

SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL CHANGE OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN BANGLADESH: A HISTORICAL STUDY FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ISLAM

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ABSTRACT

The socio-educational condition of women is interrelated with the development of a country. Socio-educational change means the overall development of a modern industrial society and its change in different aspects in education. In the modern developed countries women's are seen in an advanced position. Alike the males, females are also there in various spheres of the society. In Bangladesh, now, women's are taking part in different level of activities with the similar intelligence and brilliance like the males. In the Muslim World, Bangladesh features is the third place in respect of population. Out of above 13crores of population of the country 90% is Muslim and near about half of the population is women, therefore the question of overall progress of the country is very much closely related with the socio-educational change of the women in the context of religion. Compared to other Muslim majority countries through the females of Bangladesh were backward for a long time in socio-education, even then with the evolution of time the thoughts and consciousness of females are now in the course of change. But for a long moment in time females were backward in education, social status, power compared with male. Recently, however, perception of inevitability to earn

social and economic independence awakened the desire for education and activities of women's in Bangladesh. Social transformation of Muslim women is playing all an important role not only in economical development of the country but also in the shift of thinking and consciousness and culture of educated people of the society. Hence, it is an important factor to research about the socio-educational changes of women in Bangladesh that reserves the Muslim majority in respect of population. This research has got a great value in reconstruction of social history in modern Bangladesh and the research paper will be raised a positive influence for the social change of women from the perspective of Islam in the context other developing Muslim countries.

Key word: Socio-educational, Muslim Women, Islam, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

The state of women is an important indicator to change the socio-economic condition of a country. This is because numerically women make up almost half of the population and surely constitute the most sensitive section of it. In all developed nations of the world women match the steps of their male counterparts in all spheres of life and this trend is gradually spreading to the developing nations as well. The worldwide movement for the socio-economic emancipation of women has acquired particularly in the last three decades and no country today is free from its influence. Bangladesh too is no exception and women in this country are stepping ahead by dint of their merit and hard work to conquer new horizons. With the passage of time today there has been a marked difference in the thinking process of women in Bangladesh and socio-educational perspective on this issue has undergone a vast change. Hence in the given context the debate of women's progress has gained unprecedented importance and this is why it has designated this topic for our research. Persecution against women is a phenomenon, which dates back to ancient times and it gains historical importance when it is considered that women constitute half of the population of any nation. No historical record is complete in any

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nation without the mention of almost half of the population. So the research topic of socio-educational change of Muslim women in Bangladesh regarding with Islam is very important in the social history of the country and its documentation.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective is to find out the major causes and nature of social changes of women as well as a comparative study between social development of Muslim women and religion with special reference to Islam in Bangladesh. This study will span main social institutions and major possible subjects (family, marriage, education, jobs, social status, security, law, religion, economy, culture, empowerment and leadership) in the context of recent social changes of women in the country. For a complete analysis of the subject we intend to divide our study into the following matters:

1. Historical perspective of the socio-educational condition of Muslim women in Bangladesh.
2. State and women after independence of the country.
3. Private endeavors among women and international participation.
4. Socio-educational changes and problems among the Muslim women in Bangladesh.
5. The current situation of the Muslim women in the context of recent socio- educational changes and find out how much of this development is sanctioned by Islam and
6. Overall evolution of the development of Muslim women in the context of Islam.

METHODOLOGY

In this research mainly historical and analytical methodology has followed. Moreover philosophical aspects of Islam with distinguished features of its

structure has analyzed and reviewed. In the process of analysis of the opinion from the book of eminent scholars, researchers have been taken for the study. In respect of research is mainly to be considered the references in the official and demo-official published and unpublished source-materials, secondly, some of the useful literatures related on Muslim women in Bangladesh written by prominent scholars has been taken to compare, cross and justify against the objectives. It is also used modern technologies like internet, website, email etc. to collect facts and figures from many other overseas libraries which has helped us reach a further-more accurate decisions and opinions.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Bangladesh is a densely populated developing country in South Asia. It achieved independence from the British in 1947 and from Pakistan in 1971. According to the latest Census Report (2001), the total population of Bangladesh is 12, 38, and 51,220 of whom 5, 99, 56,380 are women. The same report shows that 89.7% of the inhabitants are Muslims, 9.2 are Hindus, 0.7% Buddhists, 0.3% Christians, while 0.2% belong to other religious communities (Government of Bangladesh: Population Census ,2001). Among Muslim countries Bangladesh ranks second in terms of population. The social change undergone by Bangladeshi women is seen by various scholars and experts as a change in the social composition of the total population and this has become one of the most top debated issues in the country today. The practice of relegating women to the darkness of houses is no more and child-marriage has been reduced to a large extent. As a result the level of education among women has increased gradually and several government and private agencies have initiated a number of projects aimed at the assimilation of women's education into the mainstream of the country's development process. Today the educated women of Bangladesh are working in private and government jobs and are part of the industrial and commercial ventures that are shaping the future of Bangladesh. Women have been successful in establishing themselves as an important part of the social and national development of the country. The World Development

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Report 2006 has heaped praise on the progress on education of women in Bangladesh and specially, acknowledged the contribution of women particularly in the growth of the country's garment industry (World Development Report: 2006).

However, throughout the 19th century and in the first part of the 20th century Bengali Muslim women had been caught in an abyss of religious superstition and economic deprivation, relegating them to a position of social backwardness. Scottish missionary William Adam (1799-?) in fact mentioned in his report (1835-38) that women's education was considered to be a symbol of evil in Bengal (Adam's Reports, 1868:132-33). Women at that time were left to rot from disease and sorrow, devoid of medical attention, within the four walls of their homes. Lack of education, child-marriage, polygamy, dowry system, poverty and above all traditional purdah robbed women of all social prestige, subjecting them to a degraded life(Progress of Education:1909,128. Also detailed information on the degeneration of Muslim women in the 19th century can be had from articles published in various periodicals like Bamabodhini Patrika (1863-1920), Dhaka Prakash (1880-1920), Al Islam (1900-1915), Saugat (1918-1950), etc.).

The British colonial government did not turn its attention to female education in Bengal and India until many years after it had begun to direct its efforts towards the education of boys. Education in this country, in the modern sense of the word, may be said to date from the year 1854 (Despatch, 1854:13).Owing to peculiar difficulties arising from the social customs of the people it took a long time, notwithstanding the earnest efforts of government, to popularize women education even among the Hindus who from the outset zealously devoted themselves to English education. The attitude of opposition taken up by the Muslims to English education and the consequent indifference of the ruling power towards the educational advancement of the community were mainly responsible for their backwardness in education. As few Muslim

youths pursued the study of English, it is no wonder that Muslim women became more and more backward in education:

Table 1
Muslim Women Students in Different Institute in Bengal: 1882

| Nature of Institute | Total Women Student | Muslim Women | Hindu Women | Muslim % | Hindu % |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------|----------|---------|
| English High School for Girls | 184 | Nil | 77 | ----- | 41.84 |
| Middle English School for Girls | 340 | 4 | 177 | 1.1 | 52.05 |
| Middle Vernacular School for Girls | 527 | 6 | 363 | 1.1 | 68.88 |
| Primary School for Girls | 17452 | 1570 | 14580 | 8.9 | 83.54 |
| Normal School for Girls | 41 | Nil | Nil | ----- | ----- |

Source: Report of the Indian Education Commission 1882, Calcutta: 1883, Appendix, pp. xlii, xlv, liv.

No necessary steps were taken to promote the education of Muslim women, though there were some leaders of this society such as Nawab Abdul Lateef (1828-1893), Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928), Syed Ameer Hossain (1843-1912-14?) to strive for the promotion of the male education in Bengal in the second half of 19th century (Please see in details, Luteef: 1883&1885, Aziz:1968, Hosssein:1880). The beginning of the 20th century, however, witnessed a number of government and private endeavors to bring about a change in the social condition of Bengali Muslim women. Begum Rokeya (1880-1932) and other humanist leaders perceived education as the sole weapon against the backwardness of women. Although organizations like, Dhaka Mussalman Surid Sammilony tried to spread female education at the last decade of the 19th

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century (Dhaka Mussalman: 1884 and 1887), but Begum Rokeya played the greatest role in mobilizing for formal and higher education for Muslim women in Bengal. She established numerous personal/familial, cultural, and financial odds, and established a school (named the “Sakhawat Memorial Girls’ School”) for Muslim girls in Calcutta in 1911 (Report, 1914:21). The school opened at 13 Waliulla Lane in a tiny classroom, with only 8 girls in attendance. In 1917, it became a Middle English school (Report, 1918:8). Begum Rokeya added a class every year till her school became a high school in 1931(Report, 1935:29).

Urged by a section of the Muslim leadership, the British government too placed women’s education on its agenda for development. To this end the government instituted a number of education commissions (Proceedings: 1909-1911, Report of the Committee Appointed: 1915, Report of the Moslem: 1934 and Report upon Girls’1938) to identify the fundamental impediments in the path of women’s education and to provide recommendations for their solution. According to the recommendations of these committees, the government established schools, provided scholarships, introduced them to religion as well as higher education of Muslim women. On the other hand, legislations like Prevention of Child-marriage Act (1930), Right to Vote (1935), Divorce Act (1939) established the legal and social rights of women (Eighth Quinquennial: 1933, Ninth Quinquennial: 1939, Tenth Quinquennial: 1944). All these steps finally led to the gradual emancipation of Muslim women from the social hurdles put before them. However, the figures for the education of Muslim women in Bengal was not satisfactory, as constitute in March 1932, are given below:

Table 2

Comparative Aspect on Hindu-Muslim Women Education in the Secondary Stage: 1932

| Nature of Class | Total Number of Girls | Hindus | Muslims | Hindus % | Muslims % |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Class V | 2728 | 1914 | 155 | 70.1 | 5.6 |
| Class VI | 2188 | 1528 | 80 | 69.8 | 3.6 |
| Class VII | 1611 | 1169 | 44 | 72.5 | 2.7 |
| Class VIII | 991 | 719 | 26 | 72.5 | 2.6 |
| Class IX | 627 | 471 | 15 | 75.1 | 2.3 |
| Class X | 626 | 436 | 10 | 69.6 | 1.6 |

Source: Report of Moslem Education Advisory Committee, Alipore: Bengal Government Press, 1934, p.110.

So it can be supposed that in spite of several positive steps the Muslim women not to achieve expected progress in secondary or higher education in Bengal during the British period. But in primary education the percentage (54.96) of Muslim women was satisfactory:

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**Table 3
Comparative Feature of Muslim Men and Women Students in the Different
Stages: 1931**

| Stage | Male students | Female students | % of Total Male students | % of Total Female Students |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Primary | 929570 | 280903 | 53.03 | 54.96 |
| Secondary (High English School) | 21726 | 233 | 18.30 | 2.65 |
| College (Arts) | 2760 | 3 | 13.70 | 0.8 |

Source: Supplement to the Report on Public Instruction in Bengal 1930-1931, Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1932, pp. 32-34

The above table show comparative feature of Muslim men and women students in the different education stages. In primary stage although the rate is satisfactory but in secondary and higher education they were much more lack behind. Though concepts like early marriage and negative attitude towards female education were disappearing slowly, other obstacles had been existing up to the said period. For example, the attitude of the aristocrat Muslim towards purdah system did not change. Poverty and lack of opportunities were main obstacles for the women in achieving secondary and higher education. Besides these, other troubles were; lack of appropriate girls school and college, lack of qualified female teacher, transformation and residential crisis etc. (Tenth Quinquennial 1944:67-68, 74).

The evolution of Bengali Muslim women as a prime constituent of the society continued unabated even after the British left the country in 1947 .To increase awareness among Muslim women and to fight against their social backwardness, the All Pakistan Women’s Association was formed in 1948. A number of other women’s bodies, which functioned under the patronage of the Pakistan government, also worked towards the development of women. The launching of the periodical Weekly Begum in 1950 was another milestone in

this regard. The formation of the Muslim Personal Law Board in 1961 was a major step towards women's emancipation and was enthusiastically welcomed by women across the country. Some of the clauses in the legislation, however, were viewed as anti-religion special to Islam, leading to a controversy. Around this time Muslim women in Bangladesh made their initial forays into the fields of education and physicians, and these first steps were hailed as a tribute to the increased levels of awareness in the country. Subsequently the Women's Muslim League was floated as an independent body to ensure women's participation in politics and women took part in the National Council Election of Pakistan in 1954 (Please in details, Begum:1989, Begum:1997).

Meanwhile in 1958 the government of Pakistan has established a commission on National Education to task of suggesting "reorientation and reorganization" of the entire system of education for the East and West Pakistan. The Report of the Commission was submitted to the President on the 26th August, 1959, and made public on the 8th January, 1960, along with a Government Resolution accepting its main recommendations (Annual Statistical, 1963:1). The Commission in its Report made a comprehensive survey of all fields of education including female education and proposed sweeping reforms for their improvement. In order to prepare a realistic plan for the implementation of the major recommendations of the Commission Report, the Government of East Pakistan ordered a ground survey of all types of educational institutions as well as women's studies in school and college. That was the most gigantic field operation ever undertaken in the history of education of the country. As a result, all this kinds of attempts and initiative played a significant role for the progress women's education in the country. But all these attempts and achievements are it can be said that women's status and emancipation under the Pakistani regime was a predominantly slow process and this was most glaringly evident in the field of education particularly compare to male between female. For instance, in 1950 Muslim girl students constituted a mere 17.2% in primary schools. After sixteen years (1965-66) it is observed the figure had increased a few portion as

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percentages i.e. 23.02% in primary level, 9.50% in secondary level and the participation of Muslim girl students in higher education was even less (Quinquennial Report, 1969:17). Due to the lack in development in this sphere can be directly related to the political situation of the times. The entire period till the formation of independent Bangladesh was fought with differences between East Bengal and West Pakistan on issues like language, sharing of power and the interpretation of Islamic rules and law. This period of tension finally gave way to independent Bangladesh in 1971.

After independence the movement for women's liberation picked up pace and a number of changes were witnessed over a short period of time. The movement was aided by the memories of significant contributions made by Muslim women in the Bangladesh war of independence. There was a greater acceptance for women's education and their participation in different spheres of social life. At this point the newly formed government announced a 10% job reservation for women and this resulted in educated women taking up jobs. The government also attached great importance to women's education as a step towards their emancipation. The new constitution of Bangladesh pledged to provide education for all. The education commission constituted by the government in 1974 remarked "The lack of proper education has forced women to come to live with ignorance and superstition. This situation needs to be changed immediately" Accordingly, the government undertook a number of projects. Among these were the establishment of girls' schools and colleges, encourage co-education, arranging for free and scholarship-oriented education up to Class VIII (1993), food for education (1993-94), reservation of up to 40% seats for women in some universities (such as Jahangirnagar University), are worth mentioning. 15% seats in the Bangladeshi legislature were reserved for women (1973) and the reservation was increased to 13% in 2004. It is known in details about current position of women quota in different sector from the following Table 4:

Table 4
Government Reservation for Women in Different Major Sector in Bangladesh

| Type of Sector | Quota % |
|---|---------|
| National Parliament | 13% |
| Local Government (Upazila Parishad Vice Chairmen) | 50% |
| Local Government (Union Parishad Member) | 25% |
| Local Government (City Corporation Counselor) | 25% |
| Public Service Commission | 10% |
| Public Primary School Teacher | 60% |
| Free Studentship (Class I to XII) | 100% |
| Stipend (Class I to X) | 100 |

Source: Secretariat of National Parliament of Bangladesh Records, Dhaka: 2008. Ministry of Establishment Records, Dhaka: 2008 Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Records, Dhaka: 2008.

In 1999, the government issued an order reserving one-third of seats in all civic bodies for women. Women were appointed as administrators in four districts for the first time in 2001 and soon after the country had its first woman chairman heading the public service commission. In 2000 the government ordered that during admission in schools should have provisions of noting the mother's name alongside the father's name. The first woman judge in the high court was appointed in 2000. Besides the steps initiated by the government, ever since the political situation changed in 1990, the post of the prime minister and the opposition leader have been consistently held by women. The recently-constituted caretaker government in Bangladesh has three women advisors in a group of ten. Also all kinds' local government parts which should be elected by the direct voting of the people are reserve for the women.

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In Bangladesh, after independence, the government initiatives for women at the legislative level are like the British period. The Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Bill were passed in 1975 and the National Women's Organization was instituted in 1976. The Anti-Dowry Act was passed in 1980, while a government decree on torture against women was issued in 1983 while decrees against throwing acid on women was passed in 1985. The following table gives a clear picture regarding the different Acts for women from the British period up to 2002.

**Table 5
Different Act towards the Right of Women in Bangladesh**

| Year | Act Name/Nature |
|------|--|
| 1930 | Child Marriage |
| 1935 | Right of Vote |
| 1937 | Muslim Personal Law application Act |
| 1939 | Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act |
| 1961 | Muslim Family Law Ordinance |
| 1974 | Muslim Marriages and Divorces Act |
| 1980 | Family Courts Act 1985 |
| 1980 | Dowry Prohibition |
| 1983 | Cruelty to Women(Deterrent Punishment) Ordinance |
| 1992 | Anti-Terrorism Ordinance |
| 1993 | The Immoral Trafficking Act |
| 2000 | Repression against Women and Children Act |
| 2002 | Acid Crime Prevention Act |

Source: <http://www.law.emory.edu/ifl/legal/bangladesh.htm>. Retrieved online 20 -02-2011.

Thus through the efforts of the government and the various private agencies women in Bangladesh today have been able to carve out a social identity for themselves against the backdrop of the country's socio-economic advancements.

Women are directly participating in all major social institutions and processes in the country – family, marriage, employment, education, health, law and religion. In this context the most promising feature has been the increasing levels of women’s education. According to government statistics published in 2006, the participation of girls almost equals that of boys in the field of primary education. Women constitute nearly 40% of the country’s educated and literate population. Girl students constitute 50% and 40% respectively of the total student strength in the secondary and higher education level. It is easily understood from the following tables 6.

Table 6
Progress of Women Education in Bangladesh: 2006-07

| Types of Education | Total Institute | Female Institute | Total Teacher | Female Teacher | Total Student | Female Student |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Primary | 80397 | ----- | 344789 | 124990 (36.25%) | 16225658 | 8134437 (50.13%) |
| Secondary | 18500 | 3708 | 232929 | 46983 (20.17%) | 7398552 | 3868014 (52.28%) |
| Higher(College) | 3150 | 600 | 90401 | 17400 (19.24%) | 1367246 | 569337 (41.64%) |
| Cadet College | 10 | 1 | 312 | 49 (15.70%) | 2732 | 295 (10.79%) |
| Higher(University) | 82 | ----- | 10339 | 1827 (17.67%) | 207577 | 49867 (24.02%) |

Source: Record of the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2007-08.

It can be said from the above data that the over-all progress of women education in Bangladesh is highly satisfactory. In previous discussion(page 6) it is seen that at the eve of independence(1967) where the education rate of women was 24% among all students, after 40 years the rate increase more than double.

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The same progress is observed in the secondary level and also in the higher stages. It is also noted that In medical science of the country 40% of students are female (Bangladesh Educational: 1996). Besides this, the advancement of mass education of women in Bangladesh is highly hopeful:

**Table 7
Literacy Rate of Population Aged 5+: 1974-2001**

| Year | Women | Men |
|------|--------|-------|
| 1974 | 14.8 % | 32.9% |
| 1981 | 16.0% | 31.0% |
| 1991 | 23.4% | 35.8% |
| 2001 | 46.4% | 53.5% |

Source: Population Census of Bangladesh- 1974, Dacca: BBS, 1977, p.23.
Population Census-2001, Dhaka: BBS, 2003, p.73.

Women have also taken significant strides in the job market as well. Today women teachers constitute over 40% of the workforce in primary schools across the country. Over 18% of teaching and administrative posts in the colleges and universities are held by women and the same figure holds in the fields of law and medical discipline. The recent advancement of women in public and private sectors are given below:

**Table 8
Proportion of Women in Selected Sector in Bangladesh**

| Sector | Women of total workforce in each sector |
|----------------------|---|
| Public/autonomous | 11.9% |
| Formal(private) | 6.2% |
| Informal(private) | 22.7% |
| Non Profit Institute | 44.2% |

Source: Labor Force Survey 1999-2000 and Bangladesh: Gender, Poverty, and the Millennium Development Goals, Country Gender Strategy, Manila: Asian

Development Bank 2004. Note: Total proportion excludes temporary and day labor.

Attempts to improve the lot of Bangladeshi women made in the non-government sector are also worth mentioning. The garment industry of the country deserves special mention for providing employment to semi-literate and illiterate women of the country:

Table 9

Women Employment in the Ready –made Garment Sector in Bangladesh

| Year | Male | Female | Female as % of total Employment | Total |
|------|--------|---------|---------------------------------|---------|
| 1991 | 8730 | 494700 | 85 | 582000 |
| 1998 | 150000 | 1350000 | 90 | 1500000 |

Source: Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association Record cited in CPD: Bangladesh Facing the Challenges of Globalization: A Review of Bangladesh's Development 2001, University Press Limited, Dhaka, p. 322.

This industry accounts for close to 75% of the country's foreign exchange and current employs nearly 2.5 million women employees (Paul-Majumder, 2000:3). Bangladeshi women are also employed in the cottage and handicrafts industry and in fisheries (Country Reports: 2001). In this context the role played by various private banks, commercial institutions, NGOs(Non-government Organizations), regional social welfare organizations and women's organizations in making loans available at low interest rates merits special mention. Among the private banks, the contribution made by Grameen Bank is mentioning although the interest rate of this bank is not appropriated for poor women. Former US president Bill Clinton praised the efforts made by Grameen Bank during his Bangladesh visited in 2000 and the bank and its founder Dr, Mohammad Yunus has been awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. 6.6 million Customers of this bank are women who are also 96% of its total clientele

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(Grameen Bank Report).The number of non-government women's organizations working towards the social uplift of Bangladeshi women is currently more than 2000 and this number has increased dramatically from only 326 in 1981(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NGOs_in_Bangladesh). All these organizations have worked significantly in the field of women's development and the role played in this regard by some affluent members of the society is commendable.

Awareness among semi-literate women and their economic independence has today led to the rooting out of social malaises like child-marriage. Acceptance of opinion of village girls with insufficient literacy to guardians gets importance in case of selection of their husbands. In the literate society dowry system has been decreased significantly. Consciousness about health has resulted from the various government and private health initiatives undertaken over the years and imbued with a new confidence women in Bangladesh have made remarkable contribution to the health sector, particularly in the area of birth control and family planning. As a result of efforts made by women, government statistics show a decline in the birth rate from 4% to 2.5%. Women in the villages are gradually moving towards the cities and by virtue of their competency in jobs are being able to hold their own home as well. They serve a big social responsibility by living in family of many members. With their jobs the women of Bangladesh have got financial recognition and self-reliance, confidence and separate social existence. Educated women are stepping into the political arena and all major political parties in the country today have women's empowerment and development prominently featured on their respective agenda and election manifesto. The issue has also found a predominant position in discussions and deliberations on national law, the constitution and various government programs. By custom, a patriarchal, patrilineal, and paralegal social system exists in Bangladesh. Increasingly, however, women's roles, responsibility, and mobility are changing due to persistent poverty and the gradual erosion of the familial umbrella of support.

In the socio-educational change of Bangladesh, the efforts of international organizations are also laudable. To create equal opportunities for women the United Nations (UN) is observing a Women's Year and a Women's Decade. To facilitate a worldwide movement for women's liberation the UN has conducted conferences in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1980), Rio De Janeiro (1992), Jakarta (1994) - which yielded the Jakarta Declaration and Beijing (1995). All these meets and the decisions influenced the social life of women in Bangladesh and affected the national women's movement. The UN passed the CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) charter in its general assembly in 1979. The charter, which aims at fighting all forms of discrimination against women, was signed by Bangladesh in 1984(CEDAW and Women: 1988). The signing of the charter allowed Bangladeshi women a chance to interact with their counterparts across the world and helped the national movement for the emancipation of women to gain an international perspective. It was thus a result of this process that in 1997 Bangladeshi Muslim woman Salma Khan was appointed chairperson of the UNCEDAW committee. She was the first Asian woman to have adorned this chair. She is the Chairperson and Project-Coordinator of NGO Coalition on CEDAW and Beijing Process. She is also a member of National Council on Women and Development (NCWD), a national policy-making body (Report CEDAW, 1999.United Nations: 2007.Also see please: <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-146517354.html>). The activities of several international NGOs working in Bangladesh have also helped the cause of the women's movement.

However, for real progress of women in Bangladesh, it is seen that a number of problems and obstacles are still present. Family traditions, cultural heritage, influence of patriarchal values, devaluation of women labor, religious conservations, and such other causes are still holding back the further empowerment of women in Bangladesh. As a result women are in disadvantageous position compared to men in different aspects. Nevertheless

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women are deprived of real liberty. In Bangladesh most of the professional women are engaged in different works for livelihood. But as there are few jobs suited for women in the light of legal right, they are being harassed at every step. There are women workers who work for 10-12 hours a day, due to their needs, but are hardly given the respect and a very little amount salary that legal right would sanction for them which is not to maintain their personal life and family and this in general scenario. The women workers of Garments who are most workers in Bangladesh, for quite some time now, have been pressing for adjustment in minimum wage that was last increased in 2006, after 12 years, from Tk. 930 (about \$60) per month to Tk. 1,662 (about \$108) per month. The workers are demanding to raise the minimum wage to Tk. 6000 per month while the Readymade Garment (RMG) owners are offering Tk. 2200 per month Let Good Sense Prevail in Bangladesh's Garment Industry. So it is abundantly clear that dissatisfaction with the nominal level of the minimum wage is at the center of the discord between garment owners and workers (Hussain: 2010). Though private NGOs (both domestic and international), commercial institutions and banks are providing loans to women, they often extract unrealistically high interest from them. Such as micro credit loan by Grameen Bank which is cumulative interest at 50% to 54% which is really unbearable for the women and ineffective to improve their socio-educational and also in economic life (Schreiner, 2003:14). Recently many criticism of Grameen Bank are growing gradually for the high rate of interest (Grameen Bank: From Wikipedia). Moreover, totally unmindful physiological and psychological characteristics of women, these institutions are continually goading women workers to work at par their male counterparts. Above all security of women in Bangladesh is at stake. In recent times the country has been plagued by incidents like violence against women, kidnapping and rape of young girls, women's trafficking, acid attacks on women, illegitimate sex, and divorce and dowry harassment cases:

Table 10

Comparative Frequency of Different Forms of Violence against Women in Bangladesh

| Types of Violence | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1995 | 1997 | 1999 | 2000 (Jan-Nov) |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------------|
| Dowry Induced | 82 | 101 | 122 | 267 | 747 | 1119 | 8585 |
| Physical Torture | 258 | 217 | 469 | 808 | 2029 | 1654 | * |
| Acid Attack | 21 | 29 | 19 | 51 | 130 | 58 | 327 |
| Rape | 407 | 749 | 285 | 651 | 2224 | 3382 | 8527 |
| Murder | 1904 | 1879 | 806 | 1787 | 2426 | 2385 | 6288 |

Source: Department of Women Affairs Record, Dhaka. Baseline Report on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh, Prepared by Naripokkho and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and coordinated by IWRAW Asia Pacific, Kulalampur, 2003. *Information not found.

From the above table shows that in 1990 there were 2672 incidents of crime against women. Of these, 407 were rape cases, 21 acid attacks, 1904 women were killed or mortally wounded and dowry harassment is 82. In 2000, cases of crime against women had sky-rocketed and reached 23727, more than nine times the previous figure in less than ten years time. Of these rape cases numbered 8527. In addition, it is known from another that more than 200,000 Bangladeshi women were trafficked from 1990 to 1997, with 6,000 children trafficked, abducted or reported missing during that time. (Faruque: 1998). News of rape, assault, trafficking, death due to dowry, etc. is common features of Bangladeshi society. Police estimate more than 15,000 women and children are smuggled out of Bangladesh every year (Fact book on Global Sexual Exploitation Bangladesh). The four broad categories of violence against women in Bangladesh are domestic violence, violence at the workplace, trafficking in

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women and forced prostitution, and sexual abuse. The present form and nature of trafficking can be explained by poverty and social disintegration. The spread of wage employment or bonded labor such as domestic labor, women working in the sex trade (mail-order brides), in entertainment (e.g., camel jockeys), child abuse, and organ trading can be identified as demand factors. Supply factors are the economic situation and social vulnerability (e.g., a poor abandoned woman might give her child for labor more easily than a more affluent woman), and frequent natural disasters (due to which many shelter less and abandoned children and women result). Bangladesh's location (adjacent land border of 4,222 km with India and 288 km with Myanmar) facilitates trafficking of women as it is loosely patrolled. Common means of trafficking are kidnapping; abduction; marital migration (through fake marriage); selling of small children by parents, guardians, and close relatives; selling of wives by their husbands; and deceiving migrant workers. Besides, In Bangladesh there has been a phenomenal growth of sexual workers but the census report has no statistics of them. In 1981, licensed sex workers were close to 6000 in number across the country. This number of workers is increasing day by day. According to police estimates there are at least 25,000 to 30,000 women in Dhaka and 5,000 to 15,000 in Narayanganj who are engaged in this profession (Khan and Arefin: 1989). While there has been a few studies on sex workers in Bangladesh not much is known about the situation that leads them to their profession and their impact. The latest figures put the number over a few hundred thousand and they are gradually becoming a social menace. Moral degradation, poverty, lack of education, various allurements and attraction, temptation are some of the reasons behind such prostitution. In spite of several legal measures were adopted to safeguard women's legal rights and provisions, however, enforcement of these law is weak, especially in rural areas, and the government seldom prosecutes those cases that are field. In addition, loopholes in existing laws, lack of proper implementation, and the weak commitment of law enforcement agencies are major obstacles(Country reports:2001). It may be concluded that laws alone

cannot be the only deterrent against violence. They must be backed up by conscious public opinion, prompt action, and efforts to change society's attitude towards women. The laws and judicial system of Bangladesh has decreed strong disciplinary measures against anybody found harassing women and ravaging their modesty. Yet in a country which has women as leaders in both major parties, they do not have much social security.

Hence under the present circumstances one is forced to consider whether the development of women has been proper and balanced. The laws and judicial system of Bangladesh already has decreed strong punitive measures against anybody found harassing women and ravaging their modesty. Although during the last two decades in Bangladesh which has two women as leaders of both the major political parties and ruling the country, but yet women do not have mentionable social security. It should be associated women's empowerment with the upsurge in crime against women and conclude that empowerment alone cannot provide women with security which was observed here it is the responsibility of researchers to find the root of real causes behind discrimination against women.

Is there any system or management or law to be provided and answer to solve the problems of socio-education change and development of women in present Bangladesh without moral characteristics? It is an attention to the way of moral characteristics either religion or in any ideal. There may be different opinion to achieve morality in this regard. But all the ways ultimately goes to the religious theme. Women's empowerment with very nearest respected by the Islam. It was cleared how empowered women are taking to Islam and how the religion and its proponents are reacting to the new changes being wrought across the society in this context.

Islam has bestowed women with freedom, prestige and wide-ranging rights. It is known to all that when the Prophet Mohammad(s.a.w) first propagated Islam, women had been the most neglected and backward section of

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society which was called Jahiliyyah (kufir, ignorance, darkness period), it was Islam that led to the emancipation of women. In the Holy Quran, 'Sura Baqarah' (verses no. 187,228), 'Taubah'(verse no.71), 'Nahl' (verse no.97), 'Nisa'(it was indicate mainly women) and also many other verses mentioned the need for women's independence, security, respect and prestige. In the Prophet's s.a.w. Hadith woman has been referred to as mother and thus deserving more respect than the man (father). In Islam, education is compulsory for women as well as men (Narrated by Ibn Majah, a Book of Hadith, quoted in Meskat Sarif: 1997.) Please also see in Holy Quran,'Sura Nisa', verse no 9). It is also mentionable that the first direction from the God is read and read by the name of Allah (Holy Quran, 'Sura 'Alaq', verses 1-5)'. As about 90% of the population of Bangladesh is Muslim, the tenets of Islam should be followed in all spheres of life including the society, the laws, and the judicial system; because Islam gives its followers clear instructions on all aspects of life. On the issue of women empowerment, the glorious Qur'an declared "And (as for) the believers, both men and women – they are friends and protectors of one another: they [all] enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Messenger." (Sura At-Tawbah 9:71) Bangladeshis, however, have notably kept Islam restricted to their individual lives. Rather a part of intellectual and educated Muslim women thought Islam is the obstacle system in the progress of women empowerment (Hashimi,Taj I.:2000). So, this feature thus makes it difficult for us to study the effects of women's empowerment in the context of Islam.

Though Islam allows a Muslim man to marry more than one if necessary (Al-Quaran, Sura Nisa: 3-4), modern laws in Bangladesh do not encourage the trend. Although this is debate issue in the society but in true sense this above system could be reduced women's unreal false position and harassments with social status. Because of unmarried aged women are insecure and hassled in all society. Most importantly the entire gamut of films, theatre,

literature, sports and cultural practices are today heavily punctuated by the presence of women in Bangladesh. These programs that are bringing in women for the sake of their beauty are immoral and totally anti-Islamic. Inspired by the Miss World contest, beauty pageants are springing up across the country. These competitions provide the perfect excuse for publicly viewing near nudity and this is harming the youths of today and ultimately women's are mostly exploited in our society through media (see in details in all current news in Bangladesh). These pageants feature women who are educated but have chosen the easy path to fame and money. Islam, however, instructs believers to cover beauty adequately and show with moderately as per necessarily increase its prestige in the process. Cinema is a powerful medium of expression and Islam also supported the culture with limit. But ever since the 1980s Bangladesh has been produced of proper cultural cinema. Instead the market is flooded with films that sell merely on the basis of its obscenity and its love for showing the vulgar, and all these films have women in leading roles. Besides, in the name of New Year celebration (which is anyway a very immoral concept) the youth of today is indulging in vulgarities that are condemned by Islam. The youth today are taking to reading obscene books and magazines which are being fed to them with an ulterior motive. Above all the social torture and security of women in Bangladesh is at stake. In recent times the country has been plagued by incidents of violence against women, kidnapping and rape of young girls, women's trafficking, acid attacks on women, illegitimate sex, and divorce and dowry harassment cases and we have already mentioned statistics in this regard. The increasing of the incidence of acid attacks also notable since 2002. According to a United States newspaper Bangladesh records the greatest number of crimes against women in Asia (The Earth Times, 2000). Therefore it can be said although overall development of women in Bangladesh is hopeful, but they are suffering insecure and left behind to real establishment of right. In this context, it may be a topic for the researcher to evaluate the role of Islam for empowering women and achieving their social security perspective to Bangladesh.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

To evaluate the result and discussion of this paper, it can be considered that the Muslim women of Bangladesh were backward in education and in the society during the British period. It is a historical truth the status of women in the society was inferior to the status of male for a long period. The contemporary intellectuals believed that the continuous degradation of the women was the result of the conservative system of the society and the illiteracy of the women. In this context, in the first decade of the twentieth century, Begum Rokeya Sakawat Hussain and other intellectuals like her focused on the importance of female education and recommended necessary steps. After that the British government played different role in women education of the Muslims. Due to the fact of government and private efforts, at the early twentieth century, Muslim women's education began to spread in Bengal. However, after independence of Bangladesh, it is evident that women in the country are trying to change their condition in a context that is complex and bewildering in its scope. But the overall social status of women has been improving in Bangladesh since last two decades inspite of different obstacles and disadvantages. Amid the present crisis faced by Muslim women in Bangladesh, there are primarily two ways in which women's development is still going on unabated. On the one hand the government has busied itself making laws and their implementation—leading to crime control and improvement of the society's moral fiber, increasing women's prestige in the process. There are also a host of private agencies – including women's organizations, NGOs and political parties – who are engaged in making women financially independent, ensuring freedom, leading to women's empowerment and stop persecution. For women economic and social development in general, nearly 2,000 NGOs are working across the country. This section of the society is extremely powerful as well. On the other hand we find a section of the Bangladeshi Muslim community actively engaged in following the primary tenets of Islam. In this sphere the role-played by Muslim organizations, some national and international NGOs,

banks, insurance companies etc. is worth mentioning. These institutions are engaged in educating Muslim women in the true Islamic traditions. The contribution made in this context by some periodicals, TV channels, newspapers and other mass-media in projecting the views of these educated women is notable. However, this section of the society is a lot weaker as compared to the former. It has also exposed on the relationship between Islam and women's independent during the early phases and also deals with the historical aspects of the feminist movement till the country's independence in 1971.

The proper development of human resources and women in particular of a country is of utmost importance. Since the independence of Bangladesh as a nation has done a lot for the development of women on the national level and these steps are reflected in the laws, judicial system and the administrative methods of the country. It was overviewed the various contexts in which the government has initiated these steps. Besides the national endeavor, it has seen also study the influence of Islam and how the government is handicapped sometimes on the issue of women's empowerment. Currently it is noted and also discussed how various sections of the Muslim society - intellectuals, private organizations and the conscious people - are thinking about the relationship between gender and Islam to establishment of real empowerment and freedom of women.

The question thus arises why the population (both men and women) is not keen on taking up Islam as a complete philosophy in all spheres of life? The present socio-educational and economic condition of the country and its political scenario are primarily responsible for the situation. It is true that Islam was largely responsible for the 19th century initiative to fight against the backwardness of women. Contemporary journals and periodicals provide enough proof of that. Despite of the British rule at that time Muslim leaders of this region were taking an active interest in the reorganizing of society for the benefit of women's empowerment and these steps were all guided by the tenets

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of Islam. For instance, Muslim leaders of the late 19th and early 20th century were of the opinion that the society could benefit only from a proper mix of religious and secular English education. However, Pakistan could not establish to institute an Islamic society. When the Pakistan government failed to secure Muslim nationalism and started conspiring against the Bengali language, a nationalist movement based on the demand of indigenous language began to take shape. The newly-formed state took up secularism, socialism and Bengali nationalism as its guiding principles. Thus in a way Islam was detached from the main body of the state and society. A section of intellectuals who believed in the principles of secularism and western education gradually took hold of the reins of the new government. Thus the movement for women's empowerment in Bangladesh began to take shape under the influence of modern western thought processes and ideologies. In 1979, the Bangladesh constitution was amended and the word 'secularism' was replaced by the words 'complete faith in Allah'. In 1988 Islam was established as the 'state' religion (The Constitution: 1996). But even though the recent government has pro-Islam groups in its fold, there has never been a true evaluation of the position of women in the light of Islam.

In conclusion, it can be expressed that this study will help to understand the condition of women in Bangladesh, in the light of Islam in a Muslim dominated country, and will also help to understand the development of women's conditions across the Muslim world. The new point is from the above discussion for the next research, why one section of the society in the country has come to believe that Islam is an impediment in the path of women's development? Is the religious practice and culture unnecessary in the present society for women? Is it obstacle to worldly life connection? There are also another point should be discussed on the roles of private organizations' success and failure in establishing Islamic ideology and influencing the feminist movement whatever positive or negative among the women in Bangladesh. Moreover, the last point for the next research, there should be analysis and justification on how the

international organizations are evaluating the position of Islam in the women's activities.

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