

Prospects & Challenges of Women's Participation in Governance: A Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

Scholars have developed some gender development approaches focusing development issues of women in different ages. All these are developed on experiment basis or reaction of socio—economic inequity, events or occurrences. Emergence of these approaches follows a chronology of time and space and for minimizing the limitations of previous one; the next new approach is evolved. But, in the Islamic construct, gender equity approach is built into the ideology. Islam judges gender equity from the view point of natural configuration of human's physiological and psychological entities and differentiated role allocation of their social relationships. But, regarding human being, Islam diminishes differentiation between men and women. Rather, women enjoy benefits in this regard more than one degree to men. Review from secondary research documents in respect of women's participation in development in this present study makes it clear that in spite of taking and implementing various development oriented plans, policies, action- oriented programs, their presence in different sector's governance is yet to be improved at desired level. Actually, the differentiated role allocation of men and women in social construct is much more natural. The social role of men and women is complementary to each other. Equity means facilitating men and women in performing their complementary roles not overlapping in their role playing. If do so, role conflict raises which is harmful for healthy organization. Anyway, denying this natural equation of men's and women's role allocation, thinkers are doing a mistake repeatedly. Islam defines men's role as instrumental authority on the other hand, women's role as expressive authority. It does not mean that Islam deny women's external authority but restricts on it as if expressive authority is undone. So, Islam gives priority on first and primary role of men and women for natural development of society. This study will help to explore this naturalistic approach which is consistent very much with the human natural disposition.

Keywords: Women's Participation, Governance, Challenges, Paradigm Shift

1. Introduction

The issues of women's development in contemporary world have received viable importance to resurgence them from their stereotype roles and responsibilities. Because, participation of women in nation building process is urgency need for sustaining human civilization. A woman is she who devotes herself to materialize the dream of a nation by providing quality citizens through upbringing children into full-fledged man follows a continuous process of development. In spite of these core duties women can contribute further to enrich countries development by participating different productive sectors. Since women constitute about half of the total human capital, here it is mandatory on behalf of them to participate in nation building process. Recognizing this fact, from the decade of 70s various international and national level interventions have been taken in extending women's participation and thereby mitigating their intense backwardness. The international policy documents CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals are notable few which have immense influence on worldwide women's development process.

The present strategic approach to integrate women in national development trend is mainstreaming approach which is the byproduct of Beijing Platform for Action. As a member country, Bangladesh alike other countries has affirmed with this strategic approach and taken various actions particularly action for strengthening national level machineries for women and thereby integrate women with the national policies and programs. Ironically speaking, in making advance the global statues of women, these international conventions and events have some positive impact. But global scenario of women's status still prevailed in disgraceful level. Women are lagged behind in each and every strata of social life. Their participation in Bangladesh is also meager. Only 2% of parliamentary seats are occupied by the women, less than 1% of the cabinet members are women, only 7.88% of civil servants are women, 2.22% in the judiciary are held by women, only 20% members of local government are women (Mahtab,2007). According to the UN gender Development Index (GDI), Bangladesh is ranked 139 out of total of 151 countries worldwide (UNDP, 2003).

In judging all aspects of development it is needless to say that women's participation in governance level is unexpectedly very low in spite of being half of the human capital. In this background, the present study is an attempt to diagnosis the existing status of participation of women in governance, causes of meager participation, its challenges and prospects, and remedies for facing future challenges. In searching out remedies, the applicability of a new paradigm for developing countries as well Muslim world originated from ideological basis for activating the developmental role of women in governance will be sought out by replacing the western paradigm of women's

advancement. Because, the achievement in gearing up the marginal status of women through western paradigm has somewhat satisfactory that will be ascertained by the review analysis of secondary research documents about the status of women's participation but it is seemed to be inadequate in accelerating their developmental role over the long period of time.

After 40 years of liberation, participation issues of women in development and governance in Bangladesh did not reach at the level of zenith. So, it is urgent demand of time for the Bangladesh as a Muslim world to reshape the paradigm for stimulating her women's development roles and responsibilities in governance. Since, women development is closely related to the socio-cultural ethos of a certain community, the authors believe that ideological determinants of socio cultural frames evolve from divine prescription 'Sharia' will be the most powerful paradigm for women's development in Muslim world as well as developing countries. Contextually, the scope of women's participation in development activities defined by the ideological credo is reviewed. An analytical focus has also been made to develop a theoretical construct depending on approaches proposed by Shariah and tried to see how these approaches are able to facilitate women in sustainable development. Except introductory and concluding discussion as well as objectives and methodology, to meet the objectives of the study, the relevant data has been provided into four sections. Section one focuses on major policy measures and initiatives of government for promoting women's participation. The second section highlights the status of women's participation in different sectors in Bangladesh, while section three portrays specific obstacles to women's participation in governance. Analytical discussions are presented in section four for searching an alternative paradigm in facing challenges and activate the developmental role of women.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore what are the actual role allocations of individual women and how they will respond to their responsibilities at priority basis. This study also seeks to explore the approach through which women can participate in their allotted roles and responsibilities.

1. To review the underlying women development policies and other initiatives of government of Bangladesh for promoting participation and developmental role of women.
2. To review the status of women's participation in different sectors' governance of Bangladesh.
3. To identify the specific obstacles that obstructs women's participation in governance along with identifying some immediate remedies to overcome these obstacles.
4. To examine the viability of Islamic approaches enabling women to participate and sustaining their position so that they contributing nation development efforts.
5. To search a neo paradigm in respect of women's role as development catalyst for arresting misleading and disequilibrium construct about gender equality.

3. Methodology of the study

The present study is based on a review of secondary research embodied *Shariatic* and non *Shariatic* approaches, policies, rules and their analytical premises regarding women's roles in economic and development activities. Relevant books, journals, government circulars, research reports, annual reports of Bangladesh Public Service Commission and Ministry of Establishment were consulted. The declarations of divine *Shariah* in the context of women's role in development and various policy measures on the present subject have been of great help to conduct this research. It is worth mentioning here that the *Qur'an and Hadiths* are used in this study as original and primary source of data. Other relevant literatures and web analysis are also examined carefully to develop the paradigm cal shift in this respect.

4. Section 1: Focus on Major Policy Measures and Initiatives of Government for Promoting Women's Participation

Bangladesh has been trying to extend support to women as they constitute nearly half of its population and half of the potential. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees certain rights and privileges to women. These are articulated in Article 27, 28(I, ii, iii, and IV), and Article 29(i). Serious attempts of mainstreaming women had been made during the 1980s. These attempts include ensuring women's rights, empowerment and participation as human capital. In addition to fulfilling the Constitutional obligation, the government took several measures to uphold women's interest. These include enacting various women-specific and women related laws; ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The government also announced National Policy for the Advancement of Women and National Action Plan. Particular emphasis has also been given on women in the Fifth Five-year Plan and in the Poverty Alleviation Strategy Paper (PRSP). Women's movement, women's organization and NGOs engaged in the enforcement of women's rights and empowerment thrived during the 1980s. Women's participation in the labor-market has been increasing since the mid-1980s (Mahtab, 2007). A 10% quota was reserved for women towards ensuring women's participation in the Bangladesh civil service. These are the initiatives taken so far to encourage women to come forward but the reality

is different.

Bangladesh is one of the first developing countries to establish a Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1978, three years after the Mexico Conference. To achieve the goal women's development the government has implemented some notable measures by establishing national machineries for women. These are: National Council for Women's Development (NCWD), Parliamentary Standing Committee for MWCA, Interministerial Coordination and Evaluation Committee, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA), WID Focal Points in Different Ministries, Department of Women Affairs, WID Coordination Committees at the Districts and Upzilla Levels. The GOB has declared the National Policy for the Advancement of Women (NPAW) on 8 March, 1997 and made some noteworthy progress in implementing the National Action Plan, prepared in response to the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA). It has addressed 14 different and relevant issues where employment and administrative empowerment of women were given special emphasis. With a view to create employment opportunities for the women, the following measures are suggested.

1. Increase efforts to employ all educated and uneducated females.
2. Increase female quotas and ensure its effective implementation in all spheres.
3. Motivate all appointing authorities to follow government quotas and to provide equal facilities for females under the purview of government employment policy.
4. Create congenial atmosphere to sustain the entry of females in the job market in greater numbers, their continuation and advancement there on.
5. Make provisions for contracts and lateral entry to facilitate female access to government service in the higher levels of administrative structure.
6. Appoint females to the higher positions of Judiciary, University Grants Commission, Ambassadors, State Representatives in different United Nations Bodies and other International Organizations.
7. Continue the quota system and increase the quota at all levels.
8. Increase efforts for achieving a 30 per cent female population at all levels of decision making, including policy level post (GOB,1998).

In spite of taking these initiatives, the majority of women in Bangladesh have yet to be empowered to participate actively in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the country. Gender discrimination is widespread in all spheres and at all levels, as indicated by official statistics on health, nutrition, education, employment, and political participation.

4.1 International events and Bangladesh Government: Over the past 40 years, World Conferences on women, held in Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing have all highlighted at international level and the various outstanding issues related to the improvement of the status of women. From each of these global Conference has identified women as a more powerful and crucial role-agent in sustainable development and protecting the environment. It is also emphasized in these conferences that the human rights of women as an inalienable, integral and indivisible, so, human rights and health, material care and family planning facilities, and of access to education and information, as essential to the exercise by women of their fundamental rights (Mahtab, 2007).

CEDAW:

The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) is a Bill of Rights addressing discrimination against women in all spheres of life. Women's human rights were accepted as "inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights" that "should form an integral part of UN human rights activities". Bangladesh has ratified the Convention with some reservations. Government does not consider as binding upon itself the provisions of Articles 2, 13(a) and 16.1(c) and (f) as they conflicting with Shariah. Later, government has withdrawn reservations about some provisions of CEDAW, relating to personal rights such as family benefits and guardianship of children. The withdrawn reservations of Bangladesh pertain to Article 13(a) and Article 16(1) (b) of the convention and reservation is now limited to Article 2 and 16.1(c) only (Mahtab, 2007).

CEDAW undoubtedly is an excellent innovation to protect women's legal rights which arrests all kinds of discriminations against them. It highly emphasizes on equal treatment for women in all spheres as human being and reaffirms equal rights of women. Showing respect Islamic sentiment, Government ratified it with some reservations. But recently reservation is withdrawn on some articles which are completely conflicting with Shariah. Truly, **CEDAW** advocates women's rights to ensure equality in society, but it cannot be considered as the first Bill of Women's Rights. Before that, fourteen hundred years ago, a bill contained a comprehensive focus on women's roles as social engineer and, rights as client was proclaimed under a full fledged ideology named Islam. In this bill, women are not only treated as human being only, also regarded as vicegerents to fulfill her assignments and enjoy her prescribed share in terms of rights and status in all strata's of society. All these decrees are affirmed through the supreme law book the *Holy Qur'an*, *Hdith* and lastly, it reaffirmed with the speech of *farewell pilgrimage*. *Shariah* upholds justice to treat women as agents of social construct and makes equal her rights and roles based on the peculiarities of human nature and capabilities both intellectual and physiological under the broader preview

of an ideology, Islam.

Such effort in *Islam* is called equity not equality in terms. Since, *Allah* has created man and woman as two distinct sexes and their duties and roles are also in accordance with their capabilities and limitations to a considerable extent, so, roles and rights of them would not be possible to make equal but equity can only be achieved. Actually, the concept of equality is posited in the affairs of human dignity and honor. No doubt, demand of dignity as human beings is equal for men and women. But all their rights can never be equal because they represent two distinct types of sexes. From ideological view point, rights may be equal (equity in true sense) but will never be identical. The urge of equality raised by feminists and development thinkers can be defined as identicalness of rights, not equality of rights. Equality differs from identicalness. Equality means 'parity and equitableness' where as identicalness means that 'they are exactly the same'.

It is possible that a father distributes his wealth equally and equitably among his sons but he may not distribute it identically. Because father has different kinds of wealth and may his sons are educated and skilled with different talents and specialized knowledge. So, when he comes to distribute his wealth amongst his sons in terms of the value of the property and that there should be no preference or discrimination, he bequeaths his wealth according to the talents which he has found in them (Mutaharri, 1991). Islam has never believed in preference and discrimination in favor of man as opposed to women. But it does not agree with the identicalness of their rights. Approaches and policy measures taken so far as are mainly centered on value free and emerged on any context of social inequity or injustice or oppressions against women. So, these approaches and policies are issued as a reaction to inequities of contemporary society. Besides, all these movements and agendas have emphasized on redistributive justice and access of women over the wealth and decision making process without ascertaining and fixing actual path with emphasize instinctive human natural disposition. In fact, thinkers have done a mistake repeatedly in lurching programs for women which is that the failure to make differentiation between 'Equality' and 'identicalness' as the rational perspective of goal achievement.

5. Section 2: Focus on the Status of Women's Participation in Different Sectors in Bangladesh

Bangladeshi women contribute substantially to their households and to the country's economy. The majority of women workers are primarily involved in the informal sector of the economy. Within the formal sector, a large number of women work in export-oriented industries (e.g., garments), the source of 70 percent of Bangladesh's foreign exchange. A significant number of women also work as teachers, lawyers, journalists, government employees, and for nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Their activities, in turn, contribute to the transformation of traditional values and gender roles of Bangladeshi women. Women have so far joined in the civil service in a limited number. The total strength of women in public service is only 10 percent, and it is a meager 8 percent in both class I and class II positions (Jahan, 2007). The presence of women in the higher positions of administration and policy formulation is not significant. In most cases, women in the higher positions were posted in the less challenging areas of jobs. Patriarchal values and stereotype attitudes are responsible for undermining women's capability as a whole.

Women have been regularly appearing in the Bangladesh civil service examination since 1982 but the number of women in 28 cadres is still trifling. The number of women holding class I positions in ministries/divisions, departments/directorates and autonomous bodies/corporations are only 5,066 compared to 73,619 men. This means that only 6.44% women are occupying class I positions compared to 93.56% men (Mahtab, 2007). An insignificant number of the total officers are working at field offices, and most of them are facing numerous challenges in performing their duties and responsibilities. These problems affect their efficiency, performance and contribution. So, the government has to look into it very seriously to utilize the services of its total work-force.

6. Section 3: Specific obstacles to women's participation in governance

Women service holders are surrounded by various kinds of problems which primarily come from their family and from the broader spectrum of the society as well. Women's marginalized position in the service sector could be seen as stemming from a complex interplay of factors. Such as: socio-economic, cultural, administrative and attitudinal. Social reasons include too many households and reproductive duties, limited mobility, insecurity and societal backwardness. Administrative reasons include among others lack of appropriate work environment. Attitudinal problems refer to negative outlook and attitudes of colleagues, clientele, bosses and general people towards women officers. The masculine cultural pattern of our society also limits female employment opportunity (Jahan, 2007).

Most women civil servants who are working in the field do not take the family with them to their work stations because all the districts do not have good schools and hospitals. They stay alone and they fail to provide enough time to their children. The children get deprived and sometimes this affects their children negatively, and they underperform academically and socially. All these ultimately have a negative impact on their image. Authority and the clients then think that women officers are incompetent.

Due to cultural heritage most of the responsibilities of a family lie with women in Bangladesh. Sometimes they have to choose one between family and career, where they give priority to family. It becomes a double burden for a working woman because she has to look after her office and house. A full time job does not excuse women from domestic responsibilities. It takes away a large part of their productive energy which is an obstacle to maintaining a high standard of performance in office (Salahuddin, 1992). Due to multiple roles that the females are expected to play in the house and in the office, it becomes difficult to perform either efficiently.

Childcare has become one of the main issues for all working mothers. Due to the changing family structure, people live in nuclear families where nobody is found to look after the children or to extend support in the household chores. In the absence of childcare facilities, a woman has to depend and rely on inefficient and unreliable maidservants. As a result she is usually mentally occupied with her children and household work while she is at work, which disrupts her office work. Sometimes it becomes difficult for her to reach office in time and she is often forced to return home before the office closes or go on frequent leaves (Kashem et.al., 2002:91). That is why women are still in favor of jobs related to teaching which have more leave opportunities.

Women's role as working women and as a wage earner is not adequately and properly considered. Most of the husbands do not share responsibilities in the household work but expect that, their working wives would look after all the comforts of the family as perfect home managers. The male colleagues have dual sets of values towards the roles of females. At home, they want to see their female members perform their roles effectively, and yet most of them do not like to consider the plight of their female colleagues if, they want to leave early or arrive late because of household duties or childcare problems (Kashem et.al., 2002).

Lack of security refers to the protection of women's privacy as well as protecting abuse and harassment (Kashem et.al., 2002). Most of the females feel insecure when having to work after the normal office hours in vacated offices.

Lack of favorable work environment is one of the main reasons for the low presence of women in service sector. Socially, we still consider men's work much more important than women's work. As a result, work-space, work-patterns are completely male oriented in our country. Special arrangements for women officers are absent in our office environment. The following problems are found to be responsible for limited entry of women in civil service, as identified in several research works.

- Absence of a day care centre.
- Unavailability of an individual room in which to work.
- Lack of separate rest room facilities.
- Lack of separate toilet facilities.
- Absence of a congenial working environment.
- Inadequate transport facilities.
- Inadequate residential accommodation.
- Lack of Career women's hostel facilities.

Our society is a male dominated society. Men are not mentally oriented to accept women as bosses and colleagues. Men feel humiliated working under a female. His male ego hurts. Men think women are not competent enough to be in top position, to take challenges, to make decisions. Male colleagues have a tendency to dominate their female colleagues and in many cases female officers receive unequal treatment in distribution of responsibilities. The tendency to treat women officers in a gender biased fashion creates a negative impression among women which also make a negative impact on the overall work environment (Jahan, 2007). Social attitudes towards female work create low career interest among female. All of these contribute to create lack of interest among women as well as their guardians towards civil service.

7. Section 4: Searching an Alternative Paradigm in Facing Challenges and Activate the Developmental Role of Women

7:1 Need to resolving misinterpretation about Islamic approach of women's developmental role and understanding real framework

The present feminist movement in the west is motivated by a freakish idea of abolishing all the distinctiveness between men and women. As human being, Islam does not make any distinction between man and woman. The RUH (soul) of both man and woman is same. In the verse 30:30, Allah says, "And so set thy face steadfastly towards the (one ever-true) faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the FITRAH (natural disposition) which Allah has instilled into mankind, (for) not to allow any change to corrupt what Allah has created – this is the (purpose of the one) ever- true faith but most people know it not." The term FITRAH in the verse mankind's (both man and woman) and intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, true and false, and thus, to sense Allah's existence and oneness. There is also a prophetic tradition about this basic similarity between man and woman: "Every child is born in this natural disposition...." (Bukhari and Muslim). Fitrah also denotes our instinctive cognition of Allah and surrender to Him. According to the above mentioned verse and the Hadeeth, there remains no discrepancy between the inherent potential and intellectual faculty of man and women (Hasan,

1999).

In Islam, the dignity does not depend upon being male or female or any other consideration but on being righteous. Allah says, “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (Not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored among you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)” (49:13).

Some people particularly western feminists make them misapprehending through ambiguous interpretation of this verse. The key word that is contentious here is Qawwamuna which is mistakenly translated by the proponents of this freakish idea as the superiority of men over the women. The Quran makes it clear that Qawwamuna or responsibility has nothing to do with superiority of man over woman but it is a matter of maintenance. If anybody impartially study the actual interpretation of this term from different Tafseers (interpretation), of Mufasssireen (interpreters of the Holy Quran) he/ she will see that a Qawwam is a person who are protectors of women and managers of their affairs. Men are the maintainers of women, because Allah has made some of them to excel others, and because men spend out of their property (for the support of women means) (4:34).

From the organizational context, authority posited in a hand from where command is issued. Command follows a formal authority and authority follows a hierarchy. As a primary institution of society, family inherits a formal hierarchy, here also a authority line. Either husband or wife will possess the central authority of the hierarchy. Now a complication may be raised. Who will take the authority? Simple but rational equation is that, he/she who possesses strength of issuing command will take the authority. The Quran makes solution here.

The Quran does not state categorically that men are superior to women or that Allah has made excel men over women. The verse (4:34) is unequivocal in specifying the financial role of men as a factor in their designation as guardian of women. But the verse speaks of excellence; it does not allocate it to any particular sex. Much less it does associate with men exclusively. So, in this case, excellence is attributed to some generalized men and women. Men and women, are endowed with what others, men and women lack. In matters of guardianship and exercise of authority, men are generally more qualified than women, and can better deal with the external problems of the family and social system. Hence they are entrusted with the instrumental authority of the household. This does not exclude the capacity of women to excel in some other areas e. g. “expressive authority” which deals with the internal authority. If the two types of authority are differentiated and held to be equally essential to the family maintenance, then the question of superiority of one sex to the other is actually irrelevant and hardly arises. It is true that, in the practical life of mundane affairs, it appears that women are preferred to do the internal household work and men do the external jobs and more hazardous activities. But it does not mean that women are deprived of the right to participate in outer world organizational activities, rather they can pursue any activities when the situation demands (Hasan, 1999).

Islam is a dynamic religion which approach of getting things done is situational. Contingent variables in given situation are getting highest priority in all affairs. Islam ignores classical rigidity or mechanistic approach in doing things. In this conceptual basis, Islam makes women a useful member of the society. To add her action oriented value, Islam stresses highest importance to make women quality personality and valuable asset for nation building through conventional education and virtuous knowledge. Except performing the key role of producing quality citizen of her children for developed nation, there are certain areas where women can play more significant role than men can; such as: teaching, medicine, nursing, to mention just a few. Again it does not necessarily mean that their activities are confined to a limited number of fields.

In fact, Islam does not advocate limiting women to the house nor does it allow women to become a commercial sexual commodity. It supports on environment conducive to herself realization and attainment of her full human potential (Bayat, 1995).

7.2: Islamic paradigm in sensitizing the role of women as mother and in domestic arena:

Islam is a religion of nature and what is prohibited by religion? Answer is that, which is detrimental towards mankind, Islam puts its restrictions there. This common philosophy may be materialized in respect of women’s roles and responsibilities. Obviously, it is beyond explanation that as half of the nation’s population, women have a crucial role in developing the status of country’s economic, social and all other affairs. But the question is that how women play this role? According to Shariah, women play proactive role as an actor of development for nation. Before taking any attempt to make productive the role of women as development catalyst, the first role of women as mother should highly be prioritized because they are the sole provider of quality citizens. There is no any text in Islam which prohibits women to refrain from seeking employment. But emphasis should be given on the job natures especially which do not affect her instinctive role as motherhood and the needs of society as a whole. Islam regards women’s role in the society as a mother and a wife as the most sacred and essential one. Neither maids nor baby –sister can possibly take the mother’s place as the educator of an upright, complex free, and carefully reared child. Such noble and vital role, which largely shapes the future of nations, cannot be regarded as “idleness.”

Family, it is a foundation of multi-faceted and high rising development construction of our society. Women are the key actor of this unit for developing society. Islam protects and enshrines this role of women with legal proclamation. From Islamic view point, women enjoy a position of dignity and honor as mother, wife, daughter and sister. Not only is she considered equal (not identical) but sometimes it appears that she enjoys greater privileges than men. For instance, she has an equal share in man's earnings but man has no share in her earnings and property. Doing household works, is not obligatory for woman rather she has right to demand payment for doing household activities including feeding milk her children from her husband. Whether she does not do so, and performs domestic activities along with self motivation and happy modes, considering it a matter of moral responsibility. She is only doing a favor to her husband for which he should be grateful to her (Mahmud & Maksuda, 1998).

So, it may be claimed that performing the domestic affairs including feeding milk her children and playing the role as tutor for children, women are cooperating her husband as to save domestic net expenditures. So, women, as housewife influence immensely and positively the household economic development from this viewpoint. She saves the cost of baby foods, maids and tutors and thereby adds economic solvency for family. Islam has provisioned to recognize the contribution of women's in household affairs by calculating these with economic value and there by glorified their developmental role in the history.

7:3 Islamic Approach of Women's Participation in Outer World Activities:

At present time, Governments of developing nations including Bangladesh are highlighting the economic role of women as a vital part of labor force in rising and equalizing contribution both male and female in gross national income. Government thinks that keeping women aloof from outer world economic participation, as representatives of half of the population, country's development will be completely difficult. Feminist movement sensitized this trend in the name of financial movement by urging them to leave their homes and work outside along with men.

Ironically speaking, the *Shariah*, as a revealed knowledge unambiguously delineated all codes encompassing every aspects of human society and its representatives. *Shariah* declares clearly the roles, responsibilities, status and shares of male and female as the key actors of social building. Role allocation of actors in development literature is regarded as first and foremost step in the whole process of respective construction. So, *Shariah* has revealed this allocation based on sex peculiarities and contingency approach for facilitating men and women of getting benefits of changing situation of the society. It means the role allocation that is done for getting maximum equity depending on their sex difference is not exclusive and rigid. It may be changed depending on time, space and overall conditional requirements as specified by *Shariah*. Development thinkers generalize *Shariah* as rigid and backward-looking in respect of women's role in development. It's not true. There are so many evidences in the history of Islam where women's have played unparallel role in different perspectives of nation building while necessity emerged. Development starts from the arena of family that is the basic source of providing quality generations to nation and *Shariah* acknowledges her roles in family with economic valuation.

Contemporary women specialists and thinkers treat women and activate them beyond their natural and instinctive capacities both cognitive and physiological. Moreover, their workloads in the domestic sphere are not recognized with economic value. Non- recognition of household work shows almost half the population as unemployed and inactive. The fact that the Labor Force Survey (LFS) of 1989-95 counts 77% of all women over ten years old as housewives and economically inactive reflects this discriminatory attitude. A survey conducted by the USAID shows that economic valuation of women's unpaid household work would add 4 billion dollars to the net global income. In the developing world, some efforts have been undertaken to evaluate women's household work. In India, and Pakistan, the housewives contribution to the GDP is nearly 49% and 20%--40% growth of national income respectively (Parveen,1995). In Bangladesh, no effort has yet to be taken to evaluate household work at the national level.

However, since economic activity means exchange of value, hence the activities mentioned above remain outside the definition of economic activities. But, it is an urgent need to redefine the concept of economic activities where women's contribution in family arena will get visibility and be evaluated with economic value. After that, thinkers will ascertain whether women possess enough time, more physical response and need to come out home for participating economic activities or not. According to *Shariah*, husband has no right in forcing his wife to work in order to earn more money. In fact, husband is cent percent responsible for all his wife's expenses, and even if she earn, he has no right to a cent of her income. If wife makes more money than her husband, he is still required by Islamic law to provide her and spend out of his pocket for her food and dress and required needs. Muslim women are indeed very fortunate. In spite of that, Islam has kept chance for getting involved in outside economic activities depending on contextual factors under *Shariah* codes.

Istly, *Quranic* command of mutual consultation (*Shura*) has to be followed by *Muslim* while facing peculiarities beyond the codes regarding role allocation of male-female for sacking greater interest of living necessities. *Shariah* assigns duties both for husband and wife in upbringing their children's physical and mental growth as well as enlighten by giving education. It is also the responsibility of both of caring domestic affairs

while and when necessary. Exclusively, while women fall in maternity role and unable to work outside the home, husband is liable for providing maintenance cost being a 'Kawwam' for their wife. Begum (2008) opined that due to two factors- supply and demand space and need of women's participation in outer world activities are emerged. According to her, 'Earning is not compulsory for women to run their family, again their employment has not yet been prohibited by *Shariah* due to many socio- economic reasons, so, due to unfavorable condition of the society, women may demand job. On the other hand, different organizations demand women employees. Women employment in an organization depends on its goals, objectives and nature'. Demand factor is stimulated by economic factor, social factor and religious factor. Recently, women are involving themselves in many odd jobs in different organizations including NGOs because of financial need and utilizing their educational qualifications where compliance of *Shariah* is quite difficult due to nature of job and unfavorable job environment.

Excepting economic reason, social factors are also responsible for employment of women outside their homes. For example, some parents feel tired to take the responsibility of their sons having low income. They want to get relief engaging their sons with educated working women so that both of them can take their responsibilities together. Again, some parents have no male child. So, they want to educate their female child as getting earning source who will give financial supports them in future. Such types of peculiarities are found in our society while women's participation in economic activities stands for emergency requirements for sustaining and building a dynamic society.

Religious factor has also positive focus on women's participation. Women's participation in professional work is essential to perform all sorts of *Fard-e-Qifayia* types of work. Moreover, efforts of the men to perform their economic responsibility to family as well as other responsibility to the society have failed to overcome all social odd. Therefore, educated women are employed to meet the instant demand of society.

Islamic decree in respect of women's participation in economic activities is tried to make clear in the above mentioned analysis. Islam is a religion of humanity. So, provision to overcome any hardship of human being is legally approved under the boundary of Islam. "Every woman has right to develop her talents and to work within the rules of Islam. *Ayesha (R)*, the *Prophet's (PUBH)* wife was a judge at various times, a political activist and, after the demise of *Prophet (PBUH)*, the interpreter of his teachings (Sohrab,1999) .

So, considering the following issues, government, as a employer can take measures to design and implement the framework of women's involvement in development activities if sustainable approach is desired to be developed in this perspective.

Firstly, priority should be given on male employment over female except in case of some helpless female candidates. Because male official addresses the financial problem of a family with members like father, mother, brothers, sisters etc., whether an employment to a female officials adds to the financial strength of her family as in most cases her husband also earns. It is true that there are women who cannot maintain themselves under the male shelter. Such cases should be dealt by the state's own responsibility. It means government should implement programs to take off their awkward financial status. After doing that, priority of male employment over female can be an acceptable approach.

Secondly, for growing up quality service sector, merit based employment should get priority over 'quota'. Ensuring equal participation in economic activities through practicing quota has no rational ground in *Shariah*. Such western concept of equality is reiterated again in the CEDAW which is conflicting with the concept of equality in Islam. In this relation, 'age bar' or 'age limit' can be relaxed or withdrawn since the need for a job of a woman can be fabricated in different stages of her life.

Thirdly, Islamic approach entertaining women's participation in job market is encouraged by Islam but some codes of Islam for this purpose have to be practiced by the authority. For example, conducive working environment for female employees included separate sitting room, prayer room, toilet facilities, dining room and transport facilities etc. has to be confirmed.

Fourthly, Another important code of *Shariah* is dress code. Primarily, there is a code both for male and female in *Shariah*. It firstly demarcated the parts of human body both male and female which are to be covered by sober clothes and in case of female, covering parts are extended to a degree because of concealing her beauty which produces attraction and enchantment and which ultimately helps to extend the sexual anarchy. In the Holy *Qur'an Allah (SWT)* has given order to Muslim women, which must be followed by them, whenever they go out of their home, they should fully cover their bodies with a long piece of cloth. This recognizes women's participation in the economic activities of the society. *Ayesha (RA)* stated, "*Jainab (RA)* was the most generous amongst us. Because, she used to work herself and give charity"(Siddiqi and Shad,1981). There is no restriction on benefiting women's exceptional talent in any field. Even for the position of judge, where there may be a doubt about women's fitness for the post due to her more emotional nature. Early Muslim scholars *Abu -Hanifa* and *At-Tabary* holding there is nothing wrong with it (Islam, 2006).

Fifthly, Many women opt out of challenging assignments due to inadequate or non availability of support systems/facilities. These are essential not only for women but also for working men. Setting up Day care centers, elder-care facility should be made mandatory.

Sixthly, Flexible working hours for all employees with small children with a view to facilitate greater demand of time that women need to handle during child bearing and subsequent stage.

Seventhly, Another radical recommendation is made that government should accept and put into action is the grant of paternity leave for 15 days. It is hoped that this will lead to more sharing of child-care responsibilities by the men folk.

Eighthly, On the issue of posting of women employees, a suitable and stable posting for women at the stage when their children are young has been recommended or posting of husband and wife should be together at the same place.

Anyway, a misleading conception prevailed in development literatures regarding religious focus on women's roles as development catalyst. They blame religion especially Islamic codes of employment for women both inside and outside the home. Islam presents a value laden model for the said purpose. Actual reason in making marginalization of women's economic and developmental roles in development is 'patriarchy' which is strengthened with misinterpretation, distortion, biased explanation and knowledge gap of **Shariah**. Sociologists observe that patriarchal discourse constitutes separate spheres of men and women. It determines inferior position for women and superior position for men; it declares men's knowledge and replaces women's voice by men's voice (Amin, 2006). Due to the strong influence and dominance of patriarchal values, a girl child from childhood, is socialized into the context of a subordinate position to men in society and for this, parents do not feel encouraged to spend equal money for treatment, education and other maintenance. Moreover, decision making power and economic control even women's inheritance right is manipulated by the male partner as because of male dependency along with patriarchy. Islamic values in this respect are totally reverse. Islam does not differentiate between male and female child in providing basic needs and fulfillments. In domestic affairs and also in the affairs of outside the home, women has given chance to counsel with her male partner and male partner is also said to pay attention to his wife's opinion and considering before taking decision. He is responsible to give women her defined share of property spontaneously. Actually, Islamic approach offers a positive outlook to activate women's role which is conducive to development.

8. A Summing Up

Throughout history, women have been greatly oppressed in almost every civilization. In fact, even the term "women" is derogatory. So, there was a real need for a movement to emancipate and elevate women. A woman's role in society, as envisioned by Islam, is manifold. Islam looks forward to her active participation in matters concerning the society and contributing greatly to almost all walks of life.

Islam presents a full fledged approach for women permitting involvement in economic and development activities both home and outside the home. This approach is equipped with the concept of divine **Shariah** encompassing every aspects of women's life conducive for total well being of society which begins firstly by highly emphasizing the role of women as mother--- core agent of nation building. The Islamic approach is nor feminism neither patriarchal in nature. Its development is enshrined with need and priority basis both for women individually and collectively for society. It gets holistic view within an ideology. Its emergence is not dependent on any societal change or occurrence or any action or reaction of historical events as like as the approaches prevailed at present time for defining women's roles and responsibilities. These non- Islamic approaches follow an alternative course of action, time, event, reasons of being emergence and after consuming a particular course of time each approach lost its effectiveness which resulted impact of the next one coming into being to overcome the limitations of earlier. Still these trends of emergence of approaches are going on. It may be defined as the contingency efforts to build up theoretical construct. Islam also emphasizes this along with prioritizing the concept of social justice and equity and keeping unchanged the core values and major policy measures of the ideology. So, it needs no overall change with any affect of any reaction. Whether any need is emerged due to changing demands of the society, there is also provision of bringing about changes highlighting the major policy document – the **Holy Qur'an** and the **Hadithes** and emphasis also be given in importation of input for developing approaches on indigenous sources including Muslim worlds replacing of western conceptualization scheme

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