

## **Chapter-1: Prologue**

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## **Introduction:**

Leadership is one of the most influential social aspects. As a concept, it is older than antiquity that's base is deeply rooted in the society. There have always been leaders in all human communities since the time immemorial. In the society, many things have changed but attraction of leadership is ever unchanged. The society always has hunted its prey under leadership for various reasons including of peace and progress.

The main goal of society is to develop itself into a desirable position. To achieve this goal proper guidance is must. Here leadership is this able guidance. As far as leadership in social development is concerned, leadership acts as a guide to reach the desired goal of a society.<sup>1</sup> The expected development of a society depends on its leadership which has to be enriched by quality. Without qualitatively positive leadership no society can reach its goal.

Bangladesh is a developing country, which is socially committed to achieving different goals where leadership can very well be instrumental. A large number of people here are backward and longing for development, which has made leadership more unavoidable.<sup>2</sup> So, an effective leadership is very necessary in this regard. It is quite impossible to achieve any desired goal without proper planning and its execution. Leadership is a key to these.

Bangladesh is a country of about 68000 villages. About 80 % of the total population lives in the rural areas. The social structure of the country is not integrated. Moreover, the society, in fact, has failed to reach its desired development with the existing structure in its thirty six of Independence. In these circumstances, a large-scale structural change is very necessary. This change is the main condition to bring the society and the majority of its people at certain level of development. Hence a qualitative leadership at rural level has to be developed

which would carry out local development activities on the basis of the expectations of the rural people.

The concept of women leadership in decentralized governance and its role in rural development is very significant in the present context of Bangladesh. The issues of 'women leadership' have gained a momentum in recent socio-political discourse. Though it has taken a long period, the women in Bangladesh are now engaged in works far from their traditional ones i.e household works, post harvesting works, care for the young, nurse the sick, layout the dead, attend women to childbirth, comfort the sorrowful and quite unruliness.

Nearly half of the total population of Bangladesh is women, majority of whom live in rural areas. So their role in different sectors in rural areas is unavoidable. Moreover, women also have opportunities to play their role formally and informally in our society. Besides, women are major forces behind people's participation in the life of society today.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, there is no denying the fact that no true democracy, no true people's participation in governance and development is possible without the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life and at all levels of decision making. Besides, the goals of development cannot be attained without women's full participation. Moreover, women's participation is changing the world in which we live by bringing new priorities and perspectives to the political process and organisation of society.<sup>4</sup>

As far as the 'women leadership in decentralised governance and their role in rural development' are concerned, Union Parishad (UP), the lower tier of local government in Bangladesh is the arena of formal women leadership at local level. This is the only elected unit at local level in the present administrative set up of the country originated to give effect to decentralization where people elect the 'leaders' through direct votes, which has turned it into a 'formal leadership system'. The union Parishad is a basic unit of local government and the pivotal

point of various functions at rural level. This body carries responsibility and authority for the development of rural areas where an overwhelming majority of the population in the country live. This is the only 'representative lower tier' of the government, which is running from the very beginning with the mode of both administration and politics.<sup>5</sup> It is an honest symbol of local government formed by direct vote of local people with a span of certain period. It is also very important in the socio-economic matrix in Bangladesh that runs the state. It constitutes the base of the overall power structure <sup>6</sup> which has been working in the land for a long time. In its long way, the system also has worked as the primary staircase of entering into 'leadership' at local level.<sup>7</sup>

Women here at the Union Parishad are elected by direct vote of local people. They are elected in two categories: **one:** through direct election, **two:** election in reserved seats. The Constitution of Bangladesh has granted equal rights to men and women both in matters relating to the state and public life (Article 9, 10, 27, 28, 29, 66 and 122). Article-----9 especially ensures women representation at local government organisations. In Union Parishad, three seats are especially kept reserved for women. A union is comprised of nine wards. Nine members are generally elected from each ward. A chairman is elected from the entire union. Three women are elected from all nine wards, which are divided into three wards, called reserved wards. People in these reserved wards elect three women members. After being voted to power, the women leaders work together for rural areas as assigned.

Union Parishad is not new in Bangladesh. For quite a long time it has been working with different names and nomenclatures.<sup>8</sup> But broad involvement of women in decision making process at rural level is new one. The legal entrance of women into the UP occurred in 1976 after 106 years of working of the system in 1870. It was done with a view to bringing the women into mainstream development.<sup>9</sup> However, in UP election held in 1973 soon after the emergence of Bangladesh, we have seen women to contest in directly with men in the post of

chairman and member. But this counted a little bit of progress where only one woman was elected in the post of chairman.

The government in a circular nominated two women at each UP in 1976. Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) nominated them. Later, in another circular, the number of women is increased into 3 from 2 in 1983. The then Upazila Parishad made this nomination. In 1993, Government amended the earlier provision and provided UP with the power of nominating the women members. Later, significant changes were made on women participation in UP through the Local Government Ordinance passed in the parliament in 1997. The then government formed a Commission aiming to re-structure the local government.<sup>10</sup> As proposed by the commission, an amendment Act was passed to re-structure the Union Parishad giving provision for direct election to the three reserved seats for women. The election was held in December 1997. In the election 44134 women contested the reserved seats from whom 12,828 were declared elected. In that election 102 women fought directly for the post of chairman and 20 were elected. In general seats 456 women also contested, of whom 110 were elected. In that election an overwhelming number of women voters (80%) cast their vote. The 1997 amendment brought about a radical change in the role of women at decentralized governance and their participation in rural development. It was also a step of empowering women politically that ushered a hope of development of women leadership at local level. It was a milestone for rural women to participate in political process.<sup>11</sup> Later another election was held in 2003 that hailed the same situation.

## **The Problem**

In the context of contemporary analysis on development in Bangladesh, gender disparity has gained dominance as a cross-sector issue and demands special attention to foster women's access to basic service and their full integration in the

national development process. The fact remains that enduring development process is impossible without engendering the entire development paradigm. From this viewpoint, as long as women are excluded from the development process, development will remain uneven.<sup>12</sup> This fact is undeniable in Bangladesh where almost, half of the population is women. But women in our society are neglected. They are excluded from the mainstream of development process. They are not usually allowed to attend the development activities at almost all spheres of the society.

Union Parishad, the lowest formal body of government would be very instrumental in rural development activities by women where now about 13,000 women leaders are working after being voted to power. Though it took a long period, the provision for direct election to various local government bodies was undoubtedly a of change in the locus-standi of women in that bodies.<sup>13</sup> But the reaction is mixed. The women leaders in general claimed that they are not taken into confidence in the works of the UP. Some felt that they are not consulted. The other problems that they are to face include the intervention of in-laws in the family, village heads, elite and religious leaders and orthodox people. These elements always use abusive terms when the women leaders are carrying out their activities. The women leaders are sharply barred by their male counterparts in the body. They do not abide by the requests or suggestions of the women leaders. They try to create problems in various ways and influence the development works.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, weakness of the system (UP), lack of specific guidelines for the women activities, maltreatment by the local government officials, long-borne social conditions, lack of consciousness and sense of unity among the women and above all lack of supporting voice are all hindering the mode of function of the incumbent women.

It is evidence that after the failure of different development models to bring women to the mainstream in economic, social, cultural and political arena, the empowerment of women issues came to the forefront, which denotes 'giving

socio-economic and political power to women to make women more visible and strategically important in the decision making process. In our country empowering women is also a matter of discussion since ninety and their entrance in union parishad as legal entity is the significant progress regarding this. But due to their lower education and economic dependence, women are ill equipped to take such challenges.<sup>15</sup> It is also hampering the possibilities of development of women leadership at local level in the country as well as rural development by them.

## **Objectives of the study**

Despite some odds, in present context of Bangladesh, women are gradually becoming conscious of their rights, duties and parts in social process. They are increasingly becoming prominent in socio-economic arena and contributing a lot to both urban and rural areas. Efforts are also being made to build up awareness among the women at the grass root level by the government, semi-government, NGO's and various national and international organisations.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the ratio of women participation in different sectors including parliament, political parties, ministerial activities and other services are also increasing day by day.<sup>17</sup>

Given the context, the proposed study seeks to explore the emerging patterns of local women leadership along with assessing their role in the process of rural development. The proposed study aims at focusing on the possibility and potentiality of women leadership in the process of decision-making and execution of rural development programme as well as the problems that confront the women leadership in the task of rural development.

Accordingly, the proposed research seeks to address the following specific objectives :

- a. To know the form, origin and activities of formal women leadership in rural development in Bangladesh; their problems, abilities and prospect of contribution in this field.

- b. To analyse the perspective of Union Parishad as an institutional ‘growing point’ and ‘landing ground’ of women leadership at local level;
- c. To identify the problems on the way to development of women leadership;
- e. To add recommendations on the issue in the socio- economic and political perspective of Bangladesh.

## **Review of literature**

Nowadays, admirable works have been done on women issues and a good number of works are being done. Government itself and different non-government organisations have initiated and carried out various programmes including seminars, workshops, discussions and publications locally and nationally to develop the situation. Attempts are still going on as to how to increase the skills and abilities of women. Initiatives are also continuing to remove various social barriers and build up awareness in this regard. Some research works have also been done in this field. But most of them have little relevance to the present topic, particularly to formal women leadership at local level in Bangladesh, its development, structure based on rural power and their role in rural development.

Since a lot of full-scale books and research materials have been produced on this issue, which would be directly or indirectly associated with the present topics under the discussion, it is pretty tough to review all of them. Hence, here is an attempt to touch on some of the major studies done in and around the country at different times relevant to the present study.

A number of researchers<sup>18</sup> focused on the experience of local governments that are working in south Asian countries including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Shrilanka. These countries have shared a near similar experience on growth of this system during last two hundred years since the British rule. The book tried to highlight several pressing issues of the countries centering local government including lack of capacity building, structural inefficiency and derailment of

decentralization. The essays emphasised on building up the ability of leadership that runs the system and termed it very important in the ‘socio economic matrix’ of the south Asia. This is because most of the south Asian countries are mainly rural based countries. Majorities of the people are lived there at rural areas. If the rural leadership is developed with efficiency, the local development activities can improve much.

Prominent Bangladeshi political economist Rehman Sobhan <sup>19</sup> wrote an anthology, where he sharply scrutinized mechanism of basic democracy introduced during undivided Pakistan. The author tried to identify the political motive behind the basic democracy rather than delegation of power to the leaders under basic democracy. The author had lauded the super-structure of basic democracy and particularly highlighted the ‘local level leaders’ who are also regarded as ‘local agents of change’. But at the same time, he criticized the shadow intention of central ruler to use these leaders as a mechanism to form the central government. The writer however, concluded that if the local bodies had been given power to render local development activities, the basic democracy could have got a meaningful shape.

Another book on Basic Democracy by A.K.M Aminul Islam <sup>20</sup> observed that the introduction of local government, the Union Parishad by the central government of Pakistan under the title: ‘Basic Democracy’ had helped to develop a group of formal-local level leaders. He further notes that, although the local government Act gave legitimacy to these formal leaders, their sphere of influence could not surpass that of the traditional rural leaders. These formal leaders who were elected in the local bodies were mostly recruited from the informal power structure. The author calls them ‘emerging leaders’. But this book did not focus on details of this issue.

S.N. Mehta <sup>21</sup> delineates the leadership pattern in the changing perspective of social structure of Ropar district of India. The author studied the pattern of interaction between the leaders and their outlooks. He used positional and

reputational methods supplemented with socio-metric technique and observation. He concluded that the leadership pattern depends on the type of social structure. Basically, leadership of local level is diffused, not specific. Its growth totally depends on structural environment that is how these leaders can execute their charges. The researcher also pointed that if the structure carries traditional mode, leadership would take traditional pattern and if it carries modern and dynamic mode, then leadership too would assume modern shape.

M.A Mannan<sup>22</sup> in his book followed the changing pattern of rural Bangladesh just after the independence. The author has found that the leadership working at rural Bangladesh is basically limited to certain class, particularly who is dominant with properties and some other matters including family background, political affiliation etc. The author showed that the leadership pattern of the country has not broadly changed from its previous trend even thirty-five years of independence. The local government system for rural areas has not taken full shape due to faulty decentralization. As a result, the transfer of power at local level from the top obviously remained absent. Though it was expected that a new trend would be followed after adopting new society, it was in vain because the concept of local government system is not actually introduced. Consequently, the rural leadership could not grow.

Manzurul Alam's<sup>23</sup> study has focused on the prospect of local government to run development at rural Bangladesh through elected leaders. The author raised several important questions on the ability of local level leaders to discharge their duties properly through the existing structure of local government. The book also has drawn its attention to 'village court' under the elected chairman of the Union Parishad. He termed it as a significant milestone to settle peace at rural areas. The researcher proposed to decentralize the power to local bodies from top level to ensure feedback policy to mass people through their elected leaders. The author found that the leaders who represent local body have not enough power and freedom in policy making as well as financial management. The study has also

criticized the indifference of the government about allocation of fund for the local institutions.

In an empirical study by S.N Mishra,<sup>24</sup> views on emerging leadership at the grass roots level. The author concluded that leadership based on kinship has been shaken and associational leadership is gradually emerging and that traditional hierarchy does not command the same respect as they used to. Consequently, ascriptive leadership is giving way to the young and action oriented leadership. The author found a diffused power structure with leadership, democratic in attitude and regional in out look. The author went on to continue that that if central government makes congenial atmosphere, the rural leadership could give way to produce next leadership.

D.V. Raghava Rao<sup>25</sup> in a case study of 172 Gram Panchayats of Tankur district in Karnataka reflected the role of Panchayat in rural India; successively reviewed the parallel institutions working in other adjacent countries and tried to identify the common problems of the system. The author has also shared the ideas of increasing function of these bodies. The author comes to the conclusion that if the local level institutions are empowered, development at local level would be widened.

Atiur Rahman<sup>26</sup> goes on both theoretical and empirical work about rural power structure in Bangladesh. In depth literature survey, the researcher evaluated the rural administrative system in Bangladesh, while in empirical findings; the study has focused on local level leadership (i.e Union Parishad), its origin, class background, thinking, education, linkage with Thana or national level power structure etc. The researcher tried to highlight the gap between scheduled duties of such local leaders and their actual capability to perform those in the socio-economic and political perspective. However, after the 60s' decade the World Bank (WB) and other donor agencies like International Monetary Fund (IMF) emphasised on the third world country to start their development plan from the down level instead of the top. The agencies advised the government of the third

World countries to draw their attention to local level institutions for carrying out development programmes. They were looking for an ‘agent of change’ in rural areas. The then government of the third world countries like Bangladesh went to the Union Parishad. The researcher termed that these leaders constitute the base of overall power structure. To reach the rural masses, the national leaders need to use Union Parishad leaders as their ‘contractors’ and ‘contactors’. The researcher concluded that despite a heavy prospect of these leaders to implement the development activities at rural Bangladesh, the Union leaders could not do so. This is because the Union Parishads are not institutionalizing as was needed. The study has also found a gap between local and national leaders, though the local leaders should be vehicles to go to the national leaders at local level. Even the national leaders do not share development activities with their local fellows.

In their study, Sheikh Maqsood Ali and Hosna Jahan Ali,<sup>27</sup> have tried to present the significance of people participation in local government system as a ‘joint venture’ of local bureaucrats and representatives on the development work at rural level. The authors revealed that peoples and local representatives both should be more conscious about the development issues. This study also is a critique of the structural displacement of local government system at different time, of problems to run the development activities at local level and of sinister motive of bureaucracy on making an actual channel between top and down. The study also revealed its opinion in favor of rural institutions like union parishad. A representative body is very much better than any other imposed body. The study comes into conclusion that local government system could not perform what was expected through this institution. It suggested more people’s participation in local bodies.

Hasnat Abdul Hye<sup>28</sup> edited several articles that broadly have discussed the concept of decentralization institutions, which are working under local government and its capability of work in the experience of some south Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Shrilanka. Some renowned

scholars have sharply and broadly delineated the concept of decentralization. The book termed, decentralization means devolution of power from top to bottom where the down level organisation like various divisions of local government receives power from central authority to carry activities at local areas. Local people may either elect this local authority or not. Some of articles conveyed their support for 'elected character' as an actual decentralization like Union Parishad in Bangladesh and Panchayet in India. The articles also relate that despite having prospect of this local institution to carry development work at local areas, these are not articulated in south Asian countries. The countries have shared a common history of local government. The papers also emphasised on decision making power and mobilizing local resources by the local institutions.

Katar Singh <sup>29</sup> broadly delineated of the meaning, objectives, measures, hypotheses and determinants of rural development on the experience of India. The book devoted to expose tools related to the issue to make success the rural development entirely. It deals with rural development policies, policy models, policy instruments and selected rural development programmes followed in India. It also covered various organisational and managerial aspects of rural development such as planning, organising, financing, implementing, monitoring and evaluation.

Jahanara Huq and Mahmuda Islam <sup>29</sup> have focused on the prospect of women participation in local government system. It has drawn the attention to direct participation of women in Union Parishad. The authors termed it a 'change agent of development paradigm of Bangladesh' specially in local level, which is carrying a long time jeopardy. They said that women power may not be an ignorable matter in development while they are pretty more than half of the total population. They should gives more opportunity to work with male, while women in Bangladesh have already established their ability to work in various sectors including of politics.

A.K. Nazmul Karim <sup>30</sup> goes on a comparative study of local government that has been introduced in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh during the last two

hundred years. Karim in his study on two villages named Dhononrajpur and Gopalhati in Rajshahi district has observed certain changes in rural leadership pattern. He found that the educated youth, emerging from influential linkage, are coming forward to occupy formal leadership positions, which might create a new scope to strengthen the local government. This study has touched on the 'village court' as a special arrangement of local government in Bangladesh, which is conducted by local leaders to settle dispute at rural level.

Harry W. Blair <sup>31</sup> has compiled several significant articles regarding rural development in Bangladesh. The book observed the financial management of local government. The authors found that the entire rural development process was not going properly, as the local institutions below the upazila level were not articulated. Even, the allocations of finance for the local bodies were also insufficient to meet the needs of local people. As a result, local development activities did not reach the far off peripherals. There were no appropriate means to supervise the financial activities of the local bodies. The articles revealed that the local bodies had no special executive power to mobilize the rural resources. The executives of those bodies only wait for allotments from the center. The book further states that the central government too wants their allegiance. The author concluded that the local institutions should carry some discretionary power including decision making on the basis of local demand, mobilizing local resources to run the local affairs on their own. It also adds that financial allotment on the basis of local necessity with powerful checking system and developed good communication system between local and center should be maintained.

Rofiqul Islam <sup>32</sup> has analysed the existing organisation for rural development in Bangladesh and examine feasibility of applying the organisational theories. The prevailing rural social structure, system of land ownership and distribution of the benefits and evolving interrelationship between political, economic and social constraints have been examined. Efforts have been made to discuss the present strategy for rural development in order to focus on the changes

necessary to ensure effective participation. The author asserted that systematic development of people has been considered as subject and object of the development process which includes upgrading of personal abilities through education and training. This book centered around the question of applicability of organisational theories and human resource development functions in rural development in Bangladesh in order to ensure participation for achievement of desired objective.

Thomas Costa <sup>33</sup> concentrated his study on two villages of Rangpur and Dinajpur district. The author has found that two types of leadership are working at rural Bangladesh. One is called 'formal' leadership and the other is 'informal'. The Union Parishad is the ground for formal leadership where people elect the leaders. It carries legal identity to conduct activities at local level. The informal leadership includes those classes that are influential with properties, cast, religion, education etc at rural areas. It stays at village level. It has no legal identity to rule the village, but makes influence on the rule. This research paper shows that most of these formal leaders either come from such informal ground or stay close to those who rule the village informally. The researcher examined that both types of leadership play important role to lead any activities at rural areas. The study however, emphasised on more empowerment to those local bodies that carry constitutional status as well as legal legitimacy to conduct local affairs.

Hasnat Abul Hye <sup>34</sup> has illustrated the background of rural development on the concept of Integrated Rural Development (IRD) and also examined the various issues involved in IRD. The author further analysed the impact of IRD on equity, people's participation and poverty alleviation. Basing on the analysis, the author argues that the IRD model can incorporate component for poverty alleviation to respond to the problem of poverty more directly and ensure greater participation of the target group within the multisectoral integrated framework for rural development. The author mentioned that local government units can play an important role in rural development, particularly in the third world countries.

Mohammed Abdul Aziz <sup>35</sup> systematically traced the background and evolution of the union parishad in Bangladesh and the then conceptual discussion. It examines the structural pattern and functional arrangement of the UP to identify the existing the problems. It is actually an environmental analysis. After consolidation and assimilation of major problems the book focuses on possible measures for improving financial and operation effectiveness of the UP. The basic considerations as pointed out are to make the UP more responsive to local needs and aspirations, to ensure people's participation and to provide resource and skill necessary for coordinated approaches to development.

Women and Politics <sup>36</sup> the book is some articles discusses the then condition of women at different social stages in Bangladesh based on various informal sectors the women are engaged in maintaining their livelihood during the period of 1971-72. The book casts its looks on a regime change where the country was emerged as a sovereign country. It also focuses on the government steps at different times in the country to develop the condition of women. The book lastly blames all the previous governments for not enacting any policy for the women. It raises a vital point that although both heads of the government and the opposition in the country are women but they did not take any initiative to develop the condition women, who hail half of the population of the country.

Sayeda Rowshan Qadir's <sup>37</sup> (ed) book includes several articles that broadly have discussed the situation of women empowerment in contemporary 'power practice' in Bangladesh when two key leaders-----Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition in parliament are women. Articles of the book were written by executives of several NGOs working for women development, women thinkers, journalists and women leaders. They have made their discussions more or less on the basis of their experience during working with women at local level. They have discovered that women at local level are not actually participating in politics. It is not that the local level women are unconscious of politics. They are more or less informed of politics. But mostly they are barred from their family and society in

participating in politics. They urged that women should be encouraged to take part in politics so that they can make their contribution to nation building.

Ashrafuddin Ahmed and Tariq Ahmed <sup>38</sup> (eds) the book is based on the workshop papers recommended by the participators including scholars in a series of workshops held in different times that was jointly organised by Rural Development Academy (RDA) and Canadian International development Agencies (CIDA). The book included several articles on Women Development (WD) and Women in Development (WID) issues. The articles articulated the position of women in informal and informal sectors in the society of Bangladesh. In the informal sector, discussion has gone on the contribution of women through their different works in rural development. In formal ways the discussion emphasises on the role of women through local government institutions i.e. union parishads. The patterns of role of women have also discussed in several articles.

Muhammad Mustafa Alam, Ahmed Shafiqul Haque and Kristen Westergaard <sup>39</sup> edited the book based on the findings of a survey conducted in 1990 of four erstwhile upazilas in two districts in Bangladesh. The study was done when 'upazila' an important decentralised form of local government went to near the abolishing. It examines the process of decision-making observed at the local level and evaluates the performance of the local government institutions in initiating and implementing miscellaneous development projects. Besides, income and expenditure pattern of the local government institutions in some details also dwells on the study. It is argued in this book that Bangladesh needs a local government which is more participatory in natures and enjoys a greater degree of autonomy than has far been case.

S. Rowshan Qadir <sup>40</sup> has examined the role of women leaders in both informal and formal organisations and institutions in rural and urban levels. Groups and associations settings for different purposes at the levels have also considered as leadership. The important facts have been identified in her study is that what criteria acts behind a woman to be leader-----family background,

involvement of women in different organisations and projects, qualities of success-----have been discussed in Qudir's study.

M. Abdul Wahab <sup>41</sup> has analysed the leadership pattern of four successive elections of six unions Parishads of Kurigram district. The study reveals that the Union Parishad leaders represent the upper strata in the rural society and as such, they significantly differ from the general people. This is due to the fact that all categories of people are not proportionately represented in the Union parishad. The author has portrayed who are mostly coming into the rural bodies. The researcher has found that the leaders elected in the bodies are rural well-to-do people who control the rural power structure. This study also has examined the economic status of the leaders, their sex, age, experiences, and their relations with national politics, their knowledge about local and national issues. The author finally has concluded that the union parishad leaders are very important not only at the stage of policy making but also at the final stage of implementation of the policies at rural level.

Dr. Moksuder Rahman <sup>42</sup> in his study has attempted to trace the development of the system of local self-government in Bangladesh. The book details on the changes of local self-government system during different regime since the independence of Bangladesh and the problems of its continuity and institutionalization process. The study is also honest attempt to portray a theoretical model of an ideal type of local self-government.

Dr. Afroza Begum <sup>43</sup> has explained different approaches; the structure and process of development management in Bangladesh. Moreover, the book elaborate o the institution building and its major features within the broad framework of development management. Attempts are made to define and categories the NGOs. The book also explains the institutional strategies of the NGOs and present different view on the possible relationship between the government and the NGOs. In the context, it shows the genesis, function, strengths and weakness of the NGOs



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both global and national level to work for development. Collaborative development programmes of government and NGOs has also covered.

Selina Hossain and Masduzzaman <sup>44</sup> (eds) has compiled several significant articles regarding women empowerment in contemporary Bangladesh. It observed the theoretical and empirical perspectives of women empowerment and analysis of the inter-relations between society and state with empowerment of women. Some of the articles also have analysed the significance of decision-making in the way of empowerment of women. And some have put on the present empowerment process of women through participation in local government system and parliament.

D. Kamal Siddique <sup>45</sup> has written several famous books on local government. In this book the author categorically delineated the prospect of local government in Bangladesh as a representative organisation at rural areas. The author termed the system as a basic institution in Bangladesh running for about two hundred years. The book also has given a special attention to Union parishad. He even mentioned that Union Parishad is the only institution that represents the local government at rural areas in Bangladesh. The Union parishad carries a democratic norm where the leadership is made by people's ballot of local areas. This leadership can make significant prospect of development at rural areas as it stands there. The author concluded that despite booming prospect, the Union Parishad in Bangladesh is remaining an ignored ideology. He emphasised on more power devolution to local level that will be dealt with those leaders who are the leaders of local levels.

Amanur Rahman <sup>46</sup> compares between the elected representatives of two successive union parishad elections held in 1997 and 2003. The study mainly focuses on the prospect of development of leadership qualities of the elected representatives of the local bodies who are known as local-level-leaders. This leadership is formally based on union parishad, the lowest tire of present local government in Bangladesh and pivotal of various functions at local level. These

functions revolve around the leaders who are elected by direct vote of the local people. The main objectives of this research work are mainly to identify the base of this leadership-----its nature, position, behaviour, business, problems and prospect. The study discusses the nature, scope and methodology of the union parishads and shows how the problems affect the ways of development of the leadership. It has also elaborated the rationale and objectives of the subject and presented the hypothesis to justify the reason why it is important. It further shows the ways and means how leadership can be developed.

Besides, a good number of research works have been done on Panchayat Raj in India since the beginning of launching the unique 'local government system' in the subcontinent. The works goes on different issues i.e. leadership pattern, social structure and political and economic background of the leaders irrespective of male female, influence of castes on the emerging of leadership, age composition, income, education and socio-political conditions etc that is importantly related to our research problem. We think that it will not be out of place to have a brief sketch on some of the important studies in other countries in our study.

Alan Beals and William McCormack (eds) <sup>47</sup> discussed about Panchayat Raj in India. They found that a new set of formal leaders were emerging out through the institution in Mysore. At the same time, the researchers observed that this new leadership was yet weak and feeble and could hardly challenge the traditional entrenched and socially powerful elite groups. Bijnath Singh <sup>48</sup> in the same volume shared another similar paper where mentioned that the leaders were coming to rule Panchayat Raj were comparatively from young age. Singh also observed that most of them were belonging to middle income group. Research paper by K. Seshadri <sup>49</sup> observed that some 'feudal' characters like prestige, money, cast, patronization by power motivated to gain leadership. People those who belonging with these easy to hold leadership position.

In another research sociologist S.C Dube <sup>50</sup> observed that village factionalism was very significant to domain on the leadership position. He felt that cast was not much helpful to influence on earning leadership power. The prestige of status symbols, financial resources was weakened in the wake of village factionalism. M. N. Shrinivas <sup>51</sup> observed that the dominant caste was functional for the maintenance of village community and also works as a referral point for the lower castes to improve their position, both social and economic. Narian Iqbal and M.C. Mathur <sup>52</sup> in their research showed that the Panchayat Raj was not free from power factions. The same view has been shared by Patnaik. <sup>53</sup> He observed that Panchayat was still functioning on traditional lines with power influence of case and kinship.

Dubey <sup>54</sup> found that the leaders at Panchayat in Maharashtra were influential due to their strong political linkage with state level. Bhat <sup>55</sup> had studied dominant caste and its political relation. Ranbr Singh <sup>56</sup> stated that the village level land owners captured most of the post of Panchayat Raj and trend was strong. Ranbir termed it as 'agricultural castes' where people low income scheduled castes failed to hold the rural power structure. A joint study by M. shivah, K.B. Shrivastava and A.C. Jana <sup>57</sup> pointed out that a good number of leaders elected in Pnachyat Raj (below 35 years) in West Bengal in 1978 were young aged and educated.

B.S. Bhargava <sup>58</sup> concluded after his study eaders of the higher tire were older than the leaders of the lower tires as well as educationally, the higher levels had better representation of the educated persons. The government of West Bengal, in its report on Gram Panchayats in West Bengal and their Activities : Survey and Evaluation <sup>59</sup> found that the average age of the institution was 39yrs. At the same time, in case of occupation, the owner-cultivators were found to constitute the majority.

Sachida Nand Mishra <sup>60</sup> shows that land holding factors still a dominant role in shaping the village leadership and major sections of the leaders belonged to the rural elites. At the same time, researcher also found the trend of emerging

leadership from low income and lower caste. From a study of 'Panchayat and Rural development : some relevant questions re-examined with the case of Purulia district in West Bengal,' Pradosh Nath <sup>61</sup> observed that the rural poor had no significant representation in the new Panchayats. No agricultural labourers were among the elected leaders. Lastly, the researcher found no sign of change in West Bengal Panchayats. Atul Kohli <sup>62</sup> stated that the institutional power of Gram Panchayats was being transferred from the hands of the dominant propertied groups to lower middle stratum. The researcher (Atul Kohli) <sup>63</sup> in another study observed share croppers and agricultural labourers constituted about a half of the new Panchayat leaders in West Bengal. V Lalini <sup>64</sup> in her study found that while majority of rural leaders hailed from upper and middle social background, a significant representation of such leaders was noted from the lower strata of the society also. G.K. Lieten <sup>65</sup> studied on socio-economic background of Panchayat leaders in West Bengal where he showed that a new type of leadership had come to dominate the stage at the lower levels. Though the bigger land owners upper caste people were still dominant, a number of people from poor peasant, agricultural labourers and therefore, also the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes had come very much to the forefront. Neil Webster <sup>66</sup> observed in his study observed that the poorer sections and scheduled castes had significant formal participation in the Panchayats of West Bengal. He noted the situation as 'considerable' before the situation of pre 1978. He however, shows that participation of women was still under obstacle of fundamental social and culture.

A.T. Kitur <sup>67</sup> analysed the emergence of rural leadership on the basis of their social-economic background. He noted that the Panchayat leadership was younger in age but hailed from locally dominant caste. Without reserved seats, the weaker sections were not able to penetrate into the Panchayat power structure. Moneyed and land lords always dominant in Panchayat elections. In their study, G.L. Roy and Sagar Mondol <sup>68</sup> observed a declined ratio of dominance of classes and castes in Gram Panchayat Pradhan. They observed that 60 percent of the

leaders belonged to the middle and lower middle classes while about 40 percent to the upper middle and upper classes. Promesh Acharya <sup>69</sup> found that despite the apparent success of Panchayat Raj under Left front in West Bengal, the overall domination of privileged classes over the rural power structure remained unchallenged. Swapan Kumar Pramanik and Prabhat Datta <sup>70</sup> in West Bengal experience have raised the evidence of pro-poor orientation of the Panchayats that had made them 'instruments' of social change. Mohanty <sup>71</sup> in his article goes on women participation in local government in India. He termed the reservation could only be regarded as first step in this direction that was necessary to create proper social, economic and political conditions to enable women to participate effectively in the institution without engendering the positive values of the prevailing family. In his comparative study between India and United States, John Echeverri-Gent <sup>72</sup> observed the Panchayat system in West Bengal have been democratised. He however, admitted the fact of domination of the middle classes at the bodies. But 'the social background of Pradhans differed from that of the traditional elite.' G.K. Lietaen <sup>73</sup> in another study of Panchayat leaders in West Bengal resounded what he had in his earlier survey on emerging types of the leadership from the lower levels even poor peasant, agricultural labourers and therefore, also the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He indicated that the character of public space had changed. The said groups had very much come to the forefront in the public arena. Mahi Paul <sup>74</sup> raised the question of the constitutional obligation on share of Panchayat composition giving space for women and weaker sections. Mahi showed that though the constitution of India made a watershed in decentralisation through 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment, but the politicians and bureaucrats had not allowed the women and weaker section into the system.

Dilip K. Ghosh <sup>75</sup> has attempted to identify the class background of the women were able to emerge as rural leaders by the virtue of 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment of the constitution and their own ability. He observed that women participated in grassroots politics were younger in age. Their participation was also irrespective

of caste, creed or religions. Most of the women were lower educated than their male counterparts. A large number was of agricultural families and housewife in status.

K. Jeyalakshmi <sup>76</sup> advocated the system of reservation has ensured the participation of women in the governance of Panchayat. She termed the system as an ‘opportunity’ of the sections concerned that also helped to promote leadership at grassroots levels. Snehalata Panda <sup>77</sup> goes on much critical on the issue of women participation in rural politics in Orissa. She concluded that women entered in politics due to the mandatory of one-third provision of reservation. Majority of them were non-political in background got opportunity to enroll in politics due to pressure from political party or village community or persuasion by their family members. Manu Bhaskar <sup>78</sup> in another study on women involvement in politics in Kerala showed that political leadership of women in grassroots democracy in Kerala was strongly influenced by the caste and community representation. The study further stated that some variables i.e. age, occupation, income determined entry into politics of women. Manu observed that the political parties have no significant role in motivating women to politics. P. Jeyabal and K. Dravidamani <sup>79</sup> in their study found that majority of the women elected in Panchayat as president was young. Their age groups were between 21-35. Besides, most of them were from cackwrd community and Hindu in religion. Their educational qualification was up to higher secondary. Abdul Aziz <sup>80</sup> in his observation termed the reservation as a fact of bringing a large portion of representatives from weaker sections into the Panchayats.

Glyn Wlliams <sup>81</sup> goes on different problems suffers the Panchayat system. In his study he emphasised on significance of the institutions, particularly role of the system in the empowerment of rural poor. He noted it as pivotal play. He concludes that though the Panchayat had some difficulties, but it helped positive to change the rural livelihoods.

George Mathew <sup>82</sup> in his writing appraised the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment of the constitution that opened a big way of positive democratic participation of women into the Panchayat system at the district, block and village levels. Mathew however, shows the other side the system that the women representatives can not set dignity from their male counterparts and local bureaucracy. In many cases, Mathew observed women members were used as proxy members by their male family members who wielded the real power. Sonally Chakravarti Banerjee <sup>83</sup> measured the empowerment of lower strata including small and marginal farmers at the Panchayat bodies. Sonali's hypothesis also says that though the male leaders are still dominant, the presence of women at Gram Panchayat was also increasing.

Moitree Bhattacharya <sup>84</sup> goes on about the party politics and influences over the Gram Panchayat. She noted that parties exercise all possible influence to keep the Panchayat members under their control. The members even have no freedom to take any decision independently. The members are to follow the decision taken by party leadership. D. Bandyopadhyay <sup>85</sup> in his writing stated the central control over the constitutionally created autonomous bodies. He criticises on the Act of Village Development Committee in 2003 terming cumbersome, unworkable and confusing that is not relevant to self-government. In another writing Bandyopadhyay and others <sup>86</sup> mentioned that from Lord Ripon to Rajiv Gandhi the tendency of ruling classes has been to control the local government system in various ways. They also retaliate on bureaucratic framework the same forces to keep their control even democracy.

A. Celine Rani <sup>87</sup> carried out her case study on emerging pattern of women leadership at rural level and their socio-economic status. The study conducted in Dindigul district Tamilnadu state. The study shows that majorities (79.6%) of rural women emerged from the age group of 20-40 with an average of 34.4%.

Sukanta Bhattacharya <sup>88</sup> in a village study shows that the representation of lower class and lower castes has been established at the level of Panchayat. But at the stage of leadership, the power is still in hands of middle peasantry. Pradeep

Narayan <sup>89</sup> in his study made an emphasis of empowerment of excluded sections within the system to ensure their productive participation. Prabaht Datta and Panchali Sen <sup>90</sup> in their work displayed the problems of the women leaders of Gram Panchayats they face. They observed that large number of women leaders elected is neo-literate. As an elected entity, the women have a good number of works. So they have to perceive their duties in the system. But due to their poor literacy, most of the women face difficulties about their works. In an article by Mahi Pal <sup>91</sup> stated the central control over the Panchayat Raj. He mentioned that central government, which party it is never works for effective decentralisation at Panchayat Raj though it is always one of the key issues of their election manifestos. The system is always under a mercy of central government. In another study by Girish Kumar <sup>92</sup> appraised the introduction of reserved seats for women that ensures women representation irrespective of castes and communities. But he found that the women members are very much helpless during the works. In most cases, male leaders handle the affairs of female leaders and sometimes by party leaders.

H.D Lakshinarayanan <sup>93</sup> studied on the problems encountered by the village Panchayats. He mentioned that Panchayats are so long financially subservient to the higher bodies; they can not be effective agents of rural change. He urged to free the Panchayats from financial hardship so that Panchayats can start work vigorously in rural development. Pramatta Saran <sup>94</sup> found a continuum between tradition and modernity on leadership pattern in rural India. The author found that caste, religion, education, wealth and joint family were base of leadership in rural India. In his book V.M. Sirsakar <sup>95</sup> found that Panchayat Raj, as a political system at rural level is always under control of a leadership which comes from the rich peasantry which has tradition, social status, wealth and other factors in its side. He also observed that rural politics and the local political system is more competitive than constructive. Andre Beteille <sup>96</sup> discovers a considerable interpretation of castes, class, and power hierarchies. It is a study of power structure and leadership.

He concluded that power rested with the formal structure, e.g., Panchayats, parties and groups. The old bases of power such as birth and ritual status had been replaced by castes, numerical support, party membership and contact with government officials. Sager Ahmad <sup>97</sup> studied on a Punjabi village now in Pakistan. Ahmad found that power and influence in the village is in hands of land holders and rich those who control the production. O. A. Oeser F.E. Emery <sup>98</sup> has dealt the social structure and the community lives there, their economic life, family and their political attitudes. Yogindra Singh <sup>99</sup> goes on power structure and leadership in village India. He observed an increased competition for power between the section of lower castes and class groups.

Mohon Lal Sharma <sup>100</sup> dealt with 'politics' 'castes' 'class' and 'power' with their inter-actional patterns. The author discussed the traditional and emerging leadership in the rural India. He found that despite class dominance in village power structure, cross-types of leadership pattern are also existed there.

Robert A Dahal <sup>101</sup> has tried to develop a typology of community power structure of an urban area in American society. Dahl found that power is broadly diffused and historically, economic and social dominants have played a decreasingly important role as holders of formal positions of influence in the community. Robert A Dahal <sup>102</sup> in another study shows that society's power is interchangeable among the layers including----holds power (powerful) and seeks power. Two more groups are also into the boundary of social power-----apolitical stratum and political stratum. The powerfuls and the power seekers play important role in controlling the power structure. Professor Norman Upoff <sup>103</sup> in her research paper summarises some of the findings of a working group sponsored by the Rural Development Committee, Cornell University on inter-country experiences with local institutions, decentralisation and resource mobilisation. Upoff emphasis on involvement of the whole range of public, membership, voluntary and private institutions in the decentralisation process as they can contribute to local governance through resource mobilisation. Harry W. Blair <sup>104</sup> goes on local

government institutions, people's participation and rural development. Blair emphasised on re-orientation of bureaucracy from people, beneficiaries and lower level functionaries of the administration. This will help to develop effective administration at lower level and extend participation of people into the system. Bair however, cautions that participation is not substitute for rural development administration but that participation will not work in the absence of effective administration and vice versa. Dr. Asoka S. Gunawardena<sup>105</sup> examines some of the emerging issues in the socio-political development, structure of decentralised administration, programmes for local resource mobilisation in Srilanka. In the backdrop of these, he analyses the functioning of the local government institutions. Asoka stated that Development Council (DC), Pradesh Mondalaya (PM) and Gram Mondalaya (GM)---the three tires of local government have introduced a new pattern of development administration where people participation can take place. But he shows that several environmental factors like the tradition of centralism, reluctance to share decision-making on the part of mainstream politicians' etc. influence the scope of participation and extend of administrative decentralisation. Dr.Prachanda Pradhan<sup>106</sup> focuses on the government organisation in Nepal at district and local levels and the process of decentralisation of power and approaches adopted by the government reaching the village people. According to the author, the most important issue is how to bring the people closer to the process through which decentralised power is exercised. He however, bemoaned that implementation of foreign aided rural development programmes in Nepal, resource mobilisation at local level is being suffered a set back.

It is clear that a number of studies on local government had done in and around from since the period of long concern. But it seems to that all went on banking some certain goals. Although the researches briefly analyzed and mentioned some fundamental aspects of local government system and process of leadership development, they could not look at the subject as is designed by the

present researcher. A careful analysis of the above mentioned literature review reveals the testimony to the fact that they are not adequate enough to give a fuller and clearer understanding of the proposition of the topic.

The aforesaid researches have gestured the general characteristics of local government, its problems and prospects. But they have failed to delve deep into the issue of development of women leadership and its role at local level development. Particularly the elected women leaders of union parishad, its problems and prospects have sharply remained absent. This leadership is now an important variable of local government, but no study did deal properly with this pressing issue. But the focus of our study is specified to trace out the women leadership pattern of this local institution as well as its problems and prospects of development. Moreover, most of the researches ignored the necessity of empirical method or superficially used it on the issue. And hence, a fresh approach to the subject becomes a rewarding investigation of the day.

## **Rationale of the study**

There are many reasons as to why the present study is of significant. Not only in Bangladesh, women issue especially their development as well as assessing their role in the process of development is a burning global issue.

Bangladesh is mostly a rural country. So if, we are to think of the development of these vast rural bases, at first it is must to think of using a better and competent strategy, which can ensure a substantial help to achieve the development. Keeping this in view, we need to engage large number of women in development process. It is also difficult to climb on development goal keeping half of the population quite out of development activities. But reality is that, women in Bangladesh cannot play their role in the whole development process. They are barred everywhere.

The inclusion of women into local government system through direct election has created great enthusiasm. And a large number of women are now enrolled in the system to work for rural development. But many inconsistencies damaged the way of activities of the women in rural development. It has to be taken into serious consideration. Many researches have been done on this issue. Most of the research works touched mainly on the issue of women development and organisational and functional sides of the union parishad. Some works covered their participation in the local government. But no research study on women's role in rural development as 'formal leaders' in particular has been done yet. The possibilities of development of 'women leadership' from local level based on Union Parishad are also remaining unexplored. The proposed study seeks to fill this gap. Here in lies the rationale of the study.

## **Section –II : Methodology**

### **a) Hypothesis**

Our primary assumption is that various inconsistencies mainly male predominance in all strata of the society sharply affected the way of women activities in social development. Some other existing social problems including social outlook are also putting the matter into jeopardy. It is true in the field of local government. This system carries a significant focal point for women where they can attend to the work for development easily. They are legally empowered to work for rural development. The women leaders are responsible for looking after three wards (two wards more than their male colleagues) and also for responding majorities of the local people. But they are always overpowered by their male colleagues. They even cannot carry out activities properly what they are assigned formally. As a result, role of women in rural development is seriously being hampered.

On the other hand, Union Parishad is also a ground of development for qualitative ‘women leadership’ from local level. It is from here that they will earn experience for handling local affairs, which is related to national development policy. This will help them to move to the next higher level leadership.

Indeed, the problem is deeply embedded into the society. Hence, integrated initiatives are needed to address the issue. Empowerment of women is pressingly necessary; superior attitudes of the male over the female have to be changed. The roles and responsibilities for women members should be specified. Comparatively educated and socially conscious women have to be encouraged in coming to union parishad and a re-structuring of union parishad is another urgent need to overcome the problem.

We believe that if these needs are fulfilled an effective role of women in rural development would be ensured and it is precisely be possible in present context of Bangladesh. Under the circumstances there seems to be research gap and as such, the present study attempts to fill that research gap.

Given the problem and the background, following hypotheses may be assumed:

- 1) Legal constitutional efforts to empower women are not enough unless supported by socio-economic empowerment.
- 2) The development of effective women leadership is possible had the society at large and the males in particular allowed such pious ventures.
- 3) Women leadership at local level in Bangladesh is slowly but steadily emerging.
- 4) Women leadership is gradually proving their worth in planning and executing rural development programme.

## **b) Method of data collection**

From two sources, the data have been collected: Primary and Secondary.

## **Primary**

The main source of primary data particularly was field survey based on observation and interview. The other sources of primary data was the government census and reports, documents and resolution of the government and related activities of various non-government organisations and socio-cultural organisations etc.

## **Secondary**

The secondary sources of data were the books on topics of the research and the related aspects of this area. Articles in research journals, magazines and printed materials in the newspapers and in the pamphlet etc were also used for supplementing the findings..

In fine, both the primary and secondary sources were utilized to rationalize our proposition.

## **c) Tools of investigation and methods of primary data collection**

Tools of investigation of our research include a structured and an unstructured interview schedule and observation coupled with internal dialogues and discussions. The objective of our study is to investigate the real motive, perception and orientations of the 'leaders'; observation of their behavior was also an important tool. Informal and formal dialogues and discussion were also taken into consideration about our research problem which otherwise could have not been gathered through interviews or observations.

## **d) Selection of the area for study**

The present research work concentrated on Kushtia district as place of study. Kushtia district is comprised of 65 Union Parishads. It has six upazilas, five municipalities and 959 villages. This district has been chosen for the present study

for particular reason. Firstly, a very little field level research work has been carried out on the district, particularly on social power based areas. Secondly, a good number of educated and prospectus women are here involved in rural development and they are working with Union Parishad.<sup>107</sup> Studies on the leadership at local level and its development, in particular, are quite a few in numbers in the district.

And finally, a congenial socio-political and culture environment prevails in this district. A number of women involved in Union Parishad activities are financially independent. If a research work on social power highlighting the women leadership factors is carried out, a good result can come out and would definitely add substantially to the data base on women leadership and also to the level of enriching knowledge --- both theoretical and empirical on the problem.

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