

Women Empowerment in Bangladesh from Islamic Perspective

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Abstract: *The subject of empowerment of women has becoming a concerning issue all over the world since last few decades. As well as the emergence of the question whether Islam empowers women in the context of mainstream development has started a crucial debate in our society. Empowerment means moving from enforced powerlessness to a position of power through ensuring education, knowledge, skills and self confidence in every sphere of life which is necessary for the whole development process. Whereas Islam says that man and women are equal members of society who have shared their equal rights in all public affairs. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate on how Islam has encouraged empowerment of women in our various aspects of life especially in family education, economy and political sector. This article mainly emphasizes on the references from Quran and Sunnah and also gives focus on the way of life of early Muslim women. In this paper the researchers also try to focus on how women can be benefitted by ensuring social respect and security through implementing Quranic rules and Sunnahs. This article finally emphasizes on how Bangladesh can be benefitted by following Quranic rules and Sunnah in various aspects of women life through ensuring empowerment to attain its desired development.*

Keywords: *Economics, Education, Islamic Shariah, Politics, Women Empowerment,*

I. Introduction

In the contemporary age of globalization Women Empowerment becomes an important issue. Empowerment means to increase the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities by developing confidence in their own capacities. Women Empowerment refers the right to determine choices, the right to have access to opportunities and resources for taking proper decision, the right to have the controlling power in their own lives and the ability to changes other perception by democratic means. According to UNIFEM, the basic principle of women empowerment is equality. Equality in a business, workplace and market place or in a community is a pre-requisite for any society regarding empowering women. Bangladesh is a developing country. Half of the total population of this country is women whose socio economic condition is not so good. The status of women in Bangladesh remained comparatively inferior to that of men. Though women are working here in educational institution, multinational company, medical, Bank and other financial institutions, Garments and other factories, police even in some exceptional areas but still now in many cases they are neglected, tortured and dominated by male society. Without ensuring empowerment of women it is not possible to develop the overall socio economic and political condition of this country. Islam gives more importance to show a profound respect for women. Women in Islam are recognized as equal partner in the procreation of humankind. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

“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.” (At-Taubah 9:71)

From this verse it can be said that men and women are equal in the sight of their creator. The only way one can be better than other is by being more righteous. Islam empowered women by ensuring that their rights are preserved and counseling that they are given equitable opportunities to succeed is essential to contain the Quranic vision, *“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding justice”*. This article emphasizes on women empowerment issues in Bangladesh with reference to Islam in respect of personal, educational, political and economic point of view.

II. Objectives Of The Study

Broad objective: The prime objective of the study is to evaluate women empowerment in Bangladesh from the perspective of Islamic Shariah.

Specific Objectives: The specific objectives of the study are,

- 1.1 To identify the current position of women empowerment in Bangladesh
- 1.2 To evaluate women empowerment in Islamic Shariah from personal, economical, educational and political aspects.
- 1.3 To provide some recommendations on the basis of Islamic Shariah and Sunnah.

III. Methodology of the study

The study is descriptive in nature and the researchers follow an observation method to prepare this article. The data were collected from two sources:

3.1. Primary Sources

3.1.1. Al Quran

3.1.2. Al hadith

3.2. Secondary Sources:

3.2.1. Publications by various authors.

3.2.2. News paper articles.

3.2.3. Papers submitted in conferences

3.2.4. Various books relating to women right

IV. Literature Review

There is quite a great number of researches have been done concerning the women empowerment in the world during the past few decades. But very few of them have tried to address the issue of women empowerment from the Islamic point of view. The number of studies regarding women empowerment in Bangladesh from Islamic perspective is even lesser than that. Nevertheless, we tried to present review of some of significant studies from around the world as well as from Bangladesh regarding women empowerment from Islamic perspective.

Islam is a complete code of life which ensures the rights of all members of society, especially has placed women on a high status of honor and recognition. The Islamic concept of women empowerment is researched by different researchers in various countries.

Badawi (1971) in his paper has explained in details about how Islam has brought revolution in the life of women by comparing their status before Islam. He focused on different aspects of Islamic empowerment.

Bugaje (1997) has demonstrated with examples and evidence from Quran and Sunnah that Islam ensures highest level of women empowerment.

Professor Dr. Fathi Osman discussed about the rights and roles of women in a family and society in one of his studies regarding women empowerment from Islamic point of view. According to him an awareness of their Islamic rights and responsibilities has inspired many women to be committed to the Islamic message of justice, peace and prosperity. These concrete developments have provided a support for the Muslim woman, stronger than any philosophical or legal argument. On the other hand, Muslim men have realized the social change and have become more inclined to deal with it.

Murad (1999) described that, Islam's theory of gender is like a maze, a web of connections that demands familiarity with a diverse legal code, regional heterogeneity, and with the metaphysical no less than with the physical. This complexity should warn us against offering facile generalizations about Islam's attitude to women. Bharmitash (2002, 2003) has discussed the economic role of Muslim women in two different Muslim countries Iran and Indonesia and has proved that Islam is not a hurdle in the way of Muslim women to work for their country but impose some restrictions and liabilities.

Fargues (2005) gave an insight on the women empowerment in Arab countries. The significant areas of his study were, women fertility rate, age at marriage and opportunities and trends of job of young Arab women which are bringing change in the patriarchal system.

Gallant (2008) presented the case of feminism in Arab world; she concluded that in Arab Muslim countries such feministic approaches are only possible if they fulfill the religious and regional demands.

Dr. Aftab Ahmad Khan (2009) stated that the teachings of Islam must take precedence over the cultures and customs with embedded bias against women's constructive role in many Muslim societies, ironically in the name of the very religion that has granted women far greater rights than these social structures are willing to accept. Any empowerment efforts in accordance with the Qur'an's vision, which upholds women's status before the law, must be fully supported.

In a paper by Sarah C White on women's empowerment in Bangladesh and Islam raised a vital question of whether Islam empowers women in the context of a mainstream development discourse that prioritizes gender equality and a resurgence of academic interest in religion. She focused on the longstanding use of gender as a key signifier of both modernity and Islam. Here, she addressed in the context of contemporary Bangladesh where, while conventional indicators of gender inequality are narrowing.

V. Limitations of the study

For preparing this article the researcher faces some problems. These are as follows:

- 5.1. For research purpose various relevant data and information are most essential. But the researcher found very little research work on this relevant field.
- 5.2. There is a lack of availability of recent published data on women empowerment issues in Bangladesh.
- 5.3. There are several confusions among Islamic scholars regarding some women empowerment issues specially in terms of economic and politics. They could not reach to the complete conclusion about such concept till now.
- 5.4. Time to prepare the report is also an important for research work which was not available to the researcher.

VI. Women Empowerment in a family

The family is the first and essential area in which women's are empowered in Islam. Islam establishes women empowerment from the moment the baby girl is born. According to Islamic Shariah and Sunnah family should be responsible for empowering women by ensuring proper physical and economical growth of a girl as per her ability. And this empowerment begins the moment a girl is born. To ensure this it is stated in Quran:

"And whenever any of them is given the glad tiding of (the birth of) a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger. He is avoiding all people because of (the alleged) evil of the glad tiding that he has received, (and debating with himself): Shall he keep this (child) despite the contempt (which he feels for her), or shall he bury her in the dust? Oh, evil indeed is whatever they decide." (Surah An-Nahl:59)

Through this verse it is very clear that Allah instructed us to appreciate the birth of a girl rather than neglecting her and get rid of her by burying her alive. This kind of behavior is clearly termed as evil. Regarding this matter our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) said,

"Anyone who brings up two daughters properly they will be very close to me on the day of Judgment."

According to another Hadith whoever brings up two daughters properly and treats them kindly and justly shall enter paradise.

Not only as a girl child also in several aspects of family life women are empowered gracefully in Islam as an individual and equal entity in terms of deeds. This fact is supported by one of the verse of Quran where Allah says,

"O people Be conscious of your Lord, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women. And remain conscious of God, in whose name you demand (your rights) from one another, and these ties of kinship. Verily, Allah is ever watchful over you." (An-Nisa:1)

Here from the above mentioned verse it is understandable that Allah (SWT) has created all of us from one single entity which means not matter how much different a male look from a female from the outside their core is same. In front of Allah they will be judged by their deeds not by their physical appearance. And also it is made clear that men are not superior to women as they both have rights on each other which establish women as an empowered individual entity as person rather than an inferior person.

In Bangladesh though the rate of infanticide or killing of female infants is lower than other neighbor countries but still in some rural areas female children are still disgraced and the parents of a daughter are ill treated as a result of lacking of proper knowledge about a girl or women's position in a family.

Women are also given the freedom to express their opinions regarding several family matters which are related to her. The Quran explicitly addresses men and women without discrimination:

"Verily, for all men and women who have submitted themselves to Allah, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves (before Allah), and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who remember Allah unceasingly: for all of them has Allah readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward." (Al-Ahzab:35).

According to this verse both men and women are addressed equally as a believer, to be patient, and to do charity and other noble things in the name of Allah and also equally addressed those men and women who are non-believers. It means that a women has all the freedom to take decision regarding her religious belief, regarding her behavior in front of Allah, and also regarding how and where she would do her charitable activities, which as a whole projects the image of an empowered women. Islam also focused married women as homemaker instead of housewives as women is not married to a house. In recent Bangladesh the position of women is positively changing towards a decision maker rather than a decision follower amongst the urban families to some extent. But in rural families women still are dominated in the name of Quran and Sunnah which absolutely a wrong concept.

Islam also has given women the freedom of choosing her spouse according to her wish. The Qur'an informs us that women cannot be forced to get married neither by her family nor by the person who wishes to marry her and thus they are empowered to express their will. Quran has supported this fact as following:

"O you who believe! You are Forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness that you may take away part of the dower you have given them -except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good." (An-Nisa:19)

Here women are not only empowered to choose their life partner but also their husbands are asked to show her proper respect through kindness and equity. And also it is discouraged to show any type of harshness to a wife without any reason. In Bangladesh there are still cases where women are forced to get married mostly by their families, with someone whom she is not agreed willingly. And parents do this type of forceful activities neglecting their daughter's decision making power.

Not only in choice of spouse, women are also given the power to divorce her husband with reasonable excuse. It is said in Quran:

"But if their intention is firm for divorce, Allah hears and knows all things." (Al-Baqarah:227).

Here it is referred as they rather than men which surely states the women may also take decision regarding divorce if they have reasonable excuse. In Bangladesh because of lacking of proper knowledge regarding marriage law as well as divorce law men usually exercise the wrongful misinterpretation of Quran and Sunnah to dominate women while divorcing them.

Though Bangladesh is developing but still there are cases of domestic violence on women especially physical abuse by their husbands in the name of religion for dowry where Islam encourages the opposite situation. According to a verse in Quran it is said that:

And of His signs is that He created for you (wives) from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought." (Surah Ar-Rum:21).

Here Allah says that he created a man's wife from himself and he should treat her with mercy and affection rather than mentally and physically hurting her. In addition, there is no report that Prophet Muhammad ever struck or beat of his wives, even though he like most mortals encountered marital challenges and his life was the true reflection of Al-Quran.

As it is evident from the above discussion that Islam has empowered women from the very beginning of their life that is from the moment a girl is born in a family but there is still some negativity in the attitudes among the family members regarding women empowerment in Bangladesh. Mostly the reason behind this type of attitude is the lack of proper knowledge of Quran and Sunnah. To change this attitude government may introduce the topics like women studies from Islamic perspective from primary level to higher education level. Not only that but also should start discussion group for both men and women in rural Bangladesh under the supervision of Imam or other knowledgeable person who has proper knowledge of Quran and Sunnah regarding the women empowerment in Islam to exchange their point of views with each other.

VII. Women Empowerment in Education

"Iqra" was the first word of the revelation to our prophet. Therefore we all are commanded to read and learn. Islam always emphasizes women to empower in education.

"Seeking Knowledge is a duty of every Muslim, man or woman". (Al- Tirmidhi Hadith 218). From this Hadith it infer that education is not only right but the responsibility on every Muslim, male or female. It is in no way permissible for a Muslim woman to simply fulfill her chores as a house wife and remain completely ignorant of her religious duties. Aisha (ra), the youngest wife of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) can be an example in promoting education. She is a hallmark in female education in Islam. She had a great love for learning and became known for her intelligence and sharp sense of judgments. Because of the strength of her personality, she was a leader in every field of knowledge, in society and in politics.

In the Quran, Allah says, *"(This is) a Book (The Quran) which we have sent down to you, full of blessings that they may ponder over it verses and that men of understanding may remember."* (Surah Sad: 29)

It is important to mention that the word "men" in the above verse refers to humankind as it does so in several other places in the Quran when Allah addresses humanity. This verse informs the readers that engaging in critical thinking is a moral obligation on both men and women. The Quran repetitively reminds people to ponder, think, analyze, thus using their mind, power to contemplate and understand, whilst making no distinction between men and women. Our prophet preached Islam, liberating women and girls in every walk of life, education being a prime aspect.

Women are an integral part of the society. Without education and empowerment of the women, nations cannot get development and progress in a real way. During the past decades, Bangladesh has improved its education policies and the access of girls to education has increased. Bangladesh government takes some steps like compulsory primary education, free text books, free education for girls up to grade XII in public institution to empower women in education. To encourage girls student to continue their studies and also to reduce dropout

rates, stipends are awarded. In primary schools, female enrollment is now 51% and in secondary schools it is now 53%.ⁱFemale youth (15-24) year's literacy percentage is 78.86(2010)ⁱⁱ. Though Bangladesh government develops so many policies to empower women in education, therefore there are some obstacles.

Most of the cases women do not continue her education after marriage because of in laws house intention. They think as a housewife, women only perform their household duties, it is not necessary to acquire knowledge. In rural areas man always think if their housewives are educated they have no control over there. But Islam always emphasizes to acquire knowledge which helps Muslim women to make an idle & happy family life. Whenever Aisha (ra), the wife of prophet heard anything which she did not understand, she used to ask again till she understood it completely.

Lack of women primary & secondary education institutions, University and different campuses for female is another problem to empower women through education. Those who are practicing Muslims they want to give proper education to their daughter in such an environment where female can maintain their dignity as per Islamic shariah. For higher education Bangladesh government should establish a good number of Women University and different female campuses because our prophet encourages us to go outside for seeking knowledge.

Now a day's social security is the prime factor for getting education. Though Bangladesh government establish different strict laws combating violence against women but still now female in every sector of education drop out for this reason. In rural also in urban areas women are physically harassed in their institution. We are well informed from our media that so many female students could not go their school and colleges because of physical and mental harassment. Many incidents do not come into light for the threat of political leaders or for the fear of family prestige. Despite hard to harder laws or harsh warnings women of this country fall a victim to harass and torture. Government should take immediate action and make judgments for every crime which is also strictly emphasized in Islam. Then it is possible to empower women in education.

VIII. Women Empowerment In Economy

Islam is a complete code of life. Islam ensures economic empowerment women 1400 years ago that most Muslim women do not enjoy in today even in the west. Islam ensured the rights of inheritance to women before they were granted to other religion. A Muslim woman receives half of what a man receives in the share of inheritance but she has no responsibility in terms of her family maintenance. All of her basic needs of food cloth and shelter are provided for by her husband.

Allah say's in the holy Quran,

"Allah commands you as regards your children's (inheritance); to the male, a portion equal to that of two females; if (there are) only daughters, two or more, their share is two thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is half."(Sura Nisa:11).

"There is a share for men and a share for women from what is left by parents and those nearest related, whether, the property be small or large - a legal share"(Sura Nisa:7).

At the same time Islam also ensures the right to get Mohr from her husband. Allah say's in the holy Quran,

"And give to the women (whom you marry) their Mahr (obligatory bridal money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage) with a good heart". (Sura Nisa:4)

From the above verse it is revealed that Muslim women are entitled to accumulate wealth in various ways such as the right to get mohr, the right to inheritance having no responsibility of supporting the subordinate member in her family. Any property getting from parents house will remain under her control and the full maintenance of a married women is the entire responsibility of her husband even though she might be rich than he is. So it can be boldly said that Islam does not deprive their women by paying half of inheritance rather Islam ensure the financial empowerment of women though he will not involve any outside work.

But to some extent it is not practiced in Bangladesh especially in rural areas where women are still now deprived by their parents house when claim to get property as per Islamic Shariah .Islam also gives the right to get Mohr where most of the cases the man who are not well informed about the Islamic Shariah. They do not pay the full amount of Mohr to their wives before starting their conjugal life.

Islam is a religion of balance. Islam emphasizes men to do struggle and hard work for his livelihood by fair means because he is responsible for all economic needs of the family and bound to meet the financial requirements of subordinates. Allah Almighty says in Qur'an,

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient

(to Allah and to their husbands), and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property, etc.).”(Sura Nisa:34)

Islam does not hold their women responsible to earn their living. But Islam never say's anywhere that Muslim women cannot go outside to do work. Islam doesn't prohibit a woman to earn wealth by fair means. She can own her property and can manage her business as well. Allah Almighty says in Qur'an

"And do not covet what Allah has given some of you more than others: the Men shall have their due share according to what they have earned and the Women shall have their share according to what they have earned. So pray to Allah for his bounty; most surely Allah has perfect knowledge of everything." (Sura Nisa:32)

From the early Muslim history it is found that Muslim women performed their internal duties for her family at the same time they were engaged in several outside work. The first wife of Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu Alaihi Wa Sallam , Hazrat Khadiza R.A, successfully ran her trading business and the prophet was worked under her supervision. Other notable example of women economic empowerment can be Shaffa bint Abdullah, who was appointed to supervise and control the market by khalifa Umar R.A. during that period.

From the references of various hadiths it is also proved that Prophet Muhammad also allows women to involve in various economic activities.

Jabir bin Abdullah said: My maternal aunt was divorced and she wanted to harvest her date palms. A man rebuked her for going out, so she went to the Prophet (SAW) (inquiring about going out during 'Iddah) and he said: 'No, go and harvest your date palms, for perhaps you will give charity or do an act of kindness.' This hadith indicates that economic activities are not completely prohibited for women and they can take part in such activities which can cause wealth circulation in society and be beneficial for them also.

Narrated Abu Humaid As-Sa 'idi: We took part in the Ghazwa of Tabuk in the company of the Prophet (SAW) And when we arrived at the Wadi Al-Qura, there was a woman in her garden. The Prophet (SAW) asked his companions to estimate the amount of fruit In the garden, and Allah's Messenger estimated it at ten Awsuq. The Prophet (SAW) said to that lady, "Check what your garden will yield." When Prophet (SAW) returned from Tabuk and reached Wadi Al-Qura he Asked that women how much her garden had yield. She said, "Ten Awsuq," and that was Allah's Messenger (SAW) had estimated.

Bangladesh shows visible changes in economic empowerment of women throughout the country since last few decades. The Constitution of Bangladesh also grants equal rights to women and men in all spheres of public life [Article 28 (1) and 28 (3)]. Bangladesh has enhanced its women labor force from 24% in 2010 to 36% in 2013ⁱⁱⁱ. Labor force participation for females has been driven primarily by the growth of approved export industry jobs in textiles and the spread of micro financing operations by NGOs including the Grameen Bank. But still now garment workers experience several violations of worker rights which are supposedly protected in Bangladesh's labor codes. Among these violations are long working hours, illegal pay deductions, lack of safe and sanitary working conditions and denial of freedom to associate and bargain collectively. Sexual harassment and violence in the workplace is also extremely prevalent in Bangladesh. Women's participation in high skill, managerial, and government executive positions has increased only to a limited extent.^{iv}

It is apparent from the BBS data of 2010, at the national level as high as 64.8% employed women were engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing industry followed by 11.8% in manufacturing industry. The other notable industries wholesale and retail trade were (6.3%) and education services (2.0%). In the urban areas, the highest 48.90% women were engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing followed by 23.11% manufacturing. In the rural area, 69.51% women were engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing compared to 48.17% men.^v In a balanced society, there must be women physicians, women nurses, women teachers and others professional women, which is completely permitted by Islam. Now Bangladesh government concentrated more in true sense for women economic empowerment.

To encourage women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh, a number of financial incentives are provided by government. Between 2010 and 2013, banks and non-bank financial institutions has disbursed TK 67 billion to 57,722 women entrepreneurs from their own sources.^{vi} At the same time Bangladesh government should be more concerned to active all of particular centre created in Bangladesh specially to solve women issue. And it should also be ensured a safe working environment for women in every area and Government should show zero tolerance about women harassment issues. Bangladesh government also can establish separate women police station, women courts, and women development banks for the rapid improvement of women society which also inspired women to engage outside work. As a Muslim country Bangladesh government should also ensure that in every profession, specially where women employment must be required, a Muslim women can participate spontaneously by maintaining Islamic shariah i.e government should not impose any restriction on veil and ensure safe and favorable working condition for women.

IX. Women empowerment in Politics

Political involvement is a way to change the society's perception in democratic means. In Islam women have an opportunity to take part in politics not just as passive voters but also if needed as active participants. Social responsibility in Islam is derived from the Qur'anic verse which states:

"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." (Qur'an Surah Tauba:71).

This verse permits women and men to move for the betterment of society. Since the beginning of Islamic history women have had a voice in electing their leader. The leader of an Islamic state is elected by the people through a process known as bai'ah. Bai'ah is a contract between the leader and the followers wherein the leader promises to obey Islamic shariah and in exchange the follower will show their loyalty. It is revealed from Islamic history that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received the bai'ah from the people both men and women of that society which can be a great example of women voting rights in politics. The Qur'an addresses the issue of women giving the bai'ah to Prophet Muhammad in this way:

"O Prophet! Whenever believing women come unto thee to pledge their allegiance to thee...then accept their pledge of allegiance." (Qur'an Surah al Mumtahana: 12)

Many scholars do not support the political empowerment of women specially the position of the head of state. They refer the following hadith as evidence which says that: "a nation would never succeed that make woman in charge of her affairs." But this evidence has however been shown to be extremely unreliable on several counts and there is no explicit text of the Qur'an which directly denies women leadership. Rather Quran express positively about the role of Bilkis, the Queen of Sheba, who was the head of her state, and was praised by Qur'an for her intelligence and ability to make wise decision and actually succeeded since she came into Islam along with her people.

From the Islamic history it is also found that Some Muslim women was appointed to hold state position, one of them Hazrat Umm Hakim Baiza, who was the paternal aunt of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) an honorable learned women, at the post of Khilafat during the period of Hazrat Umar.^{vii} Without this there is a lot example that Muslim women was participate in many battles. The female companion Nusayba binte kaab was celebrated for her military skills for taking part in many battles. As an armed fighter in Uhud, she was continuously injured on her body for protecting the prophet. Praising her boldness, Prophet Muhammad said her position on the battle field that day was unsurpassed by anyone else, men or women. The most divine place on earth for Muslims, Makkah, was founded by Hajera, the wife of Abraham. Her determination, patience and faith were as remarkable as that of her celebrated husband.

According to the "Global Gender Gap Report 2012 by World Economic Forum" Bangladesh was ranked 8th globally in terms of political empowerment of women due to government's pro-women policies. In order to enhance women's empowerment, the number of seats reserved for women in the National Parliament have been increased by 5, and made 50. There has been a sharp increase in the number of women parliamentarians elected (20% of total seats) in the last national election. To create opportunities for women's increased participation in politics, reserved seats for women in union council, Upazila Parishad and municipalities have been increased to one third of the total and women are to be directly elected to those seats. More than 12,000 women were elected as public representatives in the last round of local government elections. Women's participation in local level elections was perhaps one of the greatest milestones for Bangladesh.

At present in Bangladesh, the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker and Deputy Leader of the House are all women.^{viii} Despite notably increased female involvement in National political bodies in Bangladesh, women in local government continuously face diversified problems still now. Women commissioner somehow dominated from their male counterpart. They cannot exercise their power to implement their commitment to publics unless they are given separate wards.

In Bangladesh women are half of total population. If women cannot be able to involve actively in all state affairs which is essential to enhance the socio economic development of Bangladesh, desired development of this country is not possible. There are several example of other Muslim country such as Turkey, Pakistan where women leader play a great role specially to solve women related issue. Some Turkish women leader (under the REFAH Islamic party) has shown great success comparatively to men in the elimination of prostitution and drugs in the Turkish cities on the eastern borders with the Soviet Republics. After revolution of Iran in 1979, women have been acquired an open opportunity regarding participation in educational, political, economic and social activities along with following Islamic norms and values.^{ix} In initial days of an Islamic Revolution, Imam Khumaini highlighted the role of women in an Islamic society with saying that: "Islam wants men and women, both have to progress. Islam has protected women from the societal ills. As men perform their daily important tasks, women must also perform. Islam has wanted that a female keep safe her dignity and value. In fact, there is no another example of women empowerment as Islam empowers"^x This idea will be clear from the hadith of the Prophet that says "every one of you is a shepherd, and every shepherd will be held responsible for his flock.

X. Findings of the study

After analysis of women empowerment in family, education, economic and political sector in Bangladesh from Islamic perspective the researcher found some findings.

- 10.1 Though Islam give the equal rights of men and women but in rural areas female children are still disgraced and the parents of a daughter are ill treated as a result of lacking of proper knowledge about a girl or women's position in a family.
- 10.2 From decision making perspective, to some extent women now take part in decision in their family. But in rural families women still are dominated in the name of Quran and Sunnah which absolutely a wrong concept.
- 10.3 In Bangladesh there are still cases where women are forced to get married mostly by their families, with someone whom she is not agreed willingly. And parents do this type of forceful activities neglecting their daughter's decision making power.
- 10.4 In Bangladesh because of lacking of proper knowledge regarding marriage law as well as divorce law men usually exercise the wrongful misinterpretation of Quran and Sunnah to dominate women while divorcing them.
- 10.5 Bangladesh has improved its education policies and the access of girls to education has increased. Still women do not continue her education after marriage because of in laws house intention.
- 10.6 Government should increase separate educational institutions for women specially in higher education level and also can establish separate campuses for male and female which lead to encourage women in education but these are not sufficient number in Bangladesh.
- 10.7 Though Bangladesh government establish different strict laws combating violence against women besides female in every sector of education drop out for this reason still now.
- 10.8 To be economically empowered, Islam ensured the rights of inheritance to women before they were granted to other religion. To some extent it is not practiced in Bangladesh especially in rural areas where women are still now deprived by their parents house when claim to get property as per Islamic Shariah.
- 10.9 Islam also gives the right to get Mohr where most of the cases the man who are not well informed about the Islamic Shariah. They do not pay the full amount of Mohr to their wives before starting their conjugal life.
- 10.10 Islam doesn't prohibit a woman to earn wealth by fair means. In a balanced society, there must have some women physicians, women nurses, women teachers and others professional women, which are completely permitted by Islam.
- 10.11 Bangladesh shows visible changes in economic empowerment of women throughout the country since last few decades. Government increases the rate of women employment in every sector of Bangladesh. But some where still now in some professional area where veil is restricted that's why many Muslim women, who want to practice Islam properly in their lives, do not get motivated to involve there. As a Muslim country such type of restriction should not be applied anywhere.
- 10.12 Female involvement in National political bodies in Bangladesh increasing day by day. But women in local government continuously face diversified problems still now. Women commissioner somehow dominated from their male counterpart.

XI. Conclusion

With the passage of time the issues of empowering women becoming more concerning matter for everyone. Though Bangladesh has made a rapid progress in empowerment of women but still there are lots of aspects it needs to improvise to derive a successful result from women empowerment. And this improvisation can be done under the guideline of Quran and Sunnah to ensure safety, dignity, and self-respect of women at any place inside or outside of the house wherever she wishes to work. Women empowerment does not mean only giving power in professional life but also empowering a girl in her family, in her educational institutions, in her conjugal life, and in any other aspects of a human life. It is also established through this article that Islam is not against women empowerment rather it has covered all the aspects of human life to ensure women empowerment in a proper manner. So to get a better and positive result from women empowerment in every sector Bangladesh government should follow the instructions of Quran and observe the examples established through the life of our Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh).

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