
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Local Government of Bangladesh and its Institutions are Pivotal in the Empowerment and Involvement of Women in the Country

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ABSTRACT

In every growing nation like Bangladesh, integrating women through gender-specific policies is a recognized need for attaining significant progress. However, this problem has only now come to light about policy changes in the administrative and local government spheres. Women now have a quota in grassroots democratic institutions in Bangladesh as a result of recent local government reform. Women's issues have come up from time to time in the local government context and were emphasized in the government reform agenda, as demonstrated by the 1997 Local Government Reform. The Local Government (Union Parishad) Amendment Act of 1997 was enacted as a result. It allocates three reserved seats to three directly elected female members of the Union Parishad. Nonetheless, there are significant gaps in gender parity in the reform agenda and governance policies. Union Parishad is the most popular democratic group in the area. Given the tight relationship between empowerment and participation, the status of women's engagement at this level is vital and merits particular consideration. This paper aims to trace the origin of local government institutions in Bangladesh, focusing on women's empowerment and development. It aims to guide researchers and update readers on legal developments in local government institutions. The research monograph uses the Qualitative Method, examining information from books, papers, websites, and laws. The National Library of Australia provides high-quality materials that blend description and analysis.

KEYWORDS

Local Government, women's empowerment, Gender parity, Governance policies.

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1. Introduction

In a wider sense the concept of development of local government institutions with the participation, empowerment, and contribution of women in Local government, in a simple way, the idea of evolution of local government institutions in our country can be traced back to thousands of years. The origin and consequent development of local government institutions is a continuous process concerned with the historical background, politics, economy, equal rights of women, and conceptual view of the land. The development of local government with women's participation shows that the government allows women to subsidize political enlargement. However, this paper recommends that this particular topic be focused on two different but interrelated areas. They are:

- a) The Local government of Bangladesh and its institutions
- b) The contribution and empowerment of women in Bangladesh.

Initially, I will introduce the paper's title, which is based on an ongoing assessment of local government institutions, namely the advancement of local government. In this research, we will find the development of local government institutions in our country. And secondly, I try to put out the changes in the participation of women in local government. We try to find from this research that the involvement of women increases day by day in our politics as well as in the local government. And lastly, I want to establish that the local institutions where reserved seats are available, especially for women do not need those seats because the government ensures equal rights (Islam, 1995) for both men and women through our constitution. Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that local government is vital to successful state administration, particularly to achieve the political, economic, and social welfare of the state's marginalized populations. A strong local government system can ensure good governance through transparency, responsibility, effective participation, and equal opportunities for all (both men and women). The Constitution of Bangladesh which is the supreme law gives special emphasis on local government and ensures the equal rights of women to men. Bangladesh's Constitution ensures women's participation in national life (Huda, 1997). If we analyze the historical part of the Local Government we can see in the past there was no opportunity for women to contribute their effort in our country. In this present day, the Constitution of Bangladesh confirms the equality of opportunity for all citizens. Article 59 highlights the role of such bodies in preparing and implementing plans relating to public services and economic development. Here we can make sure based on the Constitution of Bangladesh that women have the same privilege as men.

The joker-dominating crowd doesn't embrace that an earth resider can control them. Though in our homespun two women are outstanding political leaders, anyhow in reality en masse the order believes the request of manliness, and women infrequently take any transferring up the swash according to their want. Again it's firm that the women who are tagged to the throne and deputy are extremely could hear a leg drop in the number of some unborn mutually after three seats reticent for women. There's a chance of desire of institutional substantiation and constantly they can not add energy to fire themselves in the claim to fame conditioning seeing their liabilities aren't described structurally. Women are neglected eventually they're tagged as speakers (As-Saber & Rabbi, 2009). Likewise, the women partakers are deprived by structural constraints. There are nine wards in the Union Parishad (a pastoral original government institution). Three seats in each Union Parishad were set away for women by the government. This means the women campaigners have to canvass and oversee an area three times the size of the area covered by a general (manly) member. In this script, women are again disadvantaged by resource constraints (Begum, 2012). In addition, the tagged women who share in original government institutions utmost of them are victims of gender inequality. The Asian Development Bank 2004 published Gender and Governance Issues in Original Government, showing that further than 70 of the women councilors canvassed in Bangladesh weren't attentive and responsible for their work. Further than 80 women have gone through a lack of confidence to conduct a meeting. On the other hand, 22 of the women attended meetings regularly in Pakistan. The assessment easily shows that Bangladeshi women are more backward than other countries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Original Government Act 2009 (the Act), which was quite recently enacted in Bangladesh, is one piece of stated law that consistently affirms women's equality in the government. Despite their permission of an ending of amen features to uphold the bring to a close, empirical cave reveals disappointing results in repeating the asked thing (Begum, 2012). This paper investigates some introductory constraints that leave untreated women's concinnity in Union Parishad(UP), with rare reference to a place of business of genuine excrescencies in the Act. Drawing upon this disquisition, a commiserate approach is extended in the plant that will decide to bow down to gender-centric outstanding enterprises in UP by fostering a relationship in which males and ladies will manage each other interdependent and connected as a cover rather than as rivals.

Women's rights activists and gender and knowledge interpreters have high expedients for the original council as geography for promoting gender parity and regarding women's moral rights. However, achieving gender parity will need significant structural change (Helen O'Connell, 2010). This interview can concentrate on violence and the trouble of violence, contrary women are an infectious hedge to women's political cooperation at the trade union and public situations.

A pen has raised the question that Political discipline in Bangladesh has been traditionally a manly-dominated sphere. Has the top of affirmative measures and the discipline of women politicians given them stronger voices and attracted them to change on issues that are analogous to women? According to her question, she said that historically, women's participation in reticent representative government in Bangladesh has been low. Bangladesh has indeed tagged only women high ministers since its independent transition in 1991; for all that, the legality of one and the other women leaders from the two claims to fame parties is grounded on interaction ties. Party and political culture is scrap-joker-dominated. Gender issues don't hold important cargo in the Bangladeshi government, eventually though a safe feminist movement can be traced to the anti-colonial nationalist movement against the British and also latterly Pakistan. Direct election to the 30 reserved seats in original government bodies was instructed for women in 1997 to ensure women's representation. This led to a radical shift in original choices to the Union Parishad (UP), the smallest league of original government. Whereas women were before nominated to the reserved seats by the speaker of the UP,

the new system of direct choices combined the women representatives to a particular constituency (Nazneen) but the findings of the pen didn't include the development and how the development in original institution with the growth of women. Women also warrant knowledge of practical government performing, which limits their inflexibility to be effective earlier tagged to office. Meanwhile, the advantage of manly intervention to womanish campaigners and workers within the political parties limits women's compass to run for choices, develop party species, and inspire support for women's requirements and enterprises. In conclusion, the provision of reservations has created a point for women to challenge some of these walls(M. Khan & F. Ara, 2006).
 Table 1: The ratio of women participation last 6 years.

Election year	Total Women Candidates		Elected Chairman And The Number	
	Chair	Member	Chair	Member
1997	102	43969 (456 contesting in general seats)	23	12, 828 (110 elected to general seats)
2003	232	43,764 (617 contesting in general seats)	22	12,684 (79 elected to general seats)

Statistics show that the rate of women's participation lasted 6 years (M. Khan & F. Ara, 2006). The rate gives a satisfactory result of participation in the original government of women. There's no getting complete the case that affirmative action in original governments in South Asia has given acquire to what has been nominated ' de facto' politics. De facto politics refers to a political quality where a person, despite considering a tagged companion, doesn't laboriously share in governance processes. This isn't to emphasize that all women constantly find themselves in this situation, nor that it's unrecoverable. There's heavy substantiation to represent that pastoral and civic women, as readily as low estate, ethnical women tagged to original government institutions have worked and are inversely tagged representatives(Christiansen). Women make up around 49% of the population. Colorful pointers reveal that the situation of women is more important and falls piecemeal than that of men. The development objects similar to accelerated profitable success, poverty reprieve, and national well-being and employment creation can't be achieved without the donation and participation of women. There's the vindication; social position and institutions place them in non-symmetrical and underprivileged positions (Huq, 2016).

A strong and effective local government is one of the most important elements for ensuring the quality of good governance and strengthening local government bodies. The country's socio-economic emancipation, which is primarily dependent on the fullest exploitation of its people, both men and women, for its overall growth, may be promoted by the local representatives of a local body founded on democratic concepts (Khan, 2014). In Bangladesh, though women comprise nearly half of the total population the status of women is much lower than that of men in every sector of life (Hossain, 2015). Since 1971, it has been a democratic, moderate Muslim state with a parliamentary system. But despite the existence of reserved seats and a vibrant feminist movement (Jahan, 1995), the political and administrative structure, culture, and norms are gender-biased. Although women make up half of Bangladesh's population, they have very little representation in politics and little voting power (Siddiqui and Kamal, 1995). Nevertheless, women's equal right to participate in governance is a fundamental right guaranteed by the country's constitution and is frequently upheld by several laws (Hossain, 2015). Without commensurate political empowerment, just social status and a rightful economic standing for women cannot be achieved or sustained (Huq, 2016). These articles hardly found the development of women in local government and the importance of contribution to local government.

Bangladesh also agreed to undertake positive obligations to respect and ensure this right by ratifying over a dozen international human rights instruments. Local government was the basic form of government in the sub-continent till the 6th century B.C. and management of local affairs by locally elected persons (Kudrat-E-Elahi Panir vs. Bangladesh 44DLR: AD: 1992). Bangladesh was a colony of the British for about two hundred years and this long history gave the form of local government named Local self-governing Panchayet (a body serving in an administrative capacity) at the village level was set up in 1870 to establish their administrative control at the lowest levels (Huq, 2016). In Bangladesh, most of the local government bodies owe their origin to the British rule that ultimately passed through the Pakistan period to independent Bangladesh. In the Pakistan period, the Act of 1959 introduced a new local government system called the Basic Democracy System in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) which was a four-tier system that resembled two layers, the union councils and municipal committees of the British days. Since 1973, the Union Parishad has served as Bangladesh's lowest administrative level of rural local government, replacing the Union Panchayet, which

had seen no notable changes in its nature. At present, there are two types of local government institutions in Bangladesh: one for rural areas and the other for urban areas. The local government in rural areas comprises four tiers, i.e., Gram/Palli (Village) Parishad, Union Parishad, Thana/Upazila Parishad, and Zila (District) Parishad. On the other hand, local government in the urban areas consists of Pourashava (for smaller Municipalities) and City Corporation (for the largest cities). The present research was conducted to appraise the extent of women's empowerment at the local level in Bangladesh and investigates the reasons for women's low rate of holding elected office. Furthermore, there are two primary reasons for doing historical and analytical research on Bangladeshi women's political empowerment. Firstly, one of the most important resources of Bangladesh is its people and women; Secondly to identify the present condition of Bangladeshi women's participation in local politics and policymaking process.

3. METHODOLOGY

The exploration causerie is grounded on one of the prominent procedures of exploration work named Qualitative system exploration. I have to use data and information formerly available and dissect these to make a critical evaluation. The data and information used were collected from websites; Papers and books of famed pens; And colorful legislations some of which had been passed indeed more than a hundred times alone. The work is a combination of description and analysis. I went online to visit further than 30 websites of different exploration associations and publications to collect data about the exploration title. I have visited The National Library of Australia through the Internet and set up some accouterments of excellent quality. After that, I went through the accouterments, anatomized the issues, and made up a shell of my exploration. Eventually, I drafted my thesis by putting accouterments in the structure. Therefore this exploration paper was prepared and submitted.

3.1 The Conceptual Labyrinth

- Women

Woman means an adult female human being, as contrasted to men, an adult male, and a girl, a female child. The term "woman" (irregular plural: "women") can refer to cultural gender role disparities, biological sex differences, or both (Wikipedia, 2005:1). Gender discrimination is widespread in every sphere and at all levels, only the Constitution of Bangladesh (Article 27, 28(1), 28(2), 28(3) and 65(3) guarantees equal rights to all citizens incorporated provisions for equal status of women (M. Khan & F. Ara, 2006).

- Participation

Gaining special momentum nowadays, the term participation has a simple meaning – taking part or sharing share with others. It is the action by which citizens take part in the operation of any process from micro to macro levels (Huq, 2016). The vehicle in which the community can assure members the opportunity to contribute to the creation of the community's goals and services is participation (Baetz, 1975). Access to decision-making and active involvement in determining the practices and problems are a must for it. It is a process by which people, especially the disadvantaged, influence decisions that affect them and get a more equitable share of power (World Bank, 1992). Participation is also looked at as enabling to have a voice in designing and shaping development interventions (Huq, 2016). The all-pervasive nature of participation leads us to define it as taking part and being to acting in any process in politico-economic and socio-cultural arenas of life and the interaction of individuals with others through time in the organizational process participation (Akhter & Chowdhury, 2005).

- Empowerment

- As a process and result that aims to attain a relative degree of ability to make an influence in the world (Staples, 1990) and the expansion of people's capacity to make strategic life choices in a context where the capacity was previously denied to them, empowerment is regarded as one of the powerful tools to achieve positive development outcomes and well-being of life (Tripathi, 2011) (Kabeer, 2001). It is a process, yet empowerment might also be used to describe the outcome. More specifically, the outcome of empowerment should manifest itself as a redistribution of power between individuals, genders, groups, classes, castes, races, ethnic groups, or nations. Empowerment means the transformation of structures of subordination, through radical changes in law, property rights, control over women's labor and bodies, and the institutions that reinforce and perpetuate male domination (Batliwala, 1993).

3.2 Aspects of Women's Empowerment

According to Hossain (2015) "Gender Equality" and "Women's Empowerment" have been two of the practically pervasive themes in development. Unless women are involved in the ruling and policy-making regulation at all levels of the state, changes in women's political and to several extent social and economic situation will continue to be marginal. The decision refers to the improvement of women's conditions in every capacity of life. However, it indicates the overall development of drawback classes of society to bring them into an advanced situation, almost at the same level (M. R. Khan & F. Ara, 2006) to make women capable of organizing themselves for enhancing their self-reliance, affirming their self-determining right for comprising choices and charging resources and these capabilities will help to take challenge and to break their subordination position in the society (Keller & Mbewe, 1991).

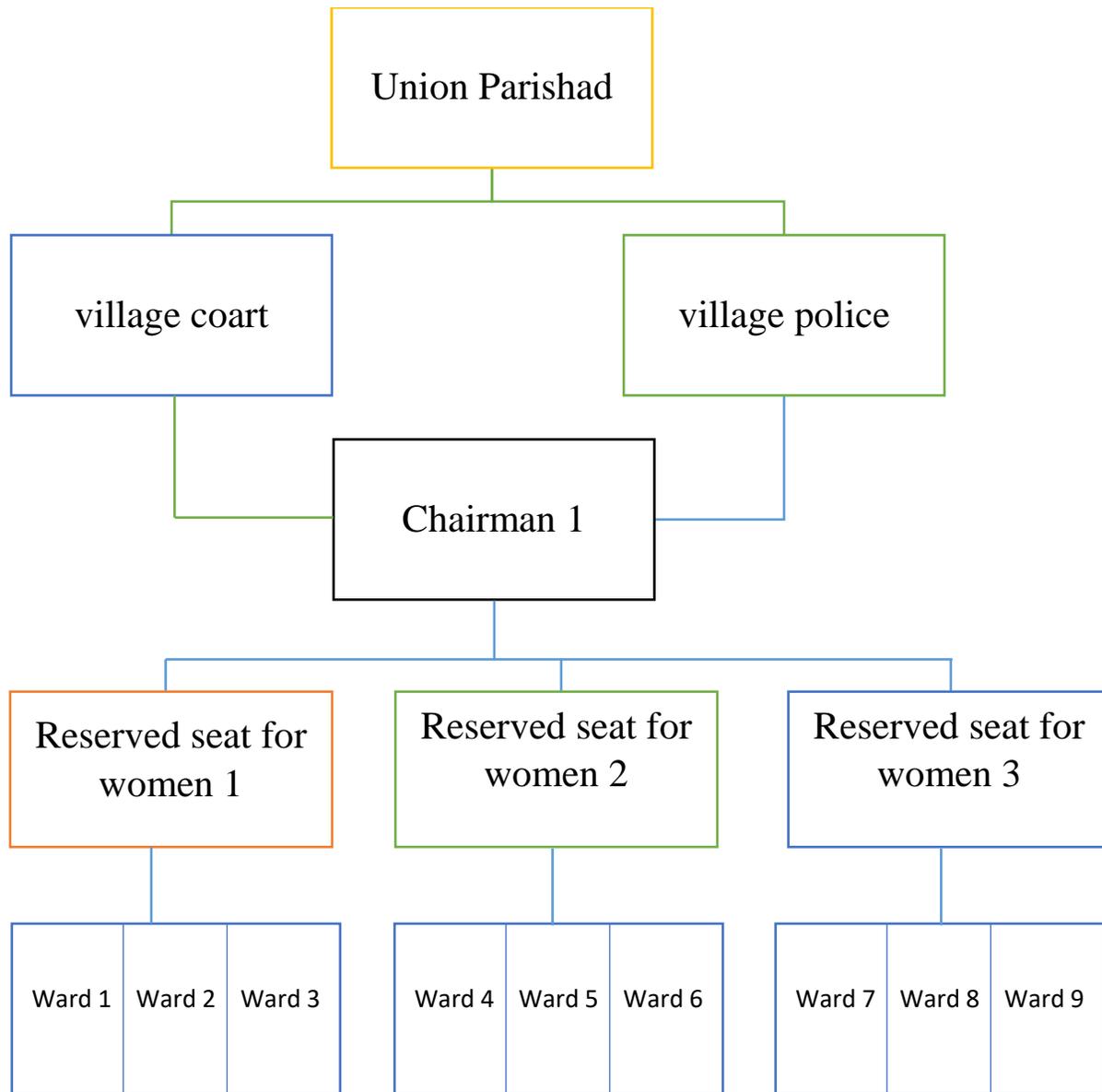


Fig 1: The Administrative Structure of Union Parishad.

The Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance 1983's most recent modifications split a union into the nine wards depicted in Fig 1. Nine members, one for each ward, and a chairman make up each UP's general seats. Three seats have also been set aside only for female members, who are chosen by the people in the three wards in question. On the basis of the adult franchise, the voters of the relevant ward choose the nine members in the general seats, while the voters of the whole union directly choose the UP Chairman. Both the chairman and the members get honoraria from the government, and the chairman is regarded as a member of the Parishad.

3.3 Women's empowerment and contribution

Empowerment of women is a process that controls women's rights and challenges gender differences in social institutions. The government focuses on women's empowerment, establishing new laws and regulations to promote gender equality. The Constitution of Bangladesh confirms equal distribution of women in all sectors of society. Women are a vital part of the country, and ensuring equal contributions from men and women is a global issue. Providing services for women and maintaining gender equality ensures global development. Bangladeshi women cover half of the population and actively participate in social, cultural, and political life. Everyone is treated equally in the eyes of the law, and giving opportunities to women is a top priority for development. However, women face complex positions in society, including maintaining social dignity, security, tradition, man-woman equity, modernity, and social pressure. The society is mainly men-oriented, with many male employees in many sectors

preferring male employees over females. Girls often complete their primary level but face challenges in higher education, leading to more reliance on men. The government emphasizes this issue, but it is unclear if male-oriented societies take this issue seriously.

3.4 The necessity of women's empowerment in Local Government:

It is a matter of fact that financial support is a necessary element for political purposes. The shortage of money women were always discouraged from participating in politics. Those who have decided to take part in politics are forced by customary political culture to spend huge amounts of money. As it is a male-oriented society, women in Bangladesh are mainly economically dependent on their male family members. If they participate in elections with the financial help of those males, they have to return the favor by giving 'preferential or special treatment' (even though that special treatment is wrong) if they win that election. In Bangladesh, the present patriarchal system automatically a women dependent on men, and men have strong uncertainties regarding women in leadership and management positions. Women in the national parliament do not reflect the level of political awareness of the women of the country. Sometimes the contribution of women in local government is more sensitive than national government. At the local level, politics needed to make women familiar with the problems of the local community in general. The women politicians of the local level go a long way in raising the political awareness of women around them with the help of their constant contact and interaction with the women (Sikder et al., 2011). As we have to spend a huge of money at the time of the election to promote the party, the interested women take back their steps. If a woman takes part in the root-level election, she can interact with those women who are victims of domestic violation.

3.5 Institutional Arrangement for Women's Participation:

Women's presence in politics and their ability to hold powerful positions at the local or national level are significantly influenced by political parties. However, despite the establishment of women's branches or committees by the political parties in recent years, women in Bangladesh still largely occupy weak and non-influential decision-making positions in the central executive committee of the various political parties because male leaders of the majority of political parties harbor strong prejudices against female candidates. Women used to be prohibited from voting in elections. Even they could not give a vote to elect someone as a leader. Women had no right to speak in front of the government. Women were most dominant in society in the past. The government established many Acts, and ordinances from the British period. No women could know about the laws that were established. *The Bengal Village Self-Government Act, of 1919* provided for the creation of elected Union Boards with restricted electorates. After establishing this Act, Women were allowed to vote in 1950.

Some of the institutions which give the opportunities to women for participating in Local Government body. Those are:

- **The 1993 Amendment to the Local Government (Union Parishad) Act:** A union was split up into nine sections under this Act. Three seats were exclusively reserved for women according to the provisions of the Act who were to be elected by the elected Chairman and the members.
- **The ZilaParishad Act, 2000:** This Act has been publicized to repeal all existing laws related to ZilaParishad which is applicable throughout the whole country except the Hill Districts. The ZilaParishad is composed of-
 - a. Chairman
 - b. Fifteen members
 - c. Five reserved women members.
- **The Upazila Parishad Ordinance, 2008 (Ordinance no. XXXII of 2008):** This Ordinance was passed on June 30, 2008. Under this Ordinance every Upazila has been declared as an administrative unit as per Article 59 (1) of the Constitution (M. R. Khan & F. Ara, 2006). Section 4 provides that the government should take steps to establish an Upazila Parishad at each Upazila after the enactment of the Ordinance. An Upazila Parishad will be composed of –
 - a. Chairman
 - b. One of the two vice-chairmen needs to be a woman.
 - c. All the Chairman of the Union Parishad within that Upazila
 - d. In the event that the Upazila has any Paurashava, the Mayor or designated Councilor
 - e. Women members of the reserved seat according to sub-section 4 (Ahmed & Nabi, 2001).

3.6 Bangladesh's National Policy for the Advancement of Women

The National Policy for the Advancement of Women in Bangladesh is the establishment of equality between men and women in all spheres and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls. The establishment of women's human rights develops as a human resource. Recognition of women's contribution to the social and economic sector and eradication of poverty is perceptible. Establishment of equality between men and women in administration, politics, education, games, sports, and all other socio-economic sectors and ensure empowerment of women in the fields of politics, administration, and the economy. Provide housing, health, shelter, and appropriate technology for women to create a positive image in the media in any adverse situation (Bangladesh Bureau of, 1998).

3.7 Reserved seats provide women’s incapacity

According to the *Local Government Ordinance 1983* women can take part in local politics where one-third reserving seats for women. Certainly, these kinds of legal protective recognition provide evidence of the traditional incapacity of women. It cannot be denied that it is an opportunity for women to take part in political development. On the other hand, it also indicates that if there are no seats for women it is impossible to take part in the process of political decision-making and become effective in redressing their grossly imbalanced status in politics (Akhter & Chowdhury, 2005). If women actively participate in politics with males equally to our politics, the male-dominated political culture should be changed. Before I discuss the equal rights of humans for both males and females which is indicated in the Supreme Law of Bangladesh. The reserved seats do not serve the purpose of the law. Moreover, it makes the women weaker than men (Ali, 1986).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unfortunately, our society is more or less dependent on males. If we talk about politics, most people (both male and female) think females need not participate to control the government.

Some major problems which women face to participate in Local Institutes:

- As our society is mainly male-oriented, the situation of Local Government institutions is controlled by the male. In this environment naturally, women do not feel comfortable. A few women work with men so women have to maintain the style and modes of men. As a result, the women cannot give their responsiveness in the specific work. Most of the males demotivate the females because they think women should not move themselves out for the position of general seat. Because of this harsh attitude, the communication gap between men and women increases day by day.
- We know education is the light of a nation. If half part of the nation did not utilize it properly then the nation could not develop. Maintaining social norms with several restrictions, and not achieving more than lower education in the life of women is always a barrier to participating in Local Government institutions. Women's freedom of speech is restricted by society. Mass people or families do not know about the laws that are established which give priority to women. As a result, they do not give any opportunity to the women to contribute in Local Government institutions.
- Women put more effort into their house chores because people in our society think women cannot concentrate outside of the house.
- Picketing and violence are examples of political engagement that may be used to persuade, inspire, and influence public authorities. Women in Bangladesh are typically not accustomed to these tactics, which is why they avoid politics.
- Huge amounts of money have to be used during the election. Each party leader spends money for advertising their party. Sometimes they give enormous cash to the poor people to vote for them.
- In the present situation, corruption is the main issue in politics. While the candidates participate in elections they invest a lot of money to get votes. They illegally give cash to the voters to elect them. As our country is poor, the poor people are easily convinced by them. Thus a worthy candidate is not elected in the *Union Parishad*.

4.1 Women participate in the Local Government.

It is apparent that women are now participating in the Local Government besides the men but the number of women recedes from men. Here is a ratio which shows the contribution of women in Local Government from 1973 to 2003.

Table 2 -Women contested and elected to the general seats (Huq, 2016).

Election	Year	Women candidates		Elected chairman and members	
		Chairmen	Member	Chairman	Member
1 st	1973	-	-	1	-

2 nd	1977	19	19	4	7
3 rd	1984	-	-	6	-
4 th	1988	79	863	1	-
5 th	1992	115	1135	8	20
6 th	1997	102	43969/456*	20+3	12882/110*
7 th	2003	232	43764/617*	22	12684/79*

From this table 2, we can see, that in the 1973 election, only one woman was elected as the chairperson of Union Parishad among 4352 unions. In the elections of 1977 and 1984, the elected women were increased in number. In 1977 only four women were elected however this number was only 6 in the election of 1984. In the 1988 Union Parishad election, out of 4401 Union Parishads, 18566 were elected, although only 79 women ran for chair and 863 for membership. In 1988, there was just one elected female chairwoman. Then in 1992, in the position of chairperson of 3899 unions out of 4398 Union Parishads, 115 women participated for chairpersonship and 1135 for members. Only 8 women were elected for chairperson with 20 members.

In the election of 1997, 102 women were fighting for the post of chairperson with 456 members. 102 chairmen and 110 members were elected. Additionally, out of the 44134 women who ran for reserved seats, 592 were elected without opposition, and 13,437 were elected. Later on, another three women were also elected as chairpersons through bye-elections. In that election women voters participated in an overwhelming number, 80 percent of women voters cast their valuable votes. In 2003, 7 elections were held. In this election, 232 women applicants fought for the post of chairperson and 617 women fought for the general seats. 22 women were elected as chairperson and 79 were elected in the general seats.

5. CONCLUSION

Hosne Ara Begum, an elected member of Union Parishad from Yarpur, has received significant support from her family, which is crucial for women to participate in politics. The Bangladesh constitutions outline a local government system with elected representatives, but these institutions have always been weak and poorly managed. Despite the importance of these institutions, they are increasingly becoming weaker due to the centralized system, which deprives them of functions, functionaries, finances, and freedom. Local governments are subservient to the bureaucracy and are increasingly controlled by Parliament members. Women are often harassed when working under men in local government, and there is a need to provide opportunities for them to contribute and influence their efforts. The article recommends structural ways of the Act to achieve 'equality' of results and suggests that the proper accommodation of values and commitments of males and females is the only way to promote a more balanced and concerned environment. Women's participation has positive effects on the quality of local government, as they have a legitimate space in rural political institutions despite their low political status compared to men. Without considering women's needs and interests, sustainable and meaningful results will not come. The inclusion of directly elected women members has created a new avenue at the grass-roots level for women to participate in decision-making processes in healthy democratic institutions.

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