



Graduate School of Development Studies

**WOMEN'S POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF TWO ORGANIZATIONS
IN KISHORGONJ, BANGLADESH**

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DEDICATION:

To My Parents and Women Animators (Volunteers of The Hunger Project-Bangladesh) of Brahmanbaria from whom I learnt a lot.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS:

CCC- Committee of Concerned Citizen

CS – Civil Society

CSO- Civil Society Organization

GG- Good Governance

INGO- International Non- Governmental Organization

NGO- Non- Governmental Organization

PS – Political Society

SHUJAN- Shushashoner Janno Nagarik (Citizen for Good Governance)

THPB- The Hunger Project Bangladesh

TIB- Transparency International

USAID- United States Agency for International Development

ABSTRACT:

There is a well known assumption that more participation of women in politics is important for democracy. In this respect, Civil Society the third branch of power has opened up space for women's engagement through the issue of good governance. Taking women's experiences from two civil society organizations, the study tried to reveal how different types of understanding on good governance and participation may shape the interest of the Civil Society Organization. By applying the concepts of civil society, good governance and participation as analytical framework, the paper critically analyzes how donor-driven concepts of civil society created problem in women's everyday life, jeopardize their transformative potentials. Finally, considering historical and contextual reality of civil society, the paper came up with a recommendation in favour of political society to bring gender justice through social movement.

KEYWORDS:

CIVIL SOCIETY, GENDER, GOOD GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

**WOMEN’S POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs): A CASE STUDY OF TWO
ORGANIZATIONS IN KISHORGONJ, BANGLADESH**



In picture Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (Women’s Council of Bangladesh) brought out a rally in the city in observance of the International Women's Day¹.

¹ The picture has been taken from internet through
http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2008/03/09/16732_1.jpg

On November 11, 2008 at 12:05

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem:

The study seeks to contribute to the debate on women's political participation, governance and civil society (CS) formation in Bangladesh². CS in Bangladesh as elsewhere is highly differentiated with many profession based organizations working for their professional benefits as well as organizations working in the context of a social movement. From a gender perspective, as Basu (2003: 25) observed, apart from the centralisation of power in government institutions, there is an antagonistic relationship between state and women's interests. The more powerful the institutions, the less likely that women and women's interests will be well represented. In Basu's view although some scholars dismiss the importance of social movements under the conditions of centralized power, women's activism in social movements is a vital ingredient of the strength and vitality of democracy. "Women's movement activism seeks greater women's participation in governing institutions and women have increased access to those resources which are necessary to bringing about gender equality. Both objectives are vital to democratic process" (Basu, 2003: 25). Given the fact that state institutions have traditionally been associated with men and masculinity, disadvantaging women and their interests, understanding women's participation in CSOs is important to grasp the diverse sites in which gender power operates in order to assess the potentials for social transformation by CS.

Bangladesh's colonial legacy and post-colonial trajectory is marked by variant forms of women's participation in political life. Due to limited practice of democracy all government institutions are still centralized. The wave of democratisation in 1990 worldwide has also affected Bangladesh directing at the decentralisation of state power. The concept of Civil Society came to be

² Bangladesh covers an area of 1, 44, 000 sq km with a population of 123.85 million (population census, 2001), among them 95.25 million live in rural and 28.61 million in urban area.

considered as emerging alternative branch of power besides market and state. To some extent, it is viewed as a form of countervailing power which can challenge the state for its action taken and as such is seen as an important tool to influence government behaviour and choices of priorities. Though there has been some criticisms about its focus, effectiveness and partisan inclinations, the CS has now being recognised as a credible channel for voicing the critical issues ranging from politics and governance (Asaduzzaman, 2004).

Besides the recognition as credible channel, the growing power of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in relation to government is an issue of tension in Bangladesh. The powers of CSOs have increased more in relation to government (Haque, 2002). At present, CSOs in Bangladesh work around the following themes:

Anti Corruption: There are many Non – Governmental Organization (NGOs) working to fight rampant corruption through calling for improved public administration and in strengthening elected bodies. Governance and democracy Program of United States Agency for International Development (USAID)³, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) - are the international NGOs working against corruption. The Committee for Concern Citizen (CCC) is the citizen forum of TIB, located at district level who deals anti- corruption related campaign and movement, and organize different types of program at grassroots level.

Free and Fair Election, Local Government and Good Governance: Free and fair election is crucial for democracy and an important area of intervention for many international NGOs. USAID, The Hunger Project- Bangladesh, The

³ <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/anc/pdf/bd388-009.pdf>, access on 17.10.08 at 17:07

Charter Centre for Democracy⁴ are the example of some of NGOs working with free election and governance issue. SHUJAN is a citizen forum of The Hunger Project- Bangladesh, works voluntarily for democratic institutions and inclusive societies. Many NGOs are directly or indirectly working with local government issues. Self regulatory Union Parishad Advocacy Group is one who is an umbrella organization of The Hunger Project- Bangladesh.

Human Rights and Gender Issues: Human rights and gender is the core issue of NGO activities in Bangladesh. Girls' Child Advocacy Forum, BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee but recently it has been changed to Building Resources Across Community), ASF(Acid Survivor Foundation), Proshika – Manobik Unnayan Kendra(Proshika Human Development Centre) are the prominent NGOs working with the above issues. ASK(Ain o Salish Kendra), BILS (Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies), BRCT(Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma Victims), GKP(Gono Kallayan Parishad), DDF(Destitute Development Foundations), PARD(Palash Palli Unnayan Sangstha), PRAN(Participatory Research Action Network), HRCBM (Human Rights and Humanitarian Services Organization), Karmojibi Nari(Employed Women- KN)⁵.

Poverty Alleviation: Poverty is the problem that helped NGOs emergence so rapidly in Bangladesh. Nijera Kori(We Do it Ourselves), Swanirvar Bangladesh (Self-Reliant Bangladesh), Grameen Bank, BRAC(Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee - it has been changed to 'Building Resources Across Community'), CCDB(Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh),

⁴

<http://www.cartercenter.org/peace/democracy/index.html?gclid=CMPDvNjFrpYCFQs2QwodE3jULA>

On 17.10.08 at 17:11

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NGOs_in_Bangladesh#Research_Organizations, accessed on 18th October at 12:22

PKKS(Prantic Krisak Kalyan Sangstha),ARBAN (Association for Realization of Basic Needs), ASA, DORP(Development Organization of the Rural Poor), GKP(Gono Kallayan Parishad), PPUS(Palash Palli Unnayan Sangstha), POPI(People's Oriented Program Implementation), RDRS(Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service),TMSS(Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha),PMUK(Padakhap Manabik Unnayan Kendra) are the examples of such NGOs.⁶

Research Based Organization: WFW(Women for Women), STD(Steps Towards Development), RIB(Research Initiatives of Bangladesh), PromptPT(Promoting Participation and Training), DDF(Destitute Development Foundation), HDRC(Human Development Research Centre), PPRC(Power and Participation Research Centre), PPS-BD(PRA Promoters' Society Bangladesh), Unnayan Onneshan(The Innovators), Shamunnay, CPD(Centre for Policy Dialogue) are the well known NGOs involved in research based development work.⁷

Rights, Faith and Profession based Organizations: Consumers Association of Bangladesh, Primary School Teachers Association, Federation of Chambers and Commerce are some NGOs who work for their professional interest.

Male dominated politics in Bangladesh is characterized by the use of black money and arms in election process and absence of democracy within the political parties.⁸ In addition to this, corruption in all stages in the administration

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid

⁸ It is well quoted terms in Bangladesh.

<http://www.bangladeshnews.com.bd/2008/10/26/feudal-mentality-a-thorn-in-democracy/>, accessed on October 31, 2008, at 16:55

deprives women more than men⁹. In a situation where arms and black money oriented politics and corruption imposes many barriers on women in achieving a better life, it is important to understand women's participation in CSOs that push for values which specifically benefits women. A key issue around which CSOs are active is 'Good Governance (GG)', in which gender equality is a central element. They develop GG related program and campaign for women's involvement, but they tend to concentrate on the quantitative aspects of women's participation, and the contributions women make or the dilemma they may face. Since, CSOs are being considered alternative branch of power, hence relatively new source of power should not be kept by men only. According to Philips (2002), there is more scope in CSOs for identifying and exploring nonexistent and egalitarian ways of doing things when operating outside the heavy hand of state power.

This research focuses on two selected CSOs who are advocacy types and where gender power is embedded in the political environment in which they operate in the district of Kishorgonj in Bangladesh. The two organisations SHUJAN and CCC - are selected on the basis of the difference in degree of dependence on local contributions. SHUJAN is more based on local initiatives and rely on the voluntary participation of its members. CCC depends more on TIB's fund and less on local contributions. This difference gives important insights on women's political consciousness, the views they hold about 'GG' and 'CS', how these views shape their motivations and expectations, and how do they exercise their agency and the dilemma they may face when it comes to the meanings of 'GG'.

⁹ For an instance, due to the dominant notion of 'men as bread winner' and corruption in recruitment process, most families are not willing to give bribe to help women to obtain jobs, thus reducing their chance for paid employment.

1.2 Relevance and Justification:

My practical experience as a coordinator for two years with THPB (The Hunger Project- Bangladesh) has broadened my awareness about diversity and its meanings among CSOs. In many cases these can go in favour of women's interest, but women's participation¹⁰ in CSOs is not substantial in comparison to men's. The family can be an obstacle for women's engagement in social movements. Expenses of the voluntary activities and choice between home and movement keep them more confined at home. Issues of femininity and socially ascribed division of labour push women at the corner of the society. In this respect, insights on gendered understandings of GG and how this affects women's participation are important to further the debate on gender and CS. Howell (2007) points out gender and CS remains an under theorized area in literature. To her, CS theorists are unsuccessful to investigate how gender relation pervades states and CS, and how these gendered sites of power reinforce the gender norms. Understanding why women are or are not participating in selected CSOs is important to understand the nature of gender power and the diverse sites of its manifestations, and what would be requirements in rethinking about democratisation in Bangladesh.

1.3 Research Objectives

There is a well known assumption that more participation of women in politics is important for democracy. But politics is not formed alone, there are many more internal and external forces linked with politics. Without addressing all these we cannot expect women's involvement as men. Furthermore, the interest of CSOs

¹⁰ Participation means the act of sharing in the activities of a group

Accessed on: April 9 at 21:59 ,Through ,

http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&rlz=1T4HPEB_en-GBNL243NL245&defl=en&q=define:participation&sa=X&oi=glossary_definition&ct=title

Researcher has used this term to mean women's involvement in designing programs to documenting it and their contribution by other means like donation and mobilising people.

is shaped by the engagement of women, where visions of the public may be different. There are different types of understandings on GG and participation. Women have different period of engagement, therefore, what type of participation we talk about is another important issue needs to be considered. Consequently, this research intends to explore how women's political consciousness and CSO may shape the patterns of women's engagement in two CSOs in Kishorgonj, Bangladesh. The research aims to achieve the following **Specific objectives;**

1. To explore how the interests of CSOs can be shaped by the engagement of women who may hold a different vision of the public compared to men.
2. To discern the ways in which different types of understanding on GG and participation may shape the patterns of women's engagement in CSOs.
3. To provide some insights on how do women cope with limitations that restrict their participation.

1.4 Research Questions:

Main question:

To what extent does women's political consciousness can shape their participation in the good governance movement through CSOs in Kishorgonj, Bangladesh?

Sub-questions:

1. How do women understand 'participation' and 'good governance' in CSOs of Kishorgonj?
2. To what extent different understandings (on 'participation' and 'good governance') can reshape their level of involvement and interest of the CSOs?
3. What motivation and problems do women have in participating? How do they triumph over the problem that restricts their engagement?

1.5 Methodology, Methods of Data Collection, Research Process

and Own Location and Positionality :

The research is qualitative and explorative in nature. Both primary and secondary data sources have been used. Primary data is collected through an in-depth direct

interview of the mentioned two CSOs. In addition, the researcher also interviewed of two male members from the CSOs (president of the both CSOs) to know male view. For secondary data, it used the documents of TIB and THPB (secretariat of 'SHUJAN'). For this, the researcher closely worked several days in the two CSOs' district office at Kishorgonj. To ensure the accuracy of data, reports and documents have been crossed checked with the national level office. Since, there were 9 respondents in the two CSOs; as a result in-depth interview was effective method to explore insight of their understandings on GG and participation. In depth interview can be defined as: "...an unstructured personal interview which uses extensive probing to get a single respondent to talk freely and to express detailed beliefs and feelings on a topic" (Webb, 1995: 121). The two important advantages of this method are; first, there is unique opportunity to apply circumstances; especially those have sensitive or personal topics (Robson and Foster, 1989). Second, it has sampling advantages including greater control over respondent selection, and hence, more depth, context and flexibility are in the process of inquiry (Cassell and Symon, 2004).

My position during field work was informed by my previous experience as a coordinator in THPB; I had the opportunity to get acquainted with CS movement, and its aspect and dynamics. I often found myself in dilemma in many programs. It is often claimed by CSOs that their activities are beneficiary for society, especially for women. Taken this claim for granted, they try to motivate women's involvement by different campaigns, special programs and other activities. But participation in terms of presence and contribution was not as expected. At the same time, when there were more women present in a program, organizer would claim that it was a successful program though women did not take part in discussions., Sometimes, it happened women have made monetary contribution, and took part in discussion- in these case organizers would consider as 'perfect' for participation. From male perspective, I listened to what is perfect and what is not in participation. But what do women think about it, it was unheard. Working with the community, I have seen many women

volunteers are very much active in other works but not in GG movement. This experience has shaped my entry point for this research.

During my data collection I saw how power relations work at family level and division of labour limits the scope of women's participation. While I was collecting information from one of my respondents, her husband was beside her. He was dictating her how to answer, even some of the answers came first from him that is why, I needed to ask her again to know her views. This was a dilemma for me. I could request him to allow us talked alone, but it might have wrong interpretation to him, therefore, I decided first listening to my respondent, and then to her husband though I did not take notes from his views. In another interview, I took appointment as she agreed upon, but while I was there her husband just dropped their small kid who was playing in the room, thus breaking our concentration.

Primarily respondents were hesitant to and sceptical about my intention as I am a man and an ex-staff of one of the NGOs, but friendly environment created helped to overcome this initial barrier. My understanding on stand point theory helps me to clear about the methodological dilemma. Having different positions in the society and from different reality Hegel, Marx, Engels and Lukacs proved themselves in theorizing the opposite class they belong to (Harding, 2005). This understanding helped to take an objective position in this study.

1.6 Scope and Limitations:

I was encountered by some problems during data collection. Though I had a plan to take views of participants of the programs of the CSOs, but I could not manage it. During my stay at home, the CSOs did not have program. Therefore, I could not go beyond the committee members of the CSOs. Regarding method, the main limitation of individual depth interviews is that they miss out on the advantages of interaction with other people (Robson, 1989).

1.7 Structure of the Paper:

The study has four chapters. Following this chapter, the paper addresses the relevant concepts¹¹ and analytical framework. Third chapter analyses the key findings, and fourth concludes with some general recommendations with concluding reflections.

¹¹ The relevant concepts are civil society, gender, good governance, participation and agency.

CHAPTER TWO:

CIVIL SOCIETY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN BANGLADESH: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Context:

Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 after a nine- month liberation war against Pakistan. The war had caused mass destruction, post independence population movements to and from India on massive scale creating a population of refugees. Reconstruction required the involvement of many actors including the government, local and international development organizations (CSOs/NGOs) whose activities were primarily focussed on the rehabilitation of rural activities and rebuilding the social and physical infrastructures.

Since 1980s, NGOs become increasingly important vehicles for ensuring access of poor people to credit and other resources, reducing poverty, promoting economic development and managing the short term and negative effects of SAP. In the 1990s, NGOs development activities increased considerably reciting the terms of empowerment, privatization and entrepreneurship. Its trend reflects NGO institutionalizations as a process which carries many contradictions in the emergent relations between NGO activities, and the state and donor interests.

As Feldman (2003:5-6) pointed out, CS has been incorporated development discourse in line with privatization within the new liberal framework, a process which undermines both state development initiatives and oppositional politics. The reason is not only for donor increasing proportion aid through them, but also the notion of 'NGOs can be seen as part of privatization strategy' of World Bank and most Donor agencies¹². The shift of focus from rebuilding infrastructure to

¹² For more, see Abul Hussain, The Changing Local Rural Power Structure: The Elite and NGOs in Bangladesh

good governance can also be explained in terms of political phenomenon. From mid 70s to 91, there was direct or indirect military rule in Bangladesh. By the insurrection of 1990s, it has started to step towards democracy. During this period, there was growing recognition of NGOs as a collaborative partner of government to implement programs undertaken within Second (1980- 85), Third (1985–90), Fourth (1990 – 1995), and Fifth Five Year Plan (1995 – 2000) by the government of HM Ershad (1980 – 90), Khaleda Zia (1990 – 95) ,and Sheikh Hasina (1995 – 2000). Therefore, opportunity has been created for CSOs to be involved more (Haque, 2002:418).

In Bangladesh there is a tendency to categorize NGOs as Civil Society Organisation(CSO) without problematizing the concept of CS itself, its internal differentiation and relationships with the state and its historical changes. Limited attention has been given to the analysis of CS as a bearer of gender norms and relations. Women's political consciousness and their contribution in politics has been crucial throughout the history of Bangladesh, but its space, activities and its actors have changed over time. In liberation war and onward activities for rebuilding the nation, women did play a very significant role. The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) took initiatives to mobilize women to support its activities and nation-building goals. With the decline of the socialist government, different national and international development organisations continue to mobilize women's participation under the umbrella of community development. They mobilize women for the provision of different social services, forming groups for entrepreneurial credit and even for social movements (like social movement against domestic violence¹³ and against youth smoking¹⁴and mass movement

¹³ <http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article-southasia.asp?parentid=97545>, accessed on 24.10.08 at 09:56

¹⁴ <http://jci-anti-smoking.blogspot.com/2007/05/jci-members-in-roundtable-with.html>, accessed on 24.10.08 at 10:00

against polygamy, child-marriage, women trafficking and prostitution by Women's Council of Bangladesh¹⁵).

In Bangladesh, the state and NGOs have defined themselves in part by the difference from one another. This is not incidental. The mythic opposition of the state and NGOs reflects real struggle to establish themselves as the legitimate voice of the Bangladeshi people (White, 1999:308). The growing power of CSOs in relation to government poses new questions about their own transparency and legitimacy. In the specific context of overpopulation, rural poverty and landlessness (83 % people live in rural area, and among them 50 % are landless), the role of CSOs can be important, and may be complimentary to the government's role. As Haque pointed out (2002) CSOs have taken over some basic services sector/ activities that state agencies supposed to do. The majority of the NGOs' (/ CSOs) members are women who represent a formidable political force as a group participating in election and shaping the result of the election. Also it is evident that resistance has been increased among the CSOs in certain policy adopted by the government, by their advocacy and publicity activities. They do have the direct involvement in macro political process by educating voter and having affiliation with the main political parties which promote their power. Finally, they have moved from social development to profit making economic enterprises what can be seen as contradictory with the initial objectives of the organizations. CSOs thus have become a formidable force affecting the political and economic domains, especially the power and legitimacy of the government. The shifted emphasis of donors from social development to good governance has changed national politics offered CSOs an additional site of action, notably the local political structure.

Understanding CS, GG and women's political consciousness in a context such as Bangladesh must probe deeper into the underlying premises and assumptions

¹⁵ http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/B_0212.htm, accessed on 24.10.08 at 10:05

behind these concepts. This chapter tries to address the essential issues and the key insights of debates on CS, GG and gender relevant to Bangladesh's current reality in order to provide a basis for a discussion in chapter three on how male and female members of CSOs understand and develop their own referents for these terms in their practices of participation.

2.1 Civil Society and Gender:

The concept of CS is used throughout the European history, but gained more prominence when philosophers began to consider the foundations of the emerging nation state in the 17th and 18th century. A key assumption for the concept of CS was the Christian notion of human equality. At that time it was linked with the idea of right- based society in which rulers and ruled were subject to the law, based on the social contract. It is a complex and contested concept with multiple interpretations. It has long history in western political thought (Ehrehburg, 1999). An important feature of the academic debate on CS, despite its diverse trends, how is gender as a domain of power continues to be treated in parallel to CS but not as an integrated element. As pointed out by Howell (2007), the tendency to keep the family outside of the CS arena is a persistent weakness in the CS debate, despite the recognition of women's collective action. Most CS theorists treated family merely as boundary marker to the CS, their primary concern being the state and CS relation. In Gramsci's view, CS is the field in which the struggle for hegemony unfolds. Therefore, it provides an opening for counter hegemonic projects to gain strength (Hodgkinson and Foley, 2003: XIX).

In contrast, Habermas (1992a:453) views the CS as an institutional core constituted by voluntary associations outside the sphere of the state and economy. These associations could be like church, cultural association, sports clubs, and debating societies to independent media, academics, groups of concerned citizens, grassroots initiatives, and organizations of gender , race and sexuality, occupational associations and political parties and labour unions. Habermas engaged more systematically with family in relation to the CS. He distinguishes family from CS (understood as the domain of commodity exchange

and social labour) and state. The family is both precursor of CS and a site of intimacy (Habermas, 1989: 46-7 in Howell, 2007: 420). Extending from this view, Jean Cohen (1998:37), and also Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato (1995: 631, n 48) propose to view the “family” as the first association of CS. To their idealized depiction, family is assumed to be an egalitarian social unit, which provides an arena where the principle of “horizontal solidarity, collective identity, and equal participation” are first experienced and constantly reproduced. They gave justification for their positioning of the family in relation to the CS. Such principles revolve from the substratum of other associations of CS and democratic political life. However, this picture of the family glosses over the unequal power relations and hierarchies ubiquitous within families, often haggard along gender and inter-generational lines and underpinning processes of exploitation, violence and abuse within families.

Apart from these few contributions most writings on state- CS relation make no reference at all to the family, and certainly about gender relation. Consequently, most CS theorists fail to investigate how gender relation pervades states and CS and how these gendered sites of power reinforce gender norms. Howell (2007: 421-2) cited three reasons for this omission. First, gender blindness reflects the general failure in political theory and other social sciences to adopt the concepts, methods, and theories developed by feminist researchers. Secondly, the conceptualisation of CS as a modern phenomenon hinges on its separation from the family leading to parallel directions on theorisation. Finally, the misuse of the concept CS in the late 1980s drew intellectual sustenance in the past, hence leading CS theorists to succumb the same trap as their predecessors, re-enforcing the view that the family is boundary maker that has very little relevance to understand the state and CS relations.

Concern about gender as analytic category has emerged in the late twentieth century and remains confined in women and gender studies. This may partly explains why it is not been considered in major bodies of social theory on CS. The term “gender” is part of effort by contemporary feminist to stake claim to a

specific definitional ground, to insist the insufficiency of existing theory for explaining persistent inequality between women and men. The use of word “gender” has significantly emerged at a moment of great epistemological turmoil. Yet as Howell (2007) pointed out, CS theorists have paid very little attention to the gendered nature of CS, at the same time, feminist theorists have involved very limited in CS theorists. “Feminist theorists have used the frameworks of social movements, voluntary action, rights, equality, civic engagement, and emancipation to understand women’s political struggles, while CSOs have pointed to women’s activism to illustrate the vibrancy of actual civil societies. The problem is rather that the way CS s conceptualized is not through the lens of gender and that how gender relations are explained has not led to a re-evaluation of CS theorists from a gender perspective” (Howell, 2007: 416-7).

Basu (2003) pointed out that at the level of practice, within the liberal democracies, women are most likely to use their power in transformative ways and avoid co-optation when they bring to the state a prior and ongoing connection to the social movements that promote women’s empowerment. Women are more likely to engage in democratic processes and achieve power collectively when women’s movement both challenges and participates in the state institutions¹⁶. Generally the more powerful the institution, the fewer women exert within it. Therefore, women are less pertinent to influence the workings of parliament than of local administrative bodies. Similarly, women are more suitable to become active in movements and institutions at the local level than at the national level. Women are inclined to be elected in relatively large numbers to school boards, town councils and civic associations. Likewise, women have been at the forefront of community campaigns which highlights as mothers

¹⁶ For an example, the pro-choice movement in the US and elsewhere. The question of women’s rights to safe , affordable abortion has become important that determine the fate of many electoral candidates hinges on what stands they adopt on this issue. Yet this issue is on discussion, taken up by the politicians, courts, and legislature.

(opposing the dumping the toxic waste in their communities, deforestation and violence in their communities). Basu (ibid) noted, “Indeed, the very distinction between the institutions and movements clearly, drawn at the national level but less clear-cut at the local level. It is not easy to identify whether the work of a women who are elected at the local government after having been active in social movements, should be as activism or institutional participation. The conclusion that follows is that women’s movement must apply greater pressure at higher levels to bring about change.”

To deepen the understanding of gender in CS, a thick concept of gender is necessary. Scott (1988:31) propose an understanding of ‘gender’ as way of denoting the “cultural constructions”- the social creation of ideas about suitable roles for men and women. It is actually a way of indicating to the exclusively social origins of the subjective identities of men and women. Therefore, gender is a category imposed on sexed body. According to Scott, J.W (1988:42), the definition of the term has two parts and several subsets. Though these are interconnected, but must be analytically different. “The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive component of social relationships based on perceived differences between the men and women; gender is the primary way of signifying relationship of power. Changes in the organization of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power, but the direction of change is not necessarily one way” (Scott, 1988:42-3). Since gender is perceived to be the differences between the sexes, and as constitutive elements of social relationships, it comprises four interrelated elements: first, culturally available symbols that evoke multiple and often contradictory. Second, normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meaning of the symbols that tried to limit and contain their metaphoric possibilities. The third aspect is gender relationship. Gender is constructed through kinship, though not exclusively; it is constructed as well in the economy, and in the polity, which, in our society at least, now operate largely independently of kinship. The subjective identity is the fourth aspect of gender. In the definition of gender all these four elements consist and no one operates

without others. They do operate simultaneously, with one simply reflecting others (ibid).

Added to this view, Papart's (2000:12) conception of gender struggles as being multi-sited the home, the community, the NGOs, and in the institutions like media, school, the churches, the work place – as well as multi-level or national and global structures. Since efforts of personal and institutional are limited and often constrained, therefore, for taking actions in particular arena, it requires large-scale mobilisation to challenge gender hierarchies require an understanding of the multi-level nature of gender power. Only then, we will be able to find out the way to bring the more gender equitable, accountable governance structures and practices at all level of society. These contributions on gender power have escaped most of the CS theorists, who continue to adopt a simplistic meaning of 'gender' as women, and would find insignificant relevance to understand the relation between state and CS through the gender lens. Consequently, gendered nature of CS has been remained unexplored.

2.2 Governance and Participation: Civil Society a Donor-Driven Concept?

After 1990s, theories of global systems of states and markets started to theorize a third aspect to known as global CS. Its notion required to capture a different phenomenon which is activities of international non-governmental organizations (INGO) that network across national borders, and create a new space of solidarity within the world system. Since there are some indivisible goods (like environment), therefore concerted action for the prevention of its decay is necessary. Based on the idea that people across the world were united by certain common concerns formed the first plank of INGOs agendas¹⁷. In addition to that, no one country, government, group of citizens could tackle these concerns in abstraction or in isolation from others. By common endeavours, strategies, and a

¹⁷ The earth Summit of 1992 in Rio, where 2400 representatives came to play central role in deliberations.

pooling energies these problem could be tackled. To do so global CS actors inducted a normative turn in world politics that conventionally indicated by realism and by the national politics and sovereignty. In fact, a set of compelling principles which aim to build an international consensus on states should or should not treat their own citizens across national borders and territorial sovereignties have been established by the INGOs. Traditionally, state does have monopoly to hold the banner of sovereignty and state security. States resist any intervention by the outside agencies. Furthermore, it is very likely to use or misuse state sovereignty to hide state sponsored violence or lawlessness from the critical public gaze. Now a day, human rights INGOs, which accentuate solidarity with victims, have carried human rights issues into the global public spheres. Therefore, they strongly challenge the notion of having sole monopoly by states over the lives of its people. In line with these global human rights organizations have legislated and mandated an ethical and morally authoritative structure for national and international community (Chandhoke, 2005).

Besides the legitimacy of INGOs, since 1990 as an ultimate outcome of the Post-Soviet era, CS has become part of development discourse linked to donor-driven norms such as GG. The renewal of interests in the concepts of CS and democracy is not without tension. In the current use of the term CS is the area of collective and contested social interaction that takes place between the state, market and household. It also refers to the range of non-state organizations, groups and associations that form part of the voluntary sector. While descriptively this is relatively straightforward, CS is accorded a host of functions associated with co-operation, participation, trust and democracy raising to what Fine (2002, 796 cited in McIlwaine, 2007: 1252) calls 'pedestal status'. Although donors are often careful to use the term CS organizations, but in reality, they often inclined to equate them with NGOs (Howell, 2000; Howell and Pearce 2001 in McIlwaine, 2007). Donors has started to channel increasing amount of financial support through NGOs (Lewis and Opuku- Mensah, 2006: 666 in McIlwaine, 2007) in an effort to promoting citizen's engagement, mostly through institutions and capacity building and partnership programmes and to finance

alternative delivery of services . It has been noted that since NGO become more dependent on donors funding, their ability to represent constituencies and beneficiaries is undermined (McIlwaine, 2007). Donor concentration to CS though has been criticized at a broader level due to it's failing to address structural issues underlying poverty and inequality and neglecting the political dimension of CS (Mohan, 2002 in McIlwaine, 2007).

CS like many other buzzword in development, a very malleable concept, easily co-opted to serve various interests and causes (Chaplowe and Engo- Tjega, 2007). CS is a political sphere between government and business in which social movement become organized (UNDP, 1993). The increased significance of CSOs in development is reflected by the growing importance of CSOs in the program implementation of international development organizations. Certainly CSOs have much to contribute to international development, but the limitations of its need to be recognized alongside empowering their potentials. Like monitoring and evaluation (M & E) of CSOs has much to offer to international development, but again its wrestle with challenges and limitations that need to be understood (Chaplowe and Engo- Tjega, 2007: 258).

Until recently, CS was mainly thought of as a national concept. In reality, self-organized non- profit associations and social movements have been networking across borders for nearly two centuries, even though it has dramatically accelerated in recent decades. But there is an important point in the way in which central European and Latin American intellectuals began to talk about transnationality as a central element of CS. The term 'global civil society' sounds too extravagant since it brings together people from different parts of the globe. There are three important reasons to speak about 'global civil society'; these are – first, whilst 'global civil society' may overstate what is really out there, 'transnational civil society understates it'. Second point is, only 'global civil society' can be posed a counterbalance of globalisation. Third is that 'global civil society' has a normative aspiration that 'transnational civil society' does not. Kaldor, Glasius and Anheier (2001) came up with three propositions to

analyse global civil society: (1) ‘Global CS as reality’¹⁸, ‘global CS and globalisation’¹⁹ and ‘global CS as fuzzy and contested concept’²⁰. CS is a concept which is located strategically at the cross-section of important string of intellectual developments in the social sciences. Centre for Civil Society (CCS) acknowledged the diversity of the concept, and adopted an initial working definition that is to guide research activities and teaching.

“Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades

¹⁸ The spread of the term ‘Global CS’ reflects an underlying social reality. What we can observe in the 1960s is the emergence of supranational sphere of social and political participation in which citizens groups and social movement and individual engage in dialogue, debate, confrontation, and negotiation with each other and with various governmental actors- international, national and local – as well as the business world.

¹⁹ The second proposition is the ‘Global CS’ both feeds on and reacts to globalisation. As Global CS the term globalisation is also a new concept having multiple interpretations. On the one hand, the globalisation provides the bedrock for civil society. On the other, Global CS is also a reaction to globalization, particularly to the impact of the spread of global capitalism and interconnectedness. Globalisation is as an uneven process has brought benefits to many but also excluded many.

²⁰ Since we are not able to find agreed meaning for what it is actually, this is fuzzy and contested concept. It is fuzzy because the boundaries of the concept are not defined clearly. It is not clear what is to be included and what is to be excluded. In addition, the term has both normative and descriptive contents and it is not always possible to find an exact correspondence between the two. It is contested in that sense it is new and therefore can be interpreted by both practitioners and social scientists as they choose.

unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group.”

(Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics)

Since Global CS has been financing, patronizing national CS all over the world, therefore, national or local CS has been influenced by them. In many countries the global CS is keeping priority in GG issues. Being a funder they exported the idea of good governance as an essential condition for development. Global CS has engaged national CS for their policy agenda. Therefore, GG is a term what is cited very frequently. In fact, governance is a fashionable term, but its concept is as old as human history (Weiss, 2000:795). It is a complex system of interactions among structures, traditions, functions (responsibilities), and processes (practices) characterized by three key values of accountability, transparency and participation (USAID, 2002, p. 2 in Punyaratabandhu , 2004:1). Governance has been defined as the stewardship of formal and informal political rules of the game. Governance demonstrate those measures that involve setting the rules for the exercise of power and resolve conflicts over such rules (Hyden 1999: 185 in Kjaer ,2004 :3).

“GG” has been described as the striving for rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, participation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision in the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority (USAID, 2002, p. 2 in Punyaratabandhu , 2004:1). There are two different streams of discourse on GG. One is donor agency driven, and the other is academic. Academic discourse is dealt mainly with the way in which power and authority relations are structured in different contexts, whereas donor-directed and policy-oriented governance discourse has focused more on state structures designed to ensure accountability, due processes of law, and related safeguards. Academic discourse is for understanding of institutional linkages between the state and CS donor-driven discourse is oriented toward enhancing policy effectiveness (Punyaratabandhu , 2004:1).

To UNDP, governance is viewed as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country affairs at all levels. It consists of mechanism, process and institutions, through which citizens articulate their interest, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences (Weiss, 2000: 797). The World Bank contributed significantly to the emanation of the concept of governance in the 1990s. Pointing corruption, bad policies and nepotism as severely hampering development, it introduced the term governance in 1989's report. World Bank does not operate with one single definition of governance; rather it varies based on particular usage. For example, in the 1989 report, governance has been defined as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank, 1989:60 in Kjaer, 2004:173). Later on, in another report, it defines as "Governance is the institutional capacity of public organizations to provide public and other goods demanded by the country's citizens or their representatives in an effective, transparent, impartial, and accountable manner, subject to resource constraints" (World Bank, 200a:48 in Kjaer, 2004:173). Though according to the World Bank, the concept of governance varies, but there are four core features of GG; firstly, public sector management (that involved civil service reform and privatization); secondly legal framework for development; thirdly, accountability; and finally, transparency and information (Kjaer, 2004: 173). To Papart (2000:1), the concern with governance has largely been ignored both gender and power. Mostly, governance has been seen as gender-neutral concept. Governance is highly gendered; women's participation in authority position within governance structures, at all level is problematic. Yet by focusing entirely on formal positions of authority, the opportunity for changing the discrimination is minimal (Papart, 2000: 11).

2.3 The Meanings of 'Civil Society' in South Asia and Bangladesh:

The history of civil society (CS) in South Asia has a distinct form. It puts forward a different understanding of the concept and term what Chatterjee

(2004) calls 'The Political Society (PS)'²¹. He draws a distinction between the CS and PS. When the rural poor mobilize themselves to claim the benefits of different governmental programs, they do not do as a member of CS. To direct the benefits effectively towards them, they need to succeed in applying the proper pressure at the right place of the governmental machineries. This would often translate the violation of rules since existing systems historically excluded them. Therefore, they obviously need to mobilize people to produce a local political consensus that effectively work against the distribution of power in society. This is a chance to start working as political society.²² Generally, governmental activity takes place within the specific social structures of class, status and privilege. Benefits that are supposed to be available are in fact concerned with those who have greater privilege. The reason is not only for corruption, rather it could happen as some sections of the people simply do not have information or will to make to claim what they are entitled. Though it is very common in country like India where effective CS is limited, but (health and education sector) in Western social democracies where the culturally equipped middle class is much better capable to use the system than the poor or under privileged. When poor are mobilized in political society, they can affect the implementation of governmental activities in their favour. It can be said that they have expanded their freedoms by using PS which is not available to them in CS (Chatterjee, 2004).

Chatterjee (2004) also argues for using 'PS' rather than CS in post colonial countries. To him, the political society is as a site of negotiation and contestation

²¹. For more see Chatterjee (2004) in *The politics of Governed: Reflections in Popular politics in Most of the World*

²². When school teachers in West Bengal of India gain trust of the rural community to entreat the case of the poor and secure the confidence of the administration to find a local consensus that they will fix, that time they do not represent the trust generated among members of civic community or CS. In contrast with that they mediate between domains that are differentiated by deep and historically deep- rooted inequalities of power. They intercede between who governs and who governed (Chatterjee, 2004: 66).

opened up by the activities of the governmental agencies aimed at population groups and administrative processes that are paralegal and of collective claims that appeal to ties of moral solidarity. How the PS is located in relation to legal political form of the state is important area to get emphasized. He also added that it is PS by which we can discern the shifting historical horizon of political modernity in most of the world, where just as the fictive ideal of CS may exercise a prevailing influence on the forces of political change. Therefore, the actual transaction over the everyday distribution of rights and entitlements lead over time to substantial redefinition of property and law within the existing modern state.

Though PS has mass acceptance in West Bengal, India but in Bangladesh usually have CS which is historically linked with NGOs and social movement. The term 'CS' is translated into Bengali as Shushil Shamaj, which literally means 'gentle society' is increasingly prominent in public debate in Bangladesh. Articles regularly appear in the newspaper debating on the possible importance, meaning and roles of CS. Government acknowledged the importance of CS; therefore, they consult with the NGOs/CSOs time to time. A Government- NGO/CSO consultative council has been established in the mid – 1990s as a committee to build better relationships between government and NGOs. Behind the scenes, the international development agencies have pushed the idea of CS as a part of GG (Lewis, 2004). "The emphasis on 'good governance' opened up a vacuum in the political space that the NGOs could occupy as the 'allies of the poor'. The shift in donor emphasis as well as changes in national politics offered them an additional site of action- the local political structure. In contrast to in the 1980s, when they fought against rural power structure on their own, in the 1990s NGOs could depend on support from donors interested in good governance issues (USAID, CIDA) and from the national parties that see NGOs as huge vote banks (Karim, 2001; 99).

In Bangladesh "the growth of NGO sector was a response to state failure, but it has also arguably contributed to the areas of state weakness" (Lewis, 2004).

CSOs were not formed automatically or evolved from grassroots; rather there were many internal and external players who forced the game. CSOs secured privileged position due to the absence of developed private sector and history of prior cooperation between donors and CSOs. CSOs were in advantage position as a ready resource in assisting donors to shift away from national planning and state- directed development initiatives. Based on the NGOs efficiency, proximity to, knowledge of, rural producers, but garnered political currency as a result of decreasing legitimacy of the military regime of General Ershad (1981- 1990). By the support of urban – based CSOs leaders and their constituencies, the regime of H.M.Ershad was collapsed and democratically elected government ushered in under Khaleda Zia (Feldman, 2003:12).

A prevailing view of a vibrant CS has been contributed by the well- documented NGO sector. “The emphasis on NGOs, however, can obscure range of other important CS processes, movement and activities. An important strand of ‘old’ CS was the organized resistance in the cultural sphere in East Pakistan in the form of ‘language movement’ in the 1950 which asserted the Bengali language against the Urdu imposed by the West Pakistan leadership. It took the form of nationalist civil society rooted in the democratic struggle for autonomy and eventually independence (Rahman, 1999), but was later absorbed into the post-1971 Bangladesh state apparatus and effectively absorbed. As Jalal(1995:90) shows after the liberation of Bangladesh, Mujib used the Awami League’s party organization at least in part to ‘establish control over society’. Jahangir (1986:44) describes the ways in which the Awami League government by 1975 secured the ‘suspension or destruction of rival trade unions, student and youth fronts’ and the control of pressure groups and alternative points of organized political power’. This eventually led to the cooption of this old civil society into official organizations and party affiliated groups. A militarization of ‘civil’ society subsequently occurred under General Ziaur Rahman with military priorities taking precedence over the social (Jahangir 1986). Resistance to this narrowing of this public space then contributed to the emergence of ‘newer’ organizations

of civil society such as NGOs, pressure groups, umbrella organization concerned with poverty, civil rights, gender and democracy” (Lewis , 2004: 115).

Therefore, boundaries between state and CS have been constantly shifted. Such blurring is apparent in the ways in which elements of ‘old’ CS captivated into the post- 1971 state, and the ways in which many NGOs linked to the government and other institutions through family ties, contracting relationships and an open overlapping dependence on foreign donor. The history of CS in Bangladesh is far more than the histories and activities of development NGOs and their supporters. The claims about the vibrancy of the CS in Bangladesh also value closer examination. Like other parts of the world, the tendency to equate NGOs with CS is problematic because it leads to a marginalization of other types of organizations and forms of action (Howell and Pearce, 2001 in Lewis, 2004). Another important problem is that NGO focused analysis of CS in Bangladesh are often ahistorical (Hashemi and Hasan , 1999 in Lewis 2004). At the end, it would be unwise to assume –as liberal account of CS to do – a simple dichotomy between the CS and the state, between kingship communities and CS, or between vertical or horizontal ties (Chandhoke, 2002 in Lewis 2004). We have seen there is more than one tradition of CS in Bangladesh. For bringing together the ‘old’ and ‘new’ streams of CS, and into a more mainstream position in relation to the general public was the peoples power protest that brought down the military regime in 1990S and returned Bangladesh in democratic system. If CS is a part of outcome of the operation of democratic institutions, then it may be that much so-called CS in Bangladesh what is really nothing of the kind. A more inclusive and locally accepted idea of CS might acknowledge the role of vertical social relations, the blurring of boundaries in Bangladesh between CS and household and kin networks, as well as with the states and the market, and ongoing relations of conflict and contestation between citizen and states. Based on this view CS becomes an entry point for the analysis of important social, economic and political themes such as the changing expectations on the part of citizen towards the state, the changing influence of transnational actors on social and economic

realities, and the nature of patronage systems, which continue to structure important aspect of political and economic life (Lewis, 2004).

Without exploring the organizational and moral diversity of CS, the ways in which state and CS are often closely interlinked in relations of both cooperation and conflicts, CS in Bangladesh cannot be understood. Since in Bangladesh many CSOs are working in different areas, these CSOs generally can be divided into various types based on their degree of autonomy, location, and scope of activities (Farrington and Lewis, 1993; Paul 200; Tvedt, 1998 in Hauque, 2002:415). However, on the basis of their primary objectives and functions, CSOs of Bangladesh can be categorized more easily and in a convenient way. In line with this, some are classified as welfare CSOs, development CSOs, Service CSOs, Environmental CSOs, advocacy CSOs, human rights CSOs, women's CSOs and religious CSOs (Gallin, 1999; Tvedt, 1998; Wagle 1999 in Hauque, 2002: 415). Furthermore, within each category there have also difference in terms of area of focus. Like Transparency International- Bangladesh and The Hunger Project – Bangladesh both are international NGO, and they are more advocacy oriented (first one research based to), but their focuses are different to each other.

In Bangladesh, many internal and external actors worked out to develop CSOs, but pattern and focus of CSOs in Bangladesh always been shifted. Women always do play an important role in national crisis of Bangladesh. Since after 1990s CSOs have gained more strength than government of Bangladesh as ultimate outcome of world changed politics. Though CS and NGOs are synonymous in world, but in Bangladesh is not same as NGOs; historically it has different meanings, contributions and consequences. Given the fact that, state institutions have traditionally been associated with men and masculinity, disadvantaging women and their interests, understanding women's participation in CSO is important to grasp the diverse sites in which gender power operates in order to assess the potentials for social transformation by CS. Since diversity is important in contextual understanding, therefore, the rhetoric of women

participation in GG movement needs to take into account the diversity and context as important factors. Since women are politically motivated, consequently, their understanding of participation and GG need to be investigated further.

2.4 Gender Dynamics in the Development of Civil Society in Bangladesh:

Just after the liberation, women's participation in politics has been seen as state driven activities. Women were considered as important to be involved in politics and development activities. In the government driven initiatives family was an important area of consideration what contrast with European women's equality movement. In late 70s NGOs became increasingly important development partner of the state and international development institutions or donors. This donor driven development CSOs were not linked with the family, family was absent in the field of their attention, and gender hierarchy was never contested. Gender power pervades both in family and CS, and family is both precursor of CS and site of intimacy (Habermas, 1992). Women were mobilized by the different NGOs for different development projects, and women have been considered as development actors, but in the early 80s fundamental groups became very close to power, and therefore, purposes of women's mobilization have been negotiated by the CSOs. It is very interestingly noticed that the actors for women's mobilization have been changed over time, the purposes of mobilization, and it has been changed but the women remain constant as political subject.

After 1990s, global wave of democratization has upshot the politics of Bangladesh as well. The new paradigm created new floor for women's political participation what generates from consciousness. Global campaigns for GG gathered women under the umbrella of social movement for GG. Women's political participation could be ensured by keeping or exercising state power or through the involvement in NGO / CSOs' activities. In terms of having state power, there is an essentialist view that entry of women in politics will be conducive to cleaner politics since women by their very nature tend to be

honest; other way, when women will have power they will not compromise with corruption. Experience of Bangladesh just contradicts with this notion. Corruption has been a persistent problem in Bangladesh. Fifteen years of women's leadership in state power have increased scale and dimensions of corruption in gigantic proportions (Chowdhury, 2008; 14).

2.5 Concluding Thoughts:

CS is an analytical concept, historically situated and shaped, and it is a concept of Western political thought, exported to all over the world. Since the term has multiple interpretations, therefore contextual understanding is important. The significance of CSO has been increased overtime, and this increasing significance is reflected by program implementation of international donor agencies. CS theorists were not much concern about gendered nature of CS; most of them consider family as boundary marker. In Gramsci's view, CS is the field where struggle of hegemony unfold, whereas Habermas treated family as voluntary associations, and to Cohen family is the first association of CS. Therefore, CS theorists ignored the family, and by default gender relations. Gender is something that works in our everyday life. As a result, the question of gender and participation is rooted in the family; it is historically shaped as CS. When CSO does not acknowledge the family as a site of CS, actually they limit women's political consciousness and participation in CS movement. Similarly, GG is a fashionable term, having old place in human history, which complex systems of interactions among structures, traditions, and functions and processes, but we should not accept it as granted, rather there is huge scope for interrogation. Given that context is very much attached with GG, hence, it should acknowledge the context before understanding the GG. Power relations between State, CS, Market and Family have to be considered before analyzing CS. In addition, analysts must be careful when using universal normative definition of Global CS and GG since this may mislead instead of promoting movement.

In Bangladesh, many internal and external actors worked out to develop CSOs, but the pattern and focus of CSOs in Bangladesh always have been shifting. Women always do play an important role in national crisis of Bangladesh. Since

after 1990s CSOs have gained more strength than government of Bangladesh as ultimate outcome of world's changed politics. Though CSOs and NGOs are synonymous in world, but in Bangladesh CS is not same as NGOs; historically it has different meaning and contribution and consequences. Given the fact that state institutions have traditionally been associated with men and masculinity, disadvantaging women and their interests, understanding women's participation in CSO is important to grasp the diverse sites in which gender power operates in order to assess the potentials for social transformation by CS. Since diversity is important in contextual understanding, therefore, the rhetoric of women's political consciousness or participation in GG movement needs to take into account the diversity and context as important factors. Since women are politically motivated, consequently, their consciousness and participation in GG movement needs to be investigated further.

CHAPTER THREE:

GENDER, PARTICIPATION AND UNDERSTANDING GOOD GOVERNANCE: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON SELECTED EXPERIENCES FROM KISHORGONJ, BANGLADESH

3.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents key findings and analysis of how do women perceive ‘GG’ and participation in three main parts in line with the three main research questions. It also deals with gender differences of political consciousness. Final part of this chapter unpacks how difference in understanding of these two issues, participation and good governance varies involvement in the social movement.

In Bangladesh women are the primary members of CSOs whether they work for providing credit or health services or legal supports. Therefore, many CSOs claimed themselves as representative of the poor and women. CSOs as self - claimed representative of the poor sometimes deploy women as political subjects when women members are kept in dark about the original fact or event (Karim, 2001: 101-4). Given the fact that women have been considered as vital for social mobilisation, women’s participation in politics has been considered as crucial. The social mobilisation of CSO has been occupied by the rhetoric of ‘non- party-politics’ and undertaken the organization of the poor²³ into a ‘grassroots political mobilisation’ at the local and national level (Karim, 2001). Proshika²⁴, in 1990s has organized public demonstration of its members for the distribution of the government land and pro-poor budget²⁵. The CSOs like Proshika have taken

²³. Household that live below the Bangladeshi poverty level and own .5 acres of land or less fall into the category of the poor

²⁴. A Bangladeshi NGO , Proshika Human Development Forum

²⁵. Proshika having the support of ADAB (Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh), sponsored NGO women members in local level election, and increased the women members in

away the role of the political parties that supposed to be done by political parties 20 years back. Interestingly, at present, same event has been done by the indigenous CSOs that are funded by western donors.

3.1 Gender Dynamics of ‘Participation’:

The term participation has become very much of cliché in the literature so repeatedly that it sounds like mantra. It is recited by government agencies, funding institutions, project consultants, experts and activists. ‘Participation’ of CS through NGOs becomes a famous neo –liberal dogma. To the points of those who govern, the term participation has one meaning i.e., as category of governance, but from the position of governed, as a practice democracy, it might have very different meanings (Chatterjee, 2004).

Explaining collective action for GG often relies on the concept of participation. Participation briefly means the act of sharing in the activities of a group. There are three aspects of participation. These are political, economic, and cultural and interpretative. The political participation comprises agenda settings, negotiation over budget, sequences of the action and finally monitoring and evaluation methods (Bernadette, R., and Real, J.R, Pantana, P., 2004). Firstly, participation may refer to a process in which information about a planned project made available to the public where dialogue develops the project option. Secondly, participation might comprise project related activities other than mere information flows. This, may starts from labour contribution or long term commitments by local groups to manage services and facilities or planning future use. Thirdly, it depends on peoples own initiatives. These could go beyond the project agenda (Gardner and Lewis in Bernadette, R., and Real, J.R, Pantana, P., 2004:522). In the economic area, participation consists cost sharing (it can be proportion of amount, distribution of burden and risk that involved in that particular case). The lenses through what a problem is defined and made visible,

the public rallies. Two decades ago only left parties in Bangladesh would organize such rallies and advocate for land reform.

and the social meaning assigned to it – belongs to cultural and interpretative aspects of participation (Papart, 2000).

Participation can also be conceptualized as discourse that contains “potential for an unjustified exercise of power” (Coke and Kothari, 2001:41). This indicates that participation can be tyrannical. “Discourses of participation are suffused with power- what they contain and omit have important ramifications (Crush 1995, Escobar 1995, Kothari 2001 in O’Reilly, 2006:1078). Different meanings of participation may serve same purpose, at the same time, similar meaning may serve different purpose (O’Reilly, 2006:1078). It is assumed that participation in the structures of governance, particularly political parties, bureaucracies, the military and the economic institutions is regarded as available to all citizens. Even nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who are increasingly recognized as pressure group for GG have too often been seen as gender- neutral actors. NGOs often do very little to challenge gender bias either in their organizations or in the CS (Meyer and Prugl, 1999; Rai, 2000 Desai, 2002 in Papart, 2000:1).

Participation is very much linked with the structures of the institutions and agency of the individual and in this way participation is gendered. Without understanding the institutional context of structure and agency, the dynamics of participation cannot be explored properly. The term ‘agency’ can be defined as the degree of free will which is exercised by individuals in their social action; peoples capacity ultimately to decide which action (not) to take; represents individual freedom. People express their agency according to the degree of constraint we experience from the structure. Some people have fewer agencies than others because of the structural factors like poverty or value – based constraint; in some situation all people have fewer agencies, while political state is oppressive (Walsh, 1998:33). Mahmood(2001:203) argues “agency not synonym for resistance that to relations of domination, but as capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create”. In order to be able to judge in ways that are more morally and politically informed, we need to consider certain practices objectionable, but it is important to take into

consideration, the desire, motivations, commitments and aspirations of the people to whom these practices are important. The kind of injury specific to women located in particular historical and cultural situations need to be explored. It is not enough to point out that a tradition of female piety or modesty serves to give legitimacy to women's subordination. We can understand the significance of that subordination to the women who embody it, if we explore the tradition in relation to the practical engagement and forms of life in which they are embodied (Mahmud, 2001: 225).

West and Zimmerman, (1987:126 in Gherardi 1994:595) links gender as a subjective identity with social behaviour and defines gender as "the activity of managing situated conduct in the light of normative conceptions of attitude and activities appointed for one's sex category". In other words, gender means something we think, we do, something we make accountable to others (Gherardi 1994: 595). "Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional and micro political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'nature'" (West and Zimmerman, 1987:126 in Gherardi 1994: 595). Besides the feminine and masculine nature of expressions, guided by perceptual interaction and micro politics, gender can be looked at, not as simple property of people but an activity and social dynamics, which can be usefully used to study organizational culture (Gherardi, 1994: 595).

3.2 Understanding Participation and Good Governance: Views from Two CSOs

Understanding on something comes from and is shaped by a process of power²⁶ and consciousness. Gramsci distinguished three level of consciousness in the movement towards hegemony and the creation of historic bloc. These are; firstly; economic- cooperative which deals with specific interests of the particular group,

²⁶. Here power refers to all three type (power to, power over and power within)

secondly, the solidarity or class consciousness which extends to whole social class, and stays solely at an economic level; and finally, the hegemonic which brings the interest of the leading class into an agreement with those of subordinate classes and incorporates these with others interests into an ideology articulated in universal conditions (Cox, 1981: 168). Besides, Gramsci's notions of consciousness feminist scholars have distinct but important stand on consciousness. Basu (2003) pointed out that in liberal democracies women are most likely to use their transformative ways and avoid co-optation when they carry a previous and/or ongoing link to social movement that encourages women's empowerment. The reason is that activism within social movements allows the building of collective identities, consciousness raising and combativeness in the direction of authorities that may persist women's identity and interests within institutions. In contrast, due to lack of linkage to social movements greatly assuages the transformative power women can exercise through institutions.

To discern the ways in which diverse understanding on GG and participation silhouette the pattern of women's engagement in social movement, the study has selected two CSOs of Kishorgonj district, Bangladesh. The two selected CSOs had 8 female members in their district committee. The study has interviewed 7 of them²⁷ and 2 male members (who are convenors of the committees) to have male perspectives in understanding gender aspect in CS movement. Among the 7 female respondents professionally they were very assorted²⁸. Either in student life or entry period of profession, all were involved in politics, being disheartened; they left politics and got involved in social activities. Among the two male members one was retired professor, and another one was prominent lawyer of Kishorgonj.

²⁷ The researcher could not reach to one woman member

²⁸ Two were teacher, and among others one from each profession lawyer, doctor, NGO worker, entrepreneur and ex-politician.

3.2.1 CASE STUDIES: SHUJAN AND CCC OF KISHORGONJ:

The study has selected Kishorgonj as area of research since it is known to keep religious harmony. Amongst the two organizations, SHUJAN is more based on local initiatives and voluntary job, but CCC relatively depends on TIB's fund and local contribution is less. The researcher has selected relatively self dependent - SHUJAN and dependent to other- CCC, idea²⁹ was that these two types of organization might give more exploratory, dynamic (and even contradictory) information about women's political consciousness in the CSOs. Both organizations are working well in Kishorgonj. Having communication with the committee in this district, good communication with Capital city, and finally political situation and religious harmony and coexistence work pushed the researcher to select this district.

SHUSHASHONER JANNO NAGARIK (SHUJAN):

Though Shushashoner Janno Nagarik (Citizen for Good Governance- popularly known as SHUJAN) is an umbrella organization of THPB, but it is a voluntary, neutral, citizen's initiative based organization works for citizen's rights resulting in GG. Its works are directed by formed committee. This committee is active from Union level to national level. Once it was 'Citizens for Fair Election'. 'Citizens for Fair Election' has started its activities in the Union Parishad³⁰ Election (Local Government Election) in 2003. The objectives were to elect honest, qualified and dedicated (to social welfare) candidates in the local government body to strengthen and make it effective. It organized face to face program and election campaign to give information to voters about the candidates. In November 02, 2005, it started a new journey beyond fair election. Therefore, it turns to move in broader area of GG with new name SHUJAN (Citizen for Good Governance) by national distinguish- neutral individuals. The

²⁹ On the basis of the researcher's two years practical working experience with them

³⁰ Union Parishad (UP) is the lower tyre of the local government. Other two tyres are Zila Parishad (District Council) and Upazila Council (Sub- District Council).

activities of SHUJAN ranges from different types of campaign (like fare voter list, information about the candidates), programs (face to face³¹), filing case against government or other organizations when it is against public interest. SHUJAN had great contribution for its campaign and other programs for free and fair election during local and national parliament's election. The transparency and accountability issues (by specific 8 points) of candidates (in election) and elected representatives that were raised by SHUJAN have been adopted by the Election Commission of Bangladesh later. It also works against corruption by raising much awareness. As a result, SHUJAN has a good impression for free and fair election movement as well as GG.

COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED CITIZENS (CCC):

Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC) is a CSO formed by TIB. TIB has started its activities as a trust in 1996. In 1998, it obtained government approval as NGO. From the very beginning of TIB's work in Bangladesh, it has been working as a catalyst of social movement against corruption, and promotes GG. It has elaborate research and advocacy programs for policy change and institutional reform for creating conditions for reducing corruption and promoting GG in Bangladesh. Since, its establishment, TIB has undertaken various activities—research, information, dissemination, campaign and advocacy to bring about greater awareness amongst the general public of the nature, extent and implications of corruption in Bangladesh across all sectors—public, private and non-governmental.

One of the early conclusions TIB has reached is that fighting against corruption and promoting transparent, accountable and efficient governance requires active

³¹. One kind of program to bring the elected representative in front of the people to give chance to ask question about their works and commitments for the transparency and accountability.

and concerted citizens' effort. TIB has, therefore, given priority to mobilizing and drawing support from constituencies of citizens by forming watchdog bodies –CCC(Committees of Concerned Citizens) – as a deterrent force against corruption, not only in key sectors of public service.

TIB has devoted itself to the task of mobilizing a social movement to curb corruption and to promote GG in the public, private and non-governmental sectors through greater accountability, transparency and public participation.³²TIB already acquired the international attention for its implicit report and activities against corruption involving mass people and doing quality research. CCC has controlled and funded by TIB. So, the idea was it would be helpful to look another CSO who works for more or less on same issues with different mechanisms.

3.3. 1 Institutions, Programs and Women's Political Consciousness:

On the basis of programs the two CSOs performed in last seven months, it is clear that they (both CSOs) are basically working with awareness building related activities. More specifically one of them (CCC) deals with programs like Campaigning (for blood donation and blood grouping), Gathering (mothers to be aware about their duties and rights), Discussion (gender and corruption), Rally (International Women's Day having special local theme corruption and women), Seminar on 'Improvement of health services at Union Level: Our responsibilities', Face to face and Open budget at Union Level (publicly discussion about answer queries regarding Union budget and decision or action has been done). It also did local level planning with Union Parishad to utilize their directly received aggregate grant by the Union Parishad. Besides all these, it had awarding program to encourage meritorious students who did very well in public examinations. On the other hand, Shujan deals with only one program, but

³². http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/index.php?page_id=228, accessed on 10th April, at 15:15

in several times in several places. It has less involvement in respect to participants' presence, where as earlier one has more participants.

Level of participation not only depends on the level of political consciousness and programs that organization takes rather nature of the organization is an important aspect to be considered. Nature of the institution can be looked at who represent the institution. In both cases, there are few women in comparison to men's involvement³³. In addition, both CSOs are male headed, and local responsible of the supportive NGOs are male. This gendered nature of institutions gives less space for women. Therefore, "the concept of the gendered institutions calls for attention to a constellation of institutional traits rather than simply the people who occupy them. How an institution acquires a gendered character is a complicated question. Institutions are shaped by the character of the groups that inhabit them. The longer either men or women inhabit an institution, the smaller the portion of people of the opposite sex, more that institution is likely to reflect the values of dominant groups. The gendered character of institutions is also determined by their distributional policies which may have unequal consequences for women and men" (Basu, 2003; 25). Consequently, gendered nature of CCC and Shujan confines women's participation in certain forms and programs, and are influenced by the men's way of looking and defining things.

3.3.2 Women's Political Consciousness and Good Governance:

Women members who involved in these two CSOs either have political experience as activist or as a social worker before getting involved in GG movement. Some of them are from political family where they have comparatively better opportunity than others to exercise their willingness in involving politics. Among the respondents who involved in politics, most of

³³ Since the researcher worked with one of the NGOs mentioned earlier, it is seen that usually 11 to 22 people represent the committee and women are mostly not more than 3 or 4. In case of CCC and Shujan, they had altogether 8 women.

them left politics due to its changed nature³⁴, lack of commitment of the national and international political leaders. Since politics had lost its values, the arena became men's field. To them, CS is the fundamental institution in raising voice for GG. CS can play significant role in promoting GG in all public and private institutions. They put emphasis on the political party. Given that, since 1990s lack of tolerance between political parties in Bangladesh creates numerous problems, therefore, they have pointed out that tolerance between political parties is one of the most important components for GG. According to one of them,

“Strong civil society is the precondition for good governance. It is the practice of truth; exercise the rule of law and unquestionable governance having transparency and accountability within all types of administration and political parties that would be concentrating on betterment of all human beings. It is a governance system that will ensure the fundamental rights of people; it takes all types of affordable measures to reduce all kinds of social injustice.”(Kamrunnahar, CCC)³⁵

They have found good relation between CS, practice of truth and GG. These are interlinked to each other. Another respondent mentioned in defining good governance;

“Making law effective and ensure rights of all human beings. In addition, make sure the rule of law is in exercised and administration is not patronizing a

³⁴ Politics became more dependent on black money, muscle power, patronizing with social elite and administration, and political party.

³⁵ Name has been codified. She was involved in leftist politics and later left politics and engaged herself in women council's movement. She is an entrepreneur.

specific party (ruling political party), rather it works for welfare of mass people.” (Dalia, Shujan).³⁶

Governance is a complex system of interactions among structures, traditions, functions (responsibilities), and processes (practices) characterized by three key values of accountability, transparency and participation (USAID, 2002, p. 2 in Punyaratabandhu, 2004:1). The three key values of GG cooperates each other very closely, and these are the preconditions by which GG can be assessed.

“Democracy should be present, administration should be society friendly, mass people friendly, and finally it should be women friendly. Furthermore, it makes sure that government is not patronizing to particular political party (most of the times, it does to ruling party) rather it works for interest of mass people. In addition, it is such kind of system where views of the majority are accepted by the government, muscle power and black money are not determinants of politics to get elected. Proper education policy works to make future generation more productive. Religious fundamentalism is banned, and government runs the country by some machineries like judiciary, legislative and executives” (Kamrunnahar, CCC).

Governance is been defined as the stewardship of formal and informal political rules of the game. Governance demonstrate those measures that involve setting the rules for the exercise of power and resolve conflicts over such rules (Hyden 1999 : 185 in Kjaer ,2004 :3). Though governance means the rules of the game, but it is more about the way how people would be governed and the relationship between the governed governors. More specifically, it should have friendly atmosphere to society, general people and women. Here the basic important point is the reality that had been reflected by the respondent. Most of the public

³⁶ Name has been codified. She is secretary of Shujan, unmarried and was involved in leftist politics and also involved in women’s council activities. Professionally she is a development worker.

institutions are not women friendly, therefore they have pointed out it should be included in the conditions of GG.

3.3.3 Political Consciousness and Level of Participation:

Participation is one of the three major conditions for GG. Political consciousness is the determinant of the level of their participation. Often it seems that people use this term as a tool or evidence for claiming their success in program implementations. It may remain ambiguous what type of participation we are talking about. Is it only to be present in the program or to contribute by labour, money or in any other means? In line with that, one of the respondents strongly mentions,

“Participation means to take part in different activities involved in the movement. Like raising awareness about the negative consequences of corruption, the role of an individual to stop or reduce it. In addition let them know what rights they have, what they could demand from the governmental / nongovernmental service providing organization”.(Kamrunnahar, CCC)

Based on the reality and perspective that women hold and the context exist in that district, it can be stated that participation should be based on moral obligations; people will decide how and when and for what they will participate. Participation when comes for GG, it should not be directed by material benefits. Participation means one kind of contribution; it could be by manual labour, money, even by mental support. Contribution needs to come from own perspectives and ability. It should not be imposed by outsiders. Even though some body is not involved by above mentioned points, but s/he is agreed upon an issue or not adversary position, then it could be taken as participation³⁷.

The respondents of the CSO have been captured by the discourse of participation. Therefore, they quoted like any other government's agency or

³⁷ The definition has been drawn from the respondents' views.

NGO. The way CSO wants to get them involved by developing the program, they get involved. Papart (2000) mentioned there are three aspect of participation (political, economic and cultural and interpretative), but the respondents have only one area they think about participation. They have been involved in political aspects of participation. Even though they are involved in political aspects of participation, but they limit themselves in only one area which is project related activities, not in the determining process of how information may available to the public, and also not by their own initiatives. Since the mode of participation of the respondents tells us that were not cultural and interpretative, as a result there is less potential for women's transformative social change.

Table1: Level of Women's Participation in Programs (in terms of attendance in programs):

SI	Name of the CSO	Name of the Program	Participation		
			Women	Men	Total
1	CCC	Campaign (Blood Donation)	200	200	400
2	CCC	Mothers Gathering	250	0	250
3	CCC	Discussion Program on Gender and Corruption	180	120	300
4	CCC	Rally: International Women's Day	300	200	500
5	CCC	Seminar (Improvement Health Services)	10	50	60
6	CCC	Face to Face	25	475	500
7	CCC	Open Budget	35	350	385
8	CCC	Local Level Planning	280	350	630
TOTAL participants of CCC			1280	1745	3025
9.	Shujan	Views Sharing Meeting ³⁸ (on Good Governance)	32 ³⁹	178 ⁴⁰	210 ⁴¹

³⁸ Only one type of program has been organized by Shujan many times and in different places

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED IN TWO CSOs	1312	1923	3235
Over all Percentage	40.56	59.44	100

The overall women participation in the programs of two CSO is 41%, but it is less in Shujan (15% only) in compare with CCC (58%).

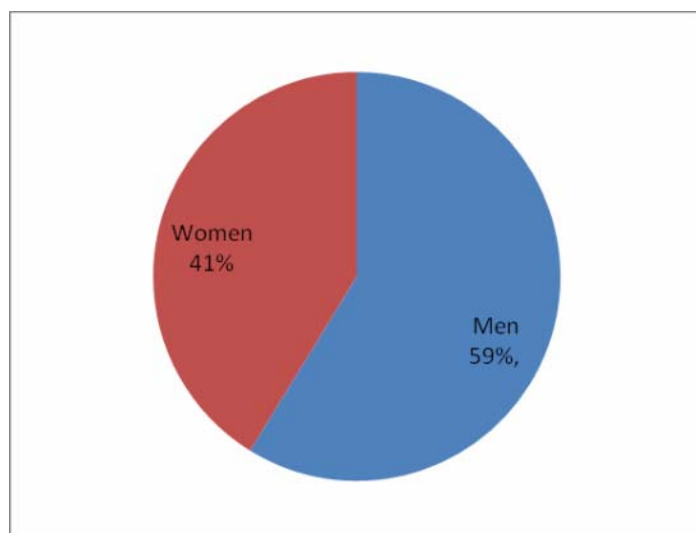


Chart 1: Female and Male Participation in CSOs' Program

The participation of women members of two CSOs differs based on their understanding of the term GG, again their understanding of GG depends on level of their political experience and motivation. It has been pointed out that respondents who were more experienced in politics were clearer about the movement, and they were more strategic and visionary in engaging themselves, while others who were comparatively new in politics and GG movement they looking more on the output.

³⁹ 15.24% for women

⁴⁰ 84.74% for men

⁴¹ It is summation of the participants attended in their six programs. For details see the annex.

3.4 Gender Differences on Understanding of Good Governance and Participation:

Besides the political motivation, another important parameter is gender that makes disparity on understanding of both GG and political participation. Men and women understand GG and political participation in a different way. Women participate in the programs to address the issues that affect their everyday lives and family, whereas men think about participation in a more abstract term. While men (two presidents of the committees) think that GG is about transparency, accountability and participation of the government, at the same time, women have more holistic notion of GG which includes human rights, tolerance, daily experiences and broader level of consciousness. They think that GG is a comprehensive issue to ensure human rights in all stages of human life, and it is not only an issue for administration rather tolerance within political parties is important as well. One of the two male respondents said,

“Being an independent state, Bangladesh has to guarantee the fundamental rights of people. Ending all social injustice, citizen rights will be established and exercised. Judiciary, legislative and administrative – these three branches of the government have to make governance more sure”.(Alok Kumar, CCC)⁴²

To them (men) GG means, if government runs the country based on the said specific machineries, and do not have malpractice, and then it can be stated as GG.

Female members do not want keeping it on theoretical frame. Their demand is more on practical experience based. They do acknowledge importance to what they are experiencing in their everyday life. Their understanding comes from the daily experience. For an instance, one (female) respondent said,

⁴² Alok (codified) is the convenor of CCC in Kishorgonj district. By profession he is a lawyer. He was also involved in leftist politics in his early life, but left direct political involvement after 1991.

“Strong civil society is the pre- condition for good governance. Good governance means transparency and accountably will be in political parties and in all types of administration. Administration has to be society friendly, mass people friendly and women friendly. Being a service providing institution of the state, it should work having responsibility of its own. Finally, tolerance among the political parties is another important condition for good governance”. (Kamrunnahar , CCC)

Political instability or lack of tolerance among political parties is a great problem in Bangladesh, affecting everyday life of women and their family. Women do realize it, and they have included tolerance as condition of GG. Therefore, it is no longer an issue of transparency and accountability only; rather it is a comprehensive system that is driven by the philosophy of betterment of all.

Regarding the understanding of participation between men – women do differ from each other. Men think participation is the basic condition for democracy, and democracy is the production house of GG. Men always go in the line of theory, so their views come from the theoretical guideline. Though women do value that participation is a condition for democracy, but they do not want to impound themselves within the theory. Therefore, they consider reality, possibility and also perspective what they are talking about. For an example, one of them (man) said,

“People are the owner of the state/country. Participation is the main principle of democracy. Participation is to involve people in different activities in different levels of action. It could be social, mental and physical”.
(Ashraf Hussain, Shujan) ⁴³

⁴³ Mr. Hussain (codified) had been involved in teaching Sociology in a government college for a quite long time.

Women pointed sensitivity is important in participating any social movement. They focused that one should be sensitized first before motivating others to do it. One respondent perfectly quoted,

“Participation means; to be sensitised oneself first, and then expand it to others. Aware and encourage people to fight for their rights”.(Zakia Sultana, CCC)⁴⁴

Another important thing they have identified which make their understanding unique. What they said participation is not something just to focus on number. If it is something like that then women should not take part in it. They ⁴⁵ also added that it could have different form, like usually we consider participation contributing in terms of physical labour, mental support or money. She likes to add that if somebody is not against any action or decision but s/he could not make contribution in other way, then also it is participation. In this point one (woman) respondent replied,

“It means to do own responsibility on time. If it is to show that someone is participating only for ‘presence or increase the number’, then it is not participation. If somebody is not in adversary position, it could be taken as participation.”(Shila Boumick, CCC)⁴⁶

3.5 Motivation of Participation in GG Movement:

Respondents of the CSOs were mostly from the comparative advanced group of the society. Many of them were directly involved in politics since their student life, but left politics after 1990s. They could not adopt themselves with the

⁴⁴ Ms. Sultana (codified) teaches Bengali literature in a local college.

⁴⁵ Ms. Sultana and Ms. Boumick , respondent

⁴⁶ By profession , Ms Boumick (codified) is a lawyer and also involved in women’s council’s activities in Kishorgonj.

shifting paradigm of politics. Although they had left the politics but their involvement with people was very much visible in different emergency situation. Still they have their political vision to create a just society; therefore, their past political experience and vision played an important role for their motivation. Along with political involvement, images of the mother NGOs are other important factors that stimulate their engagement in the movement. TIB and THPB have clean images in the country since one (female) of the participants pointed nicely,

“It [CSO] works against corruption. ‘Corruption free Bangladesh’ is a dream what we want to achieve. Reduce corruption at a tolerance level for the future generation, and move to make Bangladesh as ‘island of integrity’ ”. (Kamrunnahar, CCC)

Corruption is a global problem; as a result, it is not so easy to wish to have corruption free world. Female respondents of those two CSOs do understand the global game of the corruption, and they do experience corruption more closely than men. Therefore, the agenda of the CSO attracts women to be involved. In addition, the visionary plan to see Bangladesh as ‘Island of integrity’ was another vital force to get them involved.

3.6 Restrictions or Limitations of Participation and Copying Tactic:

Corruption is a major problem in Bangladesh. It needs comprehensive action to work against corruption, but in most of the cases it goes isolated way that faces lots of difficulty. The initiatives taken by the CSOs are not enough to address it. As corrupted people are powerful in the society, and government official do not like to involve it directly, therefore, it is very much frustrating not to accomplish it. One of the participants (man) quoted,

“Corruption is in every cell of the society. CCC is a very small initiative to address the issue like corruption. It needs mass expansion, because the corrupted people in Bangladesh are very powerful. No government official

likes to join anti corruption related works. If sometimes, somebody says about their internal corruption then his/ her position will be jeopardized, CCC does not have administrative authority to support such victim.’’

(Alok Kumar, CCC)

Besides, its (CCC) limited activities and administrative power; women do face many hindrances to take part in the movement. Professional women face problem regarding time since they need to carry all household responsibilities in addition to their job. Those who are not doing any direct outside earning related job, they need to ask their husband or brother or father to support them financially since these CSOs does not provide any money or benefit. Just like market depends on unpaid work of the household reproducing labour force, CS also depends on unpaid work of household, such as caring dependence, child-rearing other household activities, to free its participants to execute time and energy of its grounds. Since in most of the society it is women who maintain the household responsibility, participation in CS that requires at least time become gendered (Jenson, 1997 in Howell, 2007). In most of the cases they have to make a choice between family and politics/ social movement.

“We (women) have to sacrifice, like when I go out for CCC work family suffers. In this case family accept the sufferings for the betterment of the whole society.” (Zakia Sultana, CCC)

Women have to negotiate with the domestic responsibility and with priority. When they think to take in the social or political activities they have to go through opportunity cost⁴⁷. Since most of the CSO theorists never consider

⁴⁷ “**Opportunity cost** is the value of the next best alternative foregone as the result of making a decision. Opportunity cost analysis is an important part of a company's decision-making processes, but is not treated as an actual cost in any financial statement. Opportunity cost is of doing the best thing and ignoring the next best thing to be done”.

Accessed on 25th October at 14:55 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opportunity_cost

family as part of CS, rather they distinguish family from CS, (Habermas, 1989 in Howell, 2005), therefore, women's domestic burden limits their engagement. Basu(2003:49) pointed "women are also more apt to become active in movement and institutions that address the interface between their private and public roles. This often happens when public policies hinder their capacity to fulfil their domestic responsibilities."

Moreover, there are gendered notions of the society. People do not like to see their daughter, mother, wife or even sister in giving slogan or organizing people for any movement. It brings shame for them. Therefore, women need to struggle double; against family and state power. Even though, to some extent, husband is supportive or agree to accept but joint family maintain hierarchy system which is more complicated than society for women. If somebody does not follow then she has to accept lot of negative profiles imposed on their actions. One of the women respondents said,

"(Women) have to face socially created many problems like when women get involved corrupted people become angry and do harm many ways. Society imposes many terms "Kharap"(bad) , Patita (prostitute), Usrinkhal (undisciplined) to women who are dedicated." (Kamrunnahar , CCC)

Male dominated society and culture are not pleased in welcoming women's presence in social movement. Rather, it promotes the stigmatization of women activists by a social construct that operates in a similar way for isolation and silencing women. Gender practices have been intimidated by calling names of women in the society. In addition to that women's participation is limited in one specific task like program implementation related activities, and that has not been determined by them. Furthermore, as cultural and interpretative participation⁴⁸ is very much linked up with everyday experiences of women, and

⁴⁸ For more see, Papart (2000).

they could not exercise it within the two CSOs, consequently, their participation is confined within the said specific task. Moreover, local CSOs have been linked up with the international NGOs (TIB & THPB) for their financial and other types of support. Subsequently, they could not exercise their autonomy in decision making activities. It is not unexpected that those NGOs could not conceptualize the problem through the lens of gender, and the explanations of gender relations are not leading to re-evaluation of CS theorists from a gender perspective (Howell, 2007). Subsequently, as long as women are taking part in programs like blood donation, blood grouping, mothers gathering and rally on a special event – these are fine to the society, but when they speak about corruption and corrupt people- they have to accept calling names, threats and harmful hindrances to their daily activities.

3.7. Concluding Thoughts:

Men and women experience the reality of participation differently. They do emphasize the issue based on their everyday needs and priority, and the way to look at things is different. The programs of the CSOs are not equally suitable for men and women, and the level of engagement in GG movement has been formed by gendered nature of the institutions, and political consciousness of the individual. Therefore, their level of participation is unbending in one form. Family is an important institution what has been treated as boundary marker to the CS. Subsequently, it makes women's contribution and hindrances invisible and unrecognized. When family provides false impression of autonomy, voluntariness, and humanity, it plays an important role in reproducing social norms and values and patriarchal authority (Howell, 2007). Moreover, GG does not only comprise transparency, accountability and participation, rather it also looks further for friendly atmosphere especially to women. Therefore, Howell (2007:427-8) tells “civil society associations excludes women, either implicitly through norms or explicitly through regulations, as with working men's clubs, then men and women become distributed unevenly across the terrain of civil society.”

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The study provides new insights on women's political consciousness and understanding 'participation' that underpin their engagement in GG through CSOs. The study concludes with a number of observations, as follows;

Exported by the Western development discourse, the concept of CS is linked up with donor-driven norms like GG. Since the global CSOs are the financer and patroniser of the national CS, therefore, they have the legitimacy to introduce issues (term and definition both) on the basis of their political agenda and priority. It is well figured out by the respondents in this study. Though UNDP defines governance as exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage country affairs at all levels, the respondents (especially women) of the CSOs mentioned some very specifically aspects crucial to their lives, such as; tolerance, women friendly administration, effective measures to reduce social injustice and patronizing by ruling political party (/parties) over the administration. The daily experiences, priorities and expectations of women in respect to GG are not reflected in the global CS's agenda of GG. Externally imposed notions of GG could not produce a gender neutral space; rather it creates hindrances towards women's spontaneous potentials in participating social activities based on their preferences. The experiences of respondents in the context of Kishorgonj suggest that just as there is antagonistic relationship exists between state and women's interest (Basu, 2003), so two CSOs and the space they provide for participation also bear gender norms. Women's scopes to participate in the CSOs are embedded in institutional structures, which limit their choice and political agency.

The study tells us that in all CSOs or NGOs, people want to ensure participation, especially women's participation which has become another window of popular discourse. Yet women's participation is very much confined with the specific tasks what is basically related with programme implementation, not designing it or having control over decision making forum or activities. As long as their

activities remain at this level everything is fine with the society, but when their actions challenge male dominated structural power, they encounter problems.

Since GG is an imposed idea, and participation is gendered, women's potentials are in many ways jeopardized because their visions and understanding are not accounted for. When the responsibilities shift from the state to the CSOs in ensuring or advocating for GG, the burden of participation goes to women, as articulated by women respondents who mentioned that they had to go through a choice between domestic responsibilities and social movements for GG. Given the patriarchal nature of the society they have less opportunity than men to advocate their views, and must also accept so many call names what has very negative connotations in the society.

In creating a just and free society, women activists need home grown organization to achieve their agenda. In line with this perspective, an alternative could be to develop the concept of 'political society' for women. Since global actors have shifted focus to CSOs for governance, by which state has evaded its responsibilities, consequently women have to take its additional burden and menace. Male dominated politics left out women, and encouraged to involve in CS which is another male domain. Subsequently, theories of CS need to be evaluated through gender lens acknowledging contextualised reality, because the reality and history of post- colonial countries is different than others. It is not surprising that the forms or natures of CS are different, depending on specific features of the colonial and post colonial historical trajectories particularly in South-Asia. Chatterjee (2004) used the term political society which has more autonomy to decide what to do, and how to do than CS. Since political society can discern the historical horizon of political modernity, and it is a site of negotiation and contestation opened up by the activities of governmental agencies, and ties of moral solidarity, therefore, it has more to offer for women's activism. Moreover, the actual transaction of everyday distribution of rights and entitlements lead over time substantial redefinition of property and law within existing modern state, what has more local relevance and applicability to women's social movement to achieve free and a just society for all.

The key objectives of GG as externally imposed entail the participation of women in CSOs' activities, but limited to the social sector. Under these circumstances the assumption of women's participation in CSOs in bringing gender equality is uncertain. Initially, the assumption⁴⁹ was that women's engagement in the CSOs activities was driven by their political consciousness. But the findings of this study tell us that there is something more to be investigated, namely how the transformatory potentials of their participation are promoted or suppressed by an externally imposed agenda on GG. Though unsuccessful movements may have influence over discourses in ways that tremendously pressure CS and probably the state (Katzenstein, 1987:16 cited in Basu, 2003:26), promoting women's engagement without considering the purpose of joining and understanding the gendered nature of the organizations might be for the sake of form rather than substance. In order to assess the transformative potentials of women in social change, we need to go beyond the women's involvement in CS.

⁴⁹ Based on researcher's two years field experience with THPB.

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ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

General Information about Respondents:

- A. Name.....
- B. Organization..... , Designation.....
- C. Profession..... , Professional status.....

Interview Questions:

1. Did (do) you have political involvement/ engagement? If yes , since when and for how long?
2. Since when have you been involved in this movement or this organization?
3. How do you perceive the term “good governance” (what do you mean by good governance?)
4. Do you think that good governance is important? Why and how?
5. How do you understand ‘participation’? Do you think that ‘participation’ could have alternative meanings? Please elaborate your views.
6. How did you get involved in the movement of good governance?
7. What is the motivation to being involved with such activities?
8. Is there any restriction or limitation to be active in such activities? If yes, what are they?
9. How do you cope or negotiate with the restrictions?
10. Do you think that your involvement / contribution could bring change? If so, then how?
11. Do you face any kind of problem that men do not? (Do women face any problem only being a woman?)
12. Do you think that it will positively influence the society? How? Is it a process or means?

ANNEX 2: TYPES OF PROGRAMS THAT CIVIL SOCIETY TAKE

CCC, Kishorgonj (January' 08 – July 08)

SL.	Name of the program	Activities	Participant (male / Female)	Time of the event
1	Campaign: Blood Donation	Blood grouping	400 (200/200)	Day- long
2	Mothers gathering	Awareness building	250(0/250)	11 am
3	Discussion Program: Gender & Corruption	Discussion (to discuss how corruption is creating hindrances for women	300 (120/180)	3.30 pm
4	Rally: International Women's Day	Local Theme: corruption & women	500 (200/300)	3:30 pm
5	Seminar	Improvement of health services at Union level: Our responsibility (aware people about their rights)	60 (50/ 10)	11 am
6	Face to face (Q/A program)	Face the public by UP body regarding their action they have done (to inform people what they are doing)	500 (475/ 25)	3 pm

7	Open budget	Presenting the budget to people (ensure transparency and accountability)	385 (350/ 35)	4 pm
8	Local level planning	To utilize the directly received fund by the UP (involve local people in planning process)	630 (350/ 280)	11 am
9	Awarding program	Awarding ceremony for GPA 5 receiver (motivate quality education)	200(150/50)	3 pm

SHUJAN, Kishorgonj

(January' 08 – July 08)

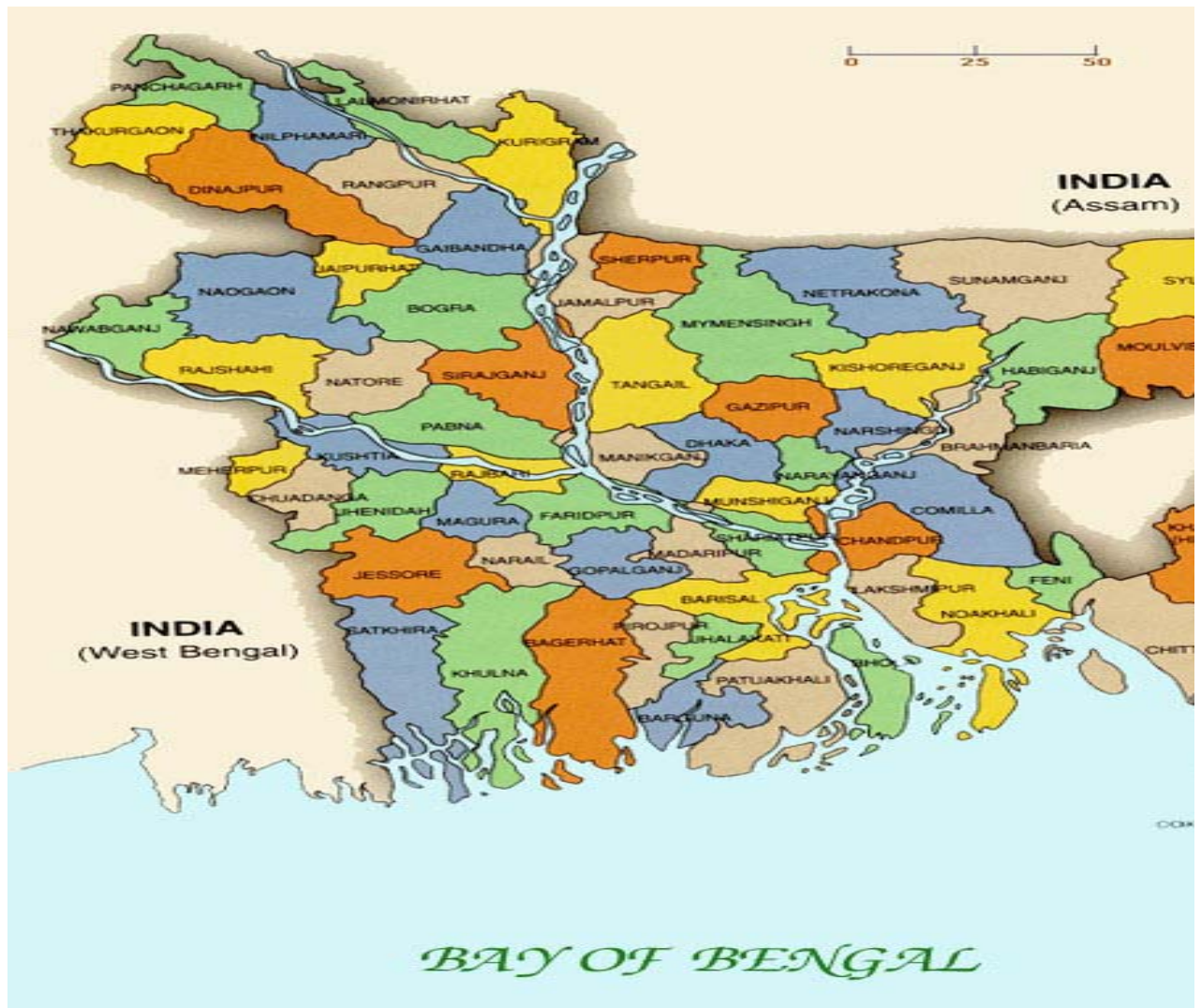
SL.	Name of the program	Activities	Participant (male / Female)	Time of the event
1	Views sharing meeting	Discussion and committee formation	14 (12/02)	10 pm
2	Views sharing meeting	Discussion and committee formation	28 (24/04)	4 pm
3	Views sharing	Discussion and committee	31 (26/ 05)	11 pm

	meeting	formation		
4	Views sharing meeting	Discussion and committee formation	36 (32/ 4)	4 pm
5	Views sharing meeting	Discussion and committee formation	31 (26/5)	6 pm
6	Views sharing meeting	Discussion and committee formation	70 (58/ 12)	6 pm

ANNEX 3: DETAILS OF RESPONDENTS'

Sl	Name of the respondent	Position at CSO	Name of the CSO	Profession
1	Nazmunnahar Moly	Convenor , Gender Sub-Committee	CCC	Entrepreneur
2	Maya Boumik	Member	CCC	Advocate
3	Asok Sarkar	Convenor	CCC	Advocate
4	Khaleda Fenci	Member	CCC	Politician
5	Roushan Ara Luthfunnahar	Member	CCC	Teaching
6	Dipika Das	Secretary	SHUJAN	Development Worker
7	Sultana Razia	Member	SHUJAN	Social Worker
8	Professor Rafikul Islam	President	SHUJAN	Teaching (retired)
9	Dr. Arundhuti Mozumder	Member	SHUJAN	Physician

ANNEX 4: DISTRICT MAP OF BANGLADESH⁵⁰



⁵⁰. Map has been taken from <http://www.homelandbangladesh.com/maps/bangmap2.jpg>, on November 11, 2008 at 11:48.