindu Marriage Remarriage Act 1856, it was not widely recognized in the general society. An IRFR report published in Washington shows that only Bangladeshi men are allowed to have multiple wives and there is no formal practice of divorce.

#### Buddhism-

The advent of Gautama Buddha ushered in the golden age of women's society. Buddha preached his message of women's emancipation by destroying the abhorrent caste system through the Cultural Revolution. According to him man excels by his actions and not by birth. Women occupy a special place in Buddhism. The Buddha portrayed women as helpers on the path to realization, not as obstacles. After the husband's death there was a practice of marriage to the husband's brother which is still in force.

#### Christianity-

According to Christianity, God created Adam and Eve, male and female, in his own image. Therefore, the human dignity of men and women is equal. According to Pope Paul VI, women have been given a special status since the beginning of Christianity. Nevertheless, it can be said that mankind has to struggle a lot to fully establish the status of women in the teaching faculty of Christ. Hindus constitute about 10.19% of the total population of Bangladesh, Buddhists 0.6%, Christians only 0.3% and Animists only 0.1%. Here the status of Buddhists is similar to that of Hindus. Both Hindus and Buddhists oppose prohibitions on divorce and remarriage. There is also the issue of marriage registration. Hindu and Sikh women have legal complications regarding inheritance, health care, voting, obtaining passports and buying and selling property.

### **1.3. Literacy and Education: Key to Women Empowerment-**

The constitution of Bangladesh has respect and equal importance for both men and women. Article 28/2 states that men and women shall enjoy equal rights in all spheres of state and public life. And Article 10 states that measures shall be taken to ensure the participation of women at all levels of national life. The responsibility of turning both men and women into skilled human resources has been accepted for the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

Dr. Rashida Khanum speaking about Muslim women's education is surprised that Muslims are largely indifferent to women's education. Fortunately the recent governments are giving importance to women education and bringing women forward in the field of education. In this country, women are seen more as instruments of childbirth. Her main work is childbirth, rearing, housework. No matter how educated and working he is, he must have the status of a husband. In a

rural family, the birth of a son receives as much importance as a daughter does not. If there is financial scarcity, only boys get education while girls are subjected to child marriage.

Women's empowerment basically means equality of women in the overall structure of society. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all men have the right to equal pay for equal work. The Government of Bangladesh has adopted quotas for the entry of women into the civil service and has adopted many policies not only to increase the representation of women in the civil service but also to integrate women into the mainstream of development.

## CHAPTER - 2

### **The Role of NGOs and Microfinance Programs in Empowering Rural Women: Socio-Economic Issues in Bangladesh**

NGOs have been playing various important roles in Bangladesh for the past two decades. NGOs are working to raise awareness through various experiments in poverty alleviation.

#### **2.1.a Features of Bangladesh Government and NGO Administration -**

1. Broader government coverage, 2. Limited service, 3. Lack of communication with beneficiaries,
4. Rigid structure, 5. Dominance of bureaucracy, 6. Predominance of center in decision-making,
7. Procrastination in decision-making, 8. Lack of initiative and motivation, 9.

Minimum training system, 10. Accountability to the general public.

On the other hand administrative features of NGOs -

1. Scope of work is spread over small scale and key target groups, 2. Providing services to selected groups, 3. Regular and close coordination with the public, 4. Flexible structure, 5. Prioritize people's development and participation in decision-making, 6. Conditions of service are good pay and challenging, 7. High initiative and motivation, 8. Continuous training program,

9. Accountability to customers and sponsors.

d. Government failure and search for alternative models -

NGOs have increased interest in their work by recognizing dissatisfaction with the inadequacy, narrowness, limitations and inadequacies of government efforts in various fields. The role of NGOs as an alternative model has grown due to the failure of conventional approaches by policy makers and planners.

### **2.1.c. Role of NGOs in women empowerment in Bangladesh**

Some of the NGOs working on women empowerment are-

1. Bangladesh Women Foundation (BWF) -

It works for the development of small rural women's organizations. Raises funds through lunches, catering services, seasonal fruit trade, independent donations, CSR fundraisers to help rehabilitate victims of domestic and sexual violence.

## 2. Women in Family Development (CWFD) -

The organization continues to work to improve women's reproductive health. The organization has decided to deliver family planning services to women's homes. Another work of the organization is 'Alokita Manas' - which is working to improve the reproductive health of some teenagers. There are also healthcare projects – Marketing Innovation for Health Project (MIH), Generation Breakthrough Project (GB), Promoting Environment Health for the Urban Poor

(PEHUP), Nivedita Restaurant and Catering Services, Nivedita Shishu Niketan and Global Program to End Child Marriage.

## 3. Bangladesh Children and Women Foundation (BCWF) -

The organization continues to work to help the underprivileged, disabled, distressed children and women. Children's projects are exclusive all-rounder digital ICT school, special stipend for general poor children, Shishu Hostel, Shishu Park, Shishu Hospital. Besides, for women there are

- Exclusive Elderly Women Rehabilitation Center, Professional Training Center for Young Women, Exclusive Digital College for Women, The Innovation and Research Institute for Women, Mother Care Training and Awareness Programme.

## 4. Shakti Foundation-

The main objective is to eradicate poverty, establish social and financial security of women. Some of the initiatives - 'Eat One Lakh, One Lakh Smile' on the occasion of Eid on 3/8/20, 'We are Shakti' in support of Corona victims on 17/8/20, on International Women's Day on 10/3/20 - 'I Dare to Dream', 24/11/19 - 15th City Micro Entrepreneur Awards.

#### 5. Hope Foundation for Women and Children of Bangladesh-

The organization is of immense importance in meeting the medical needs of Rohingya refugees. Hope Field Hospital has been set up to provide 24/7 medical care. Hope Emergency Response Team (HERT) – plays a vital role in dealing with fires, traffic accidents, natural calamities.

#### 6. Bangladesh Labor Foundation-

It seeks to build an economically independent productive society free from poverty and discrimination where the working people can exercise their basic social rights and human rights. Its programs are - Vulnerable Group (VGD) Programme, Awareness raising to prevent Child Labor through Community Mobilization and Basic Signature Project - Basic Literacy Project (BLP).

#### 7. Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF) -

The organization is taking various initiatives to establish basic rights, social protection, economic prosperity of disabled women. Some of the initiatives are – installation and monitoring of CCTV cameras in public transport, installation of portable ramps in government buses/trains and provision of wheelchairs for deserving women.

Five largest non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh-

1. Women's side - their main objective is to establish women's citizenship, equal rights, and justice.
2. Steps towards development- The organization continues to work for gender equality, advancement of women.
3. Grameen Bank- Provides loans to help poor people.
4. Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) - The organization's program aims to eradicate poverty by increasing the productive capacity of the underprivileged.
5. Nari Udyog Kendra (NUK) - The organization continues to work to protect the rights of garment workers. The NUK microfinance program continues to support women's empowerment.

## **2.2-Micro-credit programs affecting women empowerment in Bangladesh and various government micro-credit institutions and their functions in Bangladesh**

Rural societies in Bangladesh are built on local networks in which families and elites occupy a prominent place in many of these traditional systems, such as the often-exploitative patron/client relationship. BRAC and Grameen Bank offer an alternative by providing micro-employment and education to poor women. Especially in the beginning their activities were seen as undermining the enduring social and religious values of the country. Women are breaking the veil by joining microfinance programs, which has been strongly condemned by religious leaders and mediators.



Religious opposition is strongest, but political and economic forums do not shy away from criticizing it. The union council and rural leaders have expressed their anger at the increase in rural wages. As a result, members of Grameen Bank will not take any action unless they take action on minor and unnecessary issues.

Various government microfinance institutions in Bangladesh-

- Employment Bank,
- Small Farmers Development Foundation (SFDF),
- Bangladesh National Information Bureau - ((a) Loan assistance to entrepreneurs, b) Ethnic community loans and self-reliance, c) Various loans and advances to government employees, d) Member loan program among residents in housing / shelter projects, e) Loans / Financial disbursements Assistance from Imam-Muezzin Welfare Trust, f) Youth Loan)

### CHAPTER – 3

#### **Women's representation in parliament and participation in local government and politics in Bangladesh**

The Seventeenth Amendment of 2018 amended the provision of reserved seats for women in

Parliament. The amendment kept the number of seats reserved for women in Parliament at 50, but increased the number of reserved seats to 25 a year. The total number of seats in the National Assembly including reserved seats for women is currently 350.

According to the original constitution of 1972, the National Assembly consisted of 315 members. Of these, 300 were elected by the direct vote of the adult population and the remaining 15 were elected by the votes of members of parliament (i.e. reserved seats by indirect vote). Article 65 Clause 3 of the Constitution, which provides for 15 more. In 1990, the Tenth Amendment amended Article 65 Clause 3 of the Constitution, which provides for reserved seats for women.

Topics discussed in this chapter include –

Features of parliament and constitution for women empowerment

3.1.b- Factors complicating the work environment for women

3.1.c- Role of civil society and gender perspective in Bangladesh

3.1.d- Gradually develop women leadership

3.2-Participation of women in local government and politics

(Article 59(1) of the Constitution of Bangladesh states: "A body consisting of persons elected in accordance with local finance laws." Thus there is a clear distinction between local government and local self-government. Although the suffixes local government and local self-government are used in the same sense, there is a difference. In this case, the Union Parishad has been discussed in detail. Besides, the facilities and benefits received have been written somewhere.

## CHAPTER – 4

### **Women in Bangladeshi media and the current situation of divorced, widowed and elderly women in Bangladesh**

#### 4.1- Representation of women in media

#### 4.2-Situation of Divorce and Separation in Bangladesh

#### 4.3- Widows and elderly women in Bangladesh

#### 4.4- Special government provisions for widows and elderly women

There is a need to expand research on media and women in Bangladesh and the more research is done on women, the faster the gap will be filled for their empowerment. Vertical, more subjective excavations, theoretical practices, diagnostics and media itself are changing, ranging from increased media activity due to horizontal features. Research shows that to understand the power that media exerts on society, it is necessary to determine its evolution regardless of gender. In case of internal migration to Bangladesh, there is no risk of migration to other areas. However, female journalists, media workers, bloggers and single women with no support network may be able to move more safely than men, depending on their individual situational assessment. This has been discussed in detail.

Violence and conflict in family life in Bangladesh lead to divorce. Moreover, dowry is an important element of marriage here. Family crisis like abuse/harassment, threats of divorce, dowries etc. are

common in Bangladesh though marriage is universal in Bangladesh. Here the average age of marriage is not very high but age, education, occupation, marital arrangement, having children or not, pre-marital relations etc. account for divorce. All these factors are also interrelated. Here the laws regarding the grounds of divorce according to different religions are also discussed in detail.

Bangladesh's population is rapidly 'greying' and posing an important public health problem. According to a survey, the average life expectancy of Bangladeshis has increased by 12.49%, surpassing the world average.

## CHAPTER – 5

The current government of Bangladesh is taking and implementing various plans for the overall development of women. For the social and economic upliftment of women, loans have been arranged on easy terms, and various allowances have also been provided. Various plans have been adopted in the field of education to make women skilled human resources. Along with making primary education compulsory, various stipends and cost reduction measures have been adopted. Various schemes have been adopted to improve the quality of women's health care. Provision of maternity allowance and establishment of women-friendly hospitals are noteworthy. The Government of Bangladesh has formulated Gender Responsive Budget to ensure the participation of women in various political, social and economic programs.

Nowadays the awareness towards women education has increased. They are making various contributions to the state by overcoming various obstacles in the society, even contributing to the

governance of the state. Despite this, the oppression of women did not stop in these regions. In this Chapter, I have presented the views of some women in the form of case studies.

#### Case-1

Avarani Majumdar is a poor resident of Banda village in Khulna district. The family lived on the meager income of the Fries shop. By forming self-help groups, they take loans from regional banks and use them for business. It increases earnings. Pay the loan on time and take the loan again. Currently, the situation has improved somewhat. Now she is able to educate children.

#### Case-2

Savita Das lives in Fatikchari, Chittagong. Husbandless Savita Devi used to cultivate the family on a few acres of land she inherited. After learning about the agricultural loan, he submitted the supporting documents and took the agricultural loan from the local cooperative society and applied it to agriculture. Repay the loan at certain times and take it again and increase the income by using it in farming. In this way he managed to change his current situation somewhat.

#### Case-3

Nazma Akhter of Dhaka has overcome scarcity through self-confidence and hard work. Currently, he is working on repairing rickshaws. A few years ago, in consultation with her husband, she deposited her land documents with the local cooperative bank and opened a rickshaw-raising shop

with a small loan. Re-borrow by repaying the loan at specified time and invest in the business. Currently, Najma is in very good condition.

#### Case-4

Anjana Roy Khatun lives in Abdullahpur of Bhola district of Bangladesh. To restore the poor family, he took a loan from the local cooperative society by mortgaging the agricultural land registry and took a loan from the local cooperative bank by mortgaging gold ornaments and set up a flour-grinding mill with the money. After gradually paying off the loan, he expanded the scope of the business by re-borrowing. Now everyone appreciates his prosperous condition.

#### Case-5

Anima Giri lives in Bamhani village of Dhaka. Several years ago he took a loan from an organization called Asha and opened a small grocery store. From the earnings of the shop, he repays the loan on time and takes it again and invests it in the business. By gradually increasing the business in this way, today he has seen the face of some solvency.

### **Own Perspective**

Special emphasis has been placed on the empowerment of women in Bangladesh. Steps should be taken to eliminate religious misinterpretation by imparting religious education to women.

To eliminate disparities in the socialization of women from childhood, qualitative and quantitative changes are needed in all existing formal and institutional systems to eliminate the relationship of conventional gender-based concepts.

For the real development of women, different opportunities should be provided in the field of education. If the minimum standard of educational qualification of Union Parishad members is fixed, the work environment and socio-cultural environment in all areas will improve.

Women's contribution to society and economy is not sufficiently valued. It is necessary to look into this.

If women's representation in politics increases, poverty and radicalism will not stand in the way of women's empowerment.

It is expected that the success of this program will be possible if the practical limitations of microcredit activities at the public and private level can be overcome.

In order to protect the rights of women, proper implementation of the law should be ensured in the areas of dowry, divorce, child custody, child marriage etc. If necessary, new laws should be enacted and existing laws should be amended.

Muslim women in Bangladesh do not have equal rights to divorce. In such a situation, appropriate laws are needed to ensure marital life, individual rights, equality and social justice.

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