



Graduate School of Development Studies

**HOUSEHOLD DIPLOMACY, RESPONSIBILITY AND
CONTROL: INCOME ACCESS AND WOMEN'S AGENCY IN
BANGLADESH**

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To My Little Daughter Tanisha

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the implications of middle class women's access to income earning opportunities and control over income which determines their position in intra-household gender power relationships. Empowerment of women by employment is a new orthodoxy in the development discourse since 1990s. In the bargaining approach it is well explained and argued that income –earning strengthens the intra-household position of women, where patriarchal structure play the predominant role and perpetuates the pervasive nature of gender inequality. Sen has argued through his household bargaining model that “outside earnings can give women a better breakdown position, a clearer perception of her individuality and well being, higher perceived contribution to the family economic position” (1990:144). The research will show that even though women are gaining power economically, there is no corresponding improvement in their bargaining power. Women continue to view the non-economic contributions of their husbands as more important than their own economic contributions. This study critically assesses this proposition based on the feminist model of the dynamics of intra-household relations and the concept of Intersectionality. It explores how the intersection of gender with social-class, religion and culture shapes the experiences of middle class women differently from men within the household in Bangladesh. This works as a base of normative theoretical argument. Based on primary data, a critical analysis of the social and institutional arrangements within middle class households is undertaken. This study uncovers how the intersectional experiences produce chains of discriminations for women who are at the junction point of these interactions.

Keywords: Intra-household allocation, Sen's household bargaining model, middle class women, gender power relations, control over wage.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this present study is to examine the proposition that women's empowerment can be acquired through employment and access to education through a case study of urban middle class women in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The standard prescription for women's empowerment in international and national development policies is employment and education. Access to income in particular is seen as improving the bargaining position of women in the household, providing a base for their empowerment within the household and also in society. Economic dependence is a major factor in structuring inequalities between women and men this view is shared by commentators across the political spectrum –Marxists analysis and the World Bank (1990, cited by Kabeer ,1997). Such theoretical perspective predicts that waged work participation will empower women (Folbre, 1986). The neoclassical economists whose paradigm dominates 'mainstream development policy' fail to consider the power relations within the household. Mainstream studies treat household as a simple single unity, and ignore internal differences and domestic politics, where women are frequently subjected to domination.

This study investigates the issue of women's empowerment by comparing the experience of urban employed and unemployed educated middle class women in Bangladesh.. Current empirical findings illustrated that earning an income through work is not sufficient to alter women's position. Simply women's earnings will not bring them same power as men's, since socio –culturally prescribed roles are unequal and different (Mahmud, 1997). Power relations within the household involve both conflict and consensus and hence a process of diplomacy in relations between women and men. As Whitehead and Kabeer (2001:3) explained 'simple conflictual interpretations misunderstand the nature of intra household relations' whereby households are arenas of both joint and competing interests.

This study investigates the issue of women's empowerment by comparing the experience of urban employed and unemployed educated middle class women. This research provides current empirical evidence regarding the impact of outside earning on the lives of middle class employed and non employed women in an urban setting. How women apply their agency is the subject matter of this paper and this will illustrate how middle class women in Dhaka are trying to expand their boundaries of social space through outside earning. This study provides an in-depth analysis of how employed and unemployed women view and experience their empowerment in relation to their income, and how much control do women retain over their wages. This study focus in the ability of the women to exercise authority over their wages, because income control has been identified as a critical variable in the relationship of women's wage work to family power (Blumberg 1984, 1991).

1.1 Background of the study

The issue of women's employment has occupied centre stage in anti-colonial nationalist discourse as well as in postcolonial development narratives of nation building in Bangladesh. Few decades earlier the dominant picture in Bangladesh was that women should stay within the household as a mark of respectability and most middle class women saw being a housewife as their particular designation (Husain, 1958). Women's entry into the workforce was signaled as a loss of respectability, undermining of family dignity and a threat for a group of men since men in the society were commonly playing the 'one man show game' –as a universal breadwinner (Husain, 1958). Women were thought to have no economic agency of their own because cultural interpretation

of women's work in Bangladesh is negative (Mahmud, 1997). In the context of 'gender subordination is a striking feature to which women rely on male protection as much as they rely on male provision' in the context of Bangladesh (Kabeer, 1997:296). There is a strong perception available in the society that woman without male protection is open to various forms of male harassment as well as female disapproval (Kabeer, 1997). 'In Bangladesh society therefore divorce has traditionally been strongly disapproved of and considered detrimental to social prestige and it has been considered sinful for a woman to seek divorce' (Salway, 2001; 692). 'The end of marriage can lead to social rejection and serious economic consequences for the individual and their families' (White, 1992; 98) has highlighted particularly the marriage in Bangladesh.

The study focuses here specifically on middle class women because social class can affect the pattern of income control by affirming or challenging the traditional relations between men and women (Kibria, 1995)¹. In contemporary Bengali society middle class is a distinct social group with a particular economic bracket, cultivated taste, refined behavior customs, ethics and idealism (Scrase, 2003). 'Bangladesh is a patriarchal society in addition being a class society, as a consequence two economic differentiations occur in this society, one is the process of class formation which governs economic mobility in household other is the system of patriarchy which governs the economic mobility of women independent of class' (Kibria, 2008; 406).

In terms of culture they are defined as '*bhadrolok*' (gentle man) and *bhadramahila* (gentle woman) middle class people's status is defined as 'modho bitta' (Scrase, 2003). Meredith Borthwick, author of the book '*The changing Role of Women in Bengal (1849-1905)*' points out:

By the end of the century (19th) there was an articulate group of women able to make their voices heard through public institutional channels hitherto confined to men. This type of modern woman became known as bhadramahila.....Bhadramahila wasused to describe female members of bhadralok families, embodying a specific set of qualities and denoting a certain lifestyle (Cited by Amin, 1996:9).

¹The principle of female energy embodied in the mother –goddesses (Amin, 1996).

The emergence of a new female personality in colonial Bengal was an important episode in social and cultural history and a significant development in South Asian gender relations (Amin, 1996). The transition was effected through a process of social change often referred to as modernization as contrasted tradition (Amin, 1996). They emerged as a new social group in Bengal and it is remarkable that they were the first to enter into urban professional occupations and challenge traditional status maintainer (Scarce, 2003). For many middle class women marriage was the most attractive action. The new domestic ideology of this period celebrated woman as homemaker, mother not as an unseemly wage earner (Amin, 1996).

Since 1971 there is an expansion of an urban, salaried middle class whose family is shaped by no agrarian economic concerns and exposure of western thoughts (Kibria, 1995).

‘The female workforce in Bangladesh in 1990 census found the female labour force participation rate to be 6.3% ,while Labour Force Survey Bangladesh 1993-1994, BBS) showed the rate to be around 8% and many micro studies reveal that Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) rate is 8% to 18%’ (Bangladesh Union Parishad ,1982 ,Cited by Khan ,2008;96).

TABLE: 1 FEMALE LABOUR FORCE (MILLION)

Bangladesh	1995-96	1999-2000
Bangladesh	5.4	8.6(60%)
Urban	1.6	2.2(87%)
Rural	3.8	6.4(68%)

TABLE: 2 LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION (BOTH SEX BY PERCENTAGE)
(1999-2000)

Bangladesh	Both Sex	Male	Female
	54.9	84.0	23.9
Urban	55.8	83.7	26.5
Rural	54.6	84.0	23.1

BBS (1995 -2000)

The above figure shows that women's involvement in labour force is steadily increased and high rates of female work participation outside the home in urban Bangladesh represent a significant shift from the long-standing norms of female seclusion. So for the two decades there is a sharp decline in men's provider role which has weakened men's absolute earning power. These are general social improvements that have happened for women's employment. We can postulate that this is the beginning for bringing changes in the gendered power relations in family level. When families are incapable to meet traditional gender expectations women may deal with their income in a ways that are a departure from traditional patterns (Kibria: 2008; 291)².

1.2 Rationale and Justification

Economists and policy makers focus on income data which locate only individual and household income without justifying about how income is distributed or controlled within the household. On the other hand there is a major gap in the literature on middle class women where most of the researchers have carefully or carelessly neglected the dynamic aspects of family and the distribution of power within families. This study adds to the critique of Sen's Bargaining model of household which is too general because it does not account for how differences based in context and culture and how these affect the extent to which resources influence household power. In Bangladesh, with its strong patriarchal tradition (Amin, 1995) we might expect women's waged work to have a relatively limited impact. Particularly in Bangladesh the society is based on an idealized norm of male superiority, the domestic domain is a space of hierarchal relations between genders and generations (Kabeer, 1997). Household is not a single unit with a unified utility function co-ordinate by an altruistic head of the household but consists of individuals with different interests, responsibilities, functions and perceptions (Folbre,1994; Hartmann,1995; Sen,1990). However the resources entering into the household are not equally distributed among the members. In feminist

² Among middle class families today financial crisis is evident .The result of worldwide inflation created by food shortages and oil crisis(Dutta,2002;11).

discourse household has an inner hidden politics of its own which is not divorced from the politics of the society in which it is embedded (Sharma, 1986). Agarwal said that the outcomes of intra-household bargaining would be preconditioned by the outcomes of extra-household bargaining with the community (1997).

Dutta has shown that “although paid employment appears to have slightly increased women’s power in family decision-making, the total equality of power between husband and wives is yet to be realized. Husbands still tend to retain the final say in major domestic decisions” (2002:7). Women are still less able than men to translate their labor into income, income into choice and choice into personal well being (Kabeer, 1996). Values and norms reinforce inequality between men and women in general and husband and wife in particular (Kabeer, 1997). Bangladesh households tend to exemplify a ‘classic patriarchy’ which implies the control of younger male and women by older males, and women are positioned and customarily expected to bear the reproductive activities and take care of the children (Kandiyoti 1988).

Most of the bargaining models in economics do not problematize the determinants of bargaining power and therefore ignore the effect of social norms. Intra-household decision making process cannot be assumed or ignored; because domestic politics is in a hidden condition, we need to unpack and transfer this uncountable part into countable one. This study agrees with Kandiyoti that ‘systematic analyses of women’s strategies can help to capture the nature of patriarchal systems in their specific cultural and temporal concreteness’ (1988:285). ‘Women in Bangladesh engage less frequently in market work compared to men in terms of lack of response of female labour to economic imperatives, even in the face of the poverty due to overarching influence of *pardah*’ (Mahmud, 1997, 236). The power of *pardah* lies more in limiting women’s capabilities to challenge gender role prescriptions than in dictating micro level household decision (Mahmud, 1997)³. The household is a complex institution because it is simultaneously a unit of production, consumption, reproduction affiliation and has greater gender specific roles and responsibilities (Katz, 1997; 26).

³ Amin (1994:3) argued that ‘women can earn considerably less doing equivalent less doing equivalent jobs as men ... and that male positions have higher status ranking than women’s. It is well established that in Bangladesh women’s wage work is less rewarding in monetary terms than men’s wage work.

Khattak (2002) said that there is no automatic transition to empowerment through economic earnings. She argues that women's incorporation into paid work will lead to their independence but not relaxation of patriarchal controls. Earning of income is husband's affair, a widespread attitude of women's employment is a kind of conditional approval (Blumberg and Dwarki 1980; 119 cited Sharma, 1986). Mahmud said 'The extreme concentration of women's economic activities within home inevitably means that women are taught skills for expenditure-saving productive activities that have limited market demand, while men acquire income-earning activities' (1997; 240). Salway argued that 'woman's comparative advantage over men in childbearing and rearing explains their concentration in those activities, freeing men to specialize in labor market work and hence be the primary breadwinners for the family' (2003; 886). So 'women's market production is always in combination of household production, and household as a rule, invest less on women than men for acquiring market-valued human capital' (Mahmud, 1997; 242).

Therefore the rationale for this study is the need for more evidence that can illustrate that earning an income through work is not necessarily sufficient to alter women's position fundamentally. The analysis will show how men and women accommodate, adjust and have conflicts with each other over income resources, rights and responsibilities

1.3 Research Objective

The overall objective of this study is to add to the literature on women's empowerment by investigating into how middle class employed and unemployed women in Bangladesh control income, their household management tactics and decision making in different household investments and what strategies they develop for bargaining within the household. The aim is to provide new evidence also about middle class women which can make the policy formulation and implementation more gender sensitive to fulfill women's needs

1.4 MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Do employed women have basic ‘capabilities’ to translate their income into ‘functioning’ that result into empowerment?

Research sub -questions:

- What are the dynamics of income control when women have independent access to income?
- Where does the income come from and where does the income go in all different domains of household needs?
- What are the dynamics of income control for fulfilling daily needs and who determines these needs?
- Are other household members also part of the decision making process?
- What is the women’s role in the control and management of the household budget?
- Who makes decisions about how women’s income is used?
- In which part of income, women have the control and in which part she is restricted?
- Do women through active daily household decision making, achieve relative gains in sharing power?
- What are the social/cultural factors that constrain women to be an active agent of income control?

1.5 Methodology and Data Collection

My research is based on participant in –depth interviews with employed and non employed women and men public service employees in Dhaka. We approached the individual women and men .Field work was carried out over a period of two months and about 30 households were targeted for interview purpose.

The interviews covered a number of issues surrounding family background, work status and a series of questions were focused on their attitudes to the range of social

issues. The interview was conducted individually and in free time of the respondents. The respondents were from three major occupational categories in the public services such as; teaching, Banking and administrative jobs both women and men. The research based on interviews of three sets of people a) women in the service sector b) men in the service sector and c) housewives. The age of the interviewee, women ranged between 23 to 45. The methods were different for the employed section, homemakers and husbands.

- a) In case of the employed women, the in-depth personal interviews were conducted for about 45 -60 minutes. Therefore, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

- b) In case of homemakers, two visits were made to each household. During the first visits rapport was built by showing them the researcher objectives sharing of personal things and handing over a questionnaire to them. Later on, the questionnaires were collected either personally or by mail.

- c) In case of husbands after taking interviews of their wives (employed and homemakers) I discussed with them to get their perception about women's employment and the impact on their conjugal life. It was very informal process to communicate with them.

Observation method was used to get a clearer perception of the situation. Establishing rapport with the interviewees and getting them to talk was the most difficult part, since the private is still a domain that is not to be revealed to an outsider or the public gaze. During the interview my preconceived idea and conventional theories were challenged and I saw a huge gap between my thought and what was existing in reality. I was really shocked through getting a very different but real picture in our society. I had thought that an employed woman has at least minimum bargaining power for challenging the traditional power relations. However I found that the employment opportunity mainly bought partial satisfaction for women who are employed but not the full strength to challenge and change the gender power relations.

The conceptual framework for this study draws on A .Sen’s capability approach and his bargaining model of the household and the feminist concept of the household which is operationalized for the Bangladesh context as the patriarchal household. Using Intersectionality to bring out the connections between class, gender and religion I use the concepts of agency and empowerment .To assess if women have gained bargaining power due to employment .These concepts are elaborated in the next chapter .

CHAPTER TWO: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter elaborates the conceptual framework by reviewing critically theories of the household, the capability approach, and concepts of patriarchy, agency and the Intersectionality approach which are relevant for analyze.

The concept of the household is central to feminist theory and has expanded from the bargaining model of the household developed by Sen which is a critique of G. Becker’s model and the later is now re-conceptualized through feminist theorizing on the household, Studying the household approach provides a useful framework for the analysis of hidden gender power relations and to measure how gender asymmetries are constructed and contested.

2.1. Conventional Theories of the Household:

'.....the household welfare function is considered to be identical to that of the benevolent dictator who heads the household and ensures that welfare resources are optimally allocated between household members'(Becker ,1981,p.192).

Becker (1976, 1981) has argued in his New Household Economics as a decision making unit, who posit a joint household welfare function based on interdependent utility functions but the absolute rule is benevolent dictator will heads the household and control the decision making process. This model starts with the notion that members of the household have stable choices and identical preferences. He has portrayed that household as a welfare maximizing unit ,assuming that the distribution of consumption resources maximize the joint welfare of it members . Considering this model, it might be expected that women's wages lead to an increase in their share of household resources but not in their decision making capacity. Feminists critique this model on the grounds that the 'Unitary Model of household' is gendered -there are considerable persistent gender based inequalities in allocation of productive resources and distribution of benefits within the household (Folbre,1988). Thus Kabeer argued that 'changes in earning capacity affect allocated outcomes but are irrelevant to decision making principles or location of decision making' (1997; 4). This conventional theory failed to see that power as a factor in intra-household relations.

Sen's (1997) bargaining model is a departure from the neo-classical model of the benevolent dictator and his conceptualization of the household recognizes the household as a site of cooperation and conflict. He draws an attention that household still into a domain associated with conventional economy theory but essential if the culturally differentiated character of intra-household gender relations are to become a subject for economic analysis (1990). So actual preferences discovered by individual behavior will represent position within the established hierarchy of interests within the household and the alternative options and constraints associated with it. Sen's framework thus smelled out the negative association implicit within the Beckerian household model between power and altruism and offers more credible hypothesis that apparently altruistic behavior with the household. Members of the household face two types of problems; co-operation and conflict. Social arrangements as to who does what ,who gets to consume what and who takes what decision s can be seen as responses to the combined problem of co-operation and conflict(Sen,1990;129).

These diversified features of bargaining power are mutually exclusive and offers a dynamic commitment. Thus Kabeer viewed that

“Bargaining models of household open up an analytical space for considering power as a dimension of household decision making ,a possibility which is ruled out by altruistic models”(1997:264).

We can conclude this section by sharing that our main thrust of this study is to locate the substantive power and how it is managed in the daily lives of women and men within the household. Sen has pointed out that legitimacy operating power within the family comes from family power which is often unconsciously exercised.

2.2 Sen’s Household Bargaining Model

Sen’s (1997) bargaining model is a departure from the neo-classical model of the benevolent dictator and his conceptualization of the household recognizes the household as a site of cooperation and conflict. Sen analyses attention that household is still a domain associated with conventional economy theory but essential if the culturally differentiated character of intra-household gender relations are to become a subject for economic analysis (1990).

Sen agrees employment as a strategy for expanding women’s agency does in fact achieve the end and his model opens up an analytical space for considering power as parameter of household decision making (1990). Therefore he has indicated that women have defined their interest in a different way. As he puts it

The lack of perception of personal interest combined with a great concern for family welfare is of course, just kind of attitude that helps to sustain the traditional inequalities. There is much evidence in history that acute inequalities often survive precisely by making allies of the deprived. The underdog comes to accept the legitimacy of the unequal order and becomes an accompliceIt can be a serious error to take the absence of protest and questioning of inequality as evidence of the absence of that inequality (Sen,1990:126).

Agarwal (1994) redefined this particular situation as ‘women’s false consciousnesses’. These diversified features of bargaining power are mutually exclusive and offers a dynamic commitment. The bargaining approach provides a useful framework for the

analysis of gender relations where gender asymmetries are constructed and contested. Thus Kabeer viewed that ‘Bargaining models of household open up an analytical space for considering power as a dimension of household decision making ,a possibility which is ruled out by altruistic models’’(1997:264).This model entitled the conceptualization of gender which entails struggles not only over resources, labour and time but over socially constructed meanings and definitions which are often multiple ,contradictory ,fluid and contested (Kandiyoti 1988).

Thus focusing on gender should offer a reconceptualisation of household in relation to empirical focus located the gendered micro politics of negotiation, cooperation and contestation in different institutional’ (Hart, 1995:61).

2.3 Sen’s Conceptualization of the Capability Approach and Household

To understand Sen’s model of the household it is important to elaborate his capability approach. The capability approach is a departure from the utilitarian approach which is based on individual preferences and positions itself on the state of the individual (Sen 1994:31). Thus Sen has perceived ‘capabilities as possibilities’. His argument reflected the concrete base that ‘capabilities are possible functioning rather than actual power he or she can exercise. Sen’s capability approach will allow us to find out that ‘what is a woman able to do and to be on multiple levels’ (1987)⁴. Sen has argued through this approach that ‘social indoctrination is the source of women’s ‘other –regarding choices’ thus denying them agency’(Goyal,2007;409).

The importance of the capability approach is that it can locate –what is needed to enable these middle class women to function fully within the society and family. Capability approach opens up a space for discussion on how certain choices are constrained by gender -related societal mechanisms. The capability approach is a promising framework for evaluating gender inequalities⁵. It can confront intra-household distributions but also address how human dependencies and relationships affect individual well being which is significantly important for women.

⁴ Sen (1999) sidesteps a possible conflict with his emphasis s on freedom by linking the latter with the range of available choice not the point of choice(Goyal,1997;413).

⁵ ‘The approach is useful to analyze how choices affect the scope of women’s potential, once the position that women lack self –awareness when they make their own choices is disregarded’(Goyal,2007;409)

2.4 Intersectionality, Patriarchy, Agency Empowerment

Drawing on the feminist extension of Sen's model developed by Agarwal and Kabeer, I will operationalize it in relation to the patriarchal household, which is relevant in Bangladesh context⁶ As Feldman (2001) defines, patriarchy in Bangladesh is a system of gender relations that determines women's physical and social mobility, rights, access to resources. Patriarchy often understood as made up of male domination and privilege the absence of individual agency and the notion of social regulation as a totalizing project (Cain, Khanam and Nahar 1979' Adnan 1990 cited Feldman ,2001;1100). However patriarchal relations should be seen as mediated processes of negotiation which constituted by complex identities and practices rather than by an assumed unitary, dominating force of male power and authority and exclusively female subordination (Kandiyoti 1988,1991; Feldman 1992 ,1993). Kandiyoti has articulated a different lens of patriarchy since it provides a window on how 'patriarchy is negotiated and women's strategies play out in the context of patriarchal bargains that act as implicit scripts and prescriptions that highlights their domestic options''(1988:285). In Bangladesh 'Patriarchy describes a distribution of power and resources within families that men maintain power and control of resources and women are powerless and dependent on men' (Cain, Khanam and Nahar, 2008:406). Purdah is a complex institution that entails more restrictions on women's physical mobility and the material base of patriarchy is men's control of property, income, women's labour (Cain, 2008).

By bringing the intersectional analysis as an approach, the research will focus on the intersection of class, gender, religion all of which are power relations to define the experiences of women within the acknowledged gender category. The notion of Intersectionality challenges the notions of layers of oppression and discrimination. The discourse of experiences makes Intersectionality, which is one of the indispensable contributions of feminist, to emerge as a significant tool of analysis as well as

⁶ Purdah is described here not as a preset of prescriptive rules of manner and behavior that isolate women from contact with outside world but an inherent mechanism for subordination of women within the broader social institution of 'Patriarchy'.

normative theoretical argument (Hancock, 2007:63). Mohanty (1991) who criticizes the homogenizing of the 'third world' women by sticking to the patriarchal lens to evaluate their experiences without considering the temporal dimensions. Intersectionality attends segregate identities and move to process of exclusion based on context and dynamics of cross-cutting identities (Davis ; Forthcoming).

Agency has to be linked with issues of axes of difference. For this an intersectional approach is important.

'The notion of a road map of a busy town illustrates the meaning of the Intersectionality of oppression and discrimination. There is Racism Road, Patriarchy Parade, Sexism Street, Colonization Crescent, Religious Persecution Road, and Indigenous Dispossession Highway, Class Street, Caste Street, and so on. The road is full of heavy speeding traffic, and the impact of Intersectionality is when a woman from a marginalized group tries to cross the main intersection. To use this model as an analytical tool, we must unpack each of the 'road names' to explore the origin of the oppressions, and the impact of these on women across a range of situations'' (Bartolomei et al., 2003:89).

Theorizing of Intersectionality is the realization that race, color, class, sexuality, nationhood and other social relations of power are equally significant for identities of women, for the process of becoming a woman.

Intersectionality is not a 'one- does - it – all' theory but rather a theorization process –an uphill struggle to understand continuously shifting categories of power and their context –specific workings. As a strategy Intersectionality 'provides an unanticipated way of overcoming in-comp abilities between feminist theory on race ,class and gender and postmodern feminist theory'. Intersectionality attends segregate identities and move to process of exclusion based on context and dynamics of cross-cutting identities (Davis .K:Forthcoming).The notion of Intersectionality challenges the notions of 'layers of oppression' and 'discrimination'.

This concept suggests that it should be possible to separate the layers out and address the issues one by one. Multiple discriminations based on different grounds at different times, where intersectional discrimination refers to the intersection of discrimination based on several grounds at the same time (MacKinnon, 2002). This study will analyze how social practices embodied in the intersection of gender, class and religion call into question that patriarchy as the regular dominant form of social ordering. The main purpose here is to highlight how these differences combine to create women as what Makkonen defined as 'a minority within minority' (2002:19).

The concept of agency is central to this study and it will draw on the work of Naila Kabeer and others. An important contribution has been made by Honwana (2008) who argued that people can exercise their agency in two ways; Strategies and Tactics. Here strategy is seen as the calculation or manipulation of force relationships, which requires a defined physical or social space. In this space an actor definitely has autonomy to generate relations with an exterior. On the other hand a tactic is a calculated action taken by someone who lacks autonomy and who is acting in the physical and social space which is not their own. The significant characteristics of tactical agency are – the place of a tactic is the space for others and it operates in isolated actions. Tactics are the art of the weak.

Most often these are referring to women's ability to make decisions and affect outcomes of importance to themselves and their families. Control over one's own life and over resources is often stressed. Thus, there is frequent reference to some variant of the ability to affect one's own well being, and make strategic life choices. Kabeer's (2001) definition of empowerment is more useful and can be applied in Bangladesh: "The expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them." I think that this notion of "women's empowerment" is a more political and transformatory idea for struggles that can challenge not only hegemony of patriarchy, but the mediating structures of class, religion in Bangladesh which determined the nature of women's position and condition in our society in a realistic way.

2.5 Feminist Theories of the Household: Opening the Black Box

The conventional view of the household as a simple corporate unit (Becker, 1976, 1981) does not encourage investigating the internal diplomacy of the household. But it has been argued by Folbre that there are considerable and persistent gender based inequalities in allocation of productive resources and distribution of benefits (1988). Sharma stated that in “the feminist discourse the household is no longer an irreducible unit ,it has an inner politics of its own which is not divorced from the politics of the society in which it is embedded” (1986:3).

Agarwal (1987) emphasized that social norms enter virtually every sphere of activity because there is no solution for gender division of labour inside and outside of the home. They are silently surviving patriarchy because of the boundaries of the social space inhabited by them. Opening the black box thus can prove to be the starting point for research which takes a close look at the way power structures within the family are not only generated, reproduced and legitimized and so on. Feminist critiques the model on the grounds that the ‘Unitary model of Household’ is gendered –there are considerable persistent gender based inequalities in allocation of productive resources and distribution of benefits within the household (Folbre 1988). Sharma stated that in ‘the feminist discourse the household is no longer an irreducible unit it has an inner politics of its own which is not divorced from the politics of the society in which it is embedded’ (1986:3).

Opening the black box thus we can prove to be the starting point for research which takes a close look at the way power structures within the family are not only generated, reproduced and legitimized. Agarwal (1997) describes household have multidimensional actors with varying preferences and interests and differential abilities to pursue and realize those interests. So decision making will occur through a process of bargaining and negotiation. Agarwal (1997:4-7) also characterizes intra household relations as containing elements of both cooperation and conflict and what seems more comprehensive than the factors indicated by Sen. Bargaining power is not equally distributed between members but reflects the relative strength of their fallback positions(Kabeer :1997).

According to Sen (1990) a person's breakdown position is determined by the person's perceived interests, contributions and claims. These perceptions of responses tend to be biased between sexes and completely unfavorable for women only. The well accepted social norms weaken women's intra household position and ideologically constructed them as dependents and men are the universal breadwinners. In general women are poorer than men due to lack of entitlement which male members tend to enjoy in the household. Katz has mentioned the weakness of Becker's New Household Economics as a failure to notice gender based power relations that structure household resource allocation from generation to generation(1997:29). Moser (1996) has explained that women and men have different positions within the household and different control over resources as they accommodated changing roles in the society and different needs.

This conventional theory failed to see power as a factor in intra-household relations (Kabeer, 1997). Folbre (1988) states that family is governed by culturally determined expectations about the entitlements as well as obligations. These authors carefully shows the careless mistakes that social norms ,cultural values are also intervening variables in the ability to translate resources into household power. According to Kane 'Men's greater control over resources over most social institutions and over the construction of social meaning often leaves women dependents upon them socially and interpersonally''(2008:612).

2.6 Feminists Lens to Re-arrange the Conceptual Framework

Feminists' analysts have indicated that household is a double rooted place which resilience of gender ideologies by governing the distribution of resources and responsibilities within the household and manipulating women's access to earnings and their role into decision are making process. Considering the 'politics of domestic budgeting', Whitehead stated that 'relative power of husbands and wives' did not reflect their accurate relative wages in the labour market because familial ideologies about roles and responsibilities were determined to differentiate how men's and women's income were translated into control over these money (1981). In reality ideologies of maternal often led to women to reject themselves to resources to satisfy their own needs and interests in favour of other family members(Kabeer ,1997).

It is remarkable that women's fortunes are bound up with the fortunes of the household collectively. Women's longer term interests are commonly served and invested through the forms of altruistic behavior which help to keep the household free from conflict (Kabeer, 1997). Kandiyoti stated that different forms of patriarchy present women with 'distinct set of rules' with different strategies to maximize their life options (1988). The patriarchal thought and behavior generated by these assigned rules shape the terms of patriarchal bargain or prepare the passive resistance to male power (Kabeer, 1997).

Household is a locus of competing interests, rights, obligations and resources where household members are often involved in bargaining, negotiation and possibly even conflict" (Moore, 1994). Considering non co-operative family Tauchen et al. (1991) pointed out that 'a man's marginal utility violence were increasing with a woman's consumption than he may allow her greater consumption but also inflict more violence as her income increases' (Cited Bedi, 2007:861).

The above analysis suggests that Bangladesh is a place where women consciously marginalize their personal needs and penalize their independent identity. In this circumstances the translation of women's earning power into greater bargaining power within the household will reflect the perceived costs to women to re-negotiate the existing 'patriarchal bargain' (Kabeer, 1997).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter mainly explored the necessary theoretical framework, including their limitations that guided the study. The overall framework draws on the capability approach and an intersectional perspective. The key concepts that will be applied are the feminist conceptualization of the bargaining model of the household (Agarwal, Kabeer/Kandiyoti) which in Bangladesh takes a classic patriarchal form, agency and empowerment. The framework shows that middle class women are operating their agency within the vulnerability context and biased institutional setting that shapes their access to resources which determine their intra-household power and

position. Their agency, position and status are forcefully situated in a particular socio-cultural atmosphere that mediates women's choices.

CHAPTER THREE: KEY FINDINGS: WOMEN'S AGENCY AND CAPABILITY IN THE POSITIONS OF HOUSEHOLD

3.0 Introduction

This chapter has discussed women's situated position in household, drawing on a mix of bargaining and capability approach. It brings out the 'everyday lived reality' described by the urban employed and unemployed women and explores the power dynamics of intra-household gender relations based on data from in depth interviews. There are two significant relationships within the household: 1) the relationship between mother, child, and other members, called 'family power', and 2) interaction between husband and wife, called 'conjugal power' as distinguished by Dutta (2002). In this study, I focus on conjugal power only. In our local culture there is a common perception about money that 'Taka Kotha Bole'- 'money speaks' here money is equivalent to power. The focus of the interviews was hence on what actually happens to the income flows earned by wives once the income enters into the home and when women earn money, does it increase their bargaining power or not.

Operationalising the framework developed in Chapter 2, I use the following six indicators for the investigation of conjugal power:

1. Who keeps the income and how is women's monetary contribution to the household perceived?
2. Who makes the final decision to purchase property?
3. Who makes the final decision to purchase household goods (long-term major purchases such as TV, cars, refrigerators, washing machine etc. to short-term small ones like food, clothes etc.)?
4. Who makes the final decision what school the children should join?
5. Who decides about the number of children a family should have?
6. Who controls the access to mobility?

3.1. Presentation of Data on Employed Women

Before going to the main part of the findings, I will briefly discuss on some responses offered by husbands about their working wives. In Bangladesh patriarchal society requires to be protected by male members women, male protection and male provisioning, then men's perspectives on women's work reflect to some extent the structure of constraints within which women make their choices. They have claimed that women's working status and wages did affect their balance of power within marriage and most of the husbands are suffering from anxiety, sometimes insecurity. The following examples will illustrate:

3.2 Husband's Perception of Wife's Employment:

Md. Mizanur Rahman aged 42 a government officer who believed that his wife's earning capacity had made a difference to their relationship, thus he said:

Firstly, I encouraged my wife to work and earn through which she can stand on her feet. I ensured her freedom to explore the outside world. She is working for eight years as a government officer. Now –a -days, I am feeling that her loyalty towards me is increasingly decreasing. Few years ago, she used to ask my permission to go outside for the office trip but now she does not count me at all..... She is becoming a little too free which looks like to be a man. I believe a woman cannot be a man. Therefore, I asked her to resign from the job if she wants to carry her married life with me.

The above case shows that wives employment contested to be a threat by the husband Mr. Jakir Hossain expressed his views towards his employed wife in the following way

I work in a private bank so is my wife. I am fine with my wife working outside. It is her life and she has every right to choose what she wants. However, a woman is by nature very simple and there is a chance that her simplicity will be manipulated in the work place. When both the parents are working then children face little difficulty to have proper socialization. Definitely, no parents want their children to learn everything from their nanny (grandmother). At least I cannot approve it. No matter how independent a woman is she should know what her sole responsibility is –it is taking care of her child. So I think no woman should work when her children is young. I did not let my wife initially when we had our first child. She quite understood the fact that her child needs her more. It is not necessary for women to work if their husband can support

the family financially. I think women should let their husband do their duty – to support them financially, to protect them from all odds.

This statement shows that husbands are sometimes eager to make their wives stay in a cage and they do not welcome the decision of their wives working outside⁷ this statement raises a question that whether men are really thinking about their family life in a true sense or they are feeling threat of losing their masculine identities.

Mr. Karul Hasan made a similar statement about his wife's employment:

My wife is working in a private company. However, it was not my decision. She decided for herself. My whole family was deadly against her work but she justified her job as part of her identity. This is the main problem when women becomes little educated job becomes a part of their identity. Why does a single job become more important than family commitment? I had a very sick mother when we got married but that did not really matter to my wife. When women get the opportunity to explore, they misuse it by neglecting their family responsibility. My wife cannot expect me to take care of the household. Can she? I really do not understand today's women. Why they have to be so greedy? They want a life they cannot handle. They want family for which they do not have time and they want jobs, which are not for them. They have some ascribed responsibilities. I think they should stick to those. My son is very young and it is really becoming difficult for the family to take care of that young kid who needs his mother the most. Therefore, I am constantly requesting my wife to quit her job. However, at the end of the day it is her decision. I think job make women little disobedient and irresponsible because they start to neglect their household duty because they are earning. I do not like this attitude. My wife was a shy little girl when I saw her the first time. Now she is trying to take control of her life and in many ways mine too.

Men's observation attitude towards employed women is very traditional. Most of the male partners commented that women should be more responsible towards family responsibilities. In the above statements, there is a patronizing attitude and a fear that women will become independent. Therefore women's wages were seen as a complex of the customary marriage relations where decision making power was only hold by male head who acted as a 'benevolent dictators'.

⁷ According to Amin (1994 :8) for women to engage in outside market work and particularly wage work is viewed as a violation of the 'codes of conduct' for women's economic activities and it is seen to be associated with loss of face for the individual and the family .

Control over income and perceptions of wife's monetary contribution to the household .The first issue emerged from the data, who keeps the money earned by the wives?

Household Budget management expenditure: The first issue emerged from the data, who keeps the money earned by the wives? Most of the women gave their wages to their husbands. This was justified on the basis that that a man can do proper budget and better accountancy than women. One college teacher aged 42 gladly stated that:

From the first day of my job, I have kept my chequebook with my husband. I take small amount of money for the sake of my transport cost and also for cosmetic purpose. Sometimes I take extra money if I need to purchase any Sharee (traditional dress) for myself. It looks odd if I want to keep the money with me. Both of us make the family needs and family budget then my husband gives me particular amount of money for household expenditure and I do that .

Similar views emerged in the words of Mrs Nahar, aged 38, who has been working as a college teacher. She said that her husband had initially opposed her employment but now he has accepted. It took almost 15 years for reaching this decision. Therefore, she 'said that

I am very lucky that at least I have the opportunity to go outside to see the outside world whereas many women do not get this chance in their lifetime. I do not have any strain about who is controlling the money.

Then she said:

I give all my money to my husband because I cannot even think of any alternative picture. After all my husband is spending this money for fulfilling our family needs not for his own pleasure. This is my satisfaction that when he spends the money it is for the good of our family. I am happy and free from the fear that nobody can blame me for excess expenditure. Sometimes my husband also gives me particular amount of money for the family expenses but I do not bother who is spending this money .

The above statement shows that women did not appear to be much concerned they were not in charge of management. Here we can see the intersection of class and gender- even though these middle class women are happy to break traditional gender norms they also want to hold on to 'middle class respectability'. This takes the form of reinforcing the view in our patriarchal society that married women should be good wives and properly respect the guidance of their husband.

Women are not able to view their work as real work or see their wage as an important part of household income. Women's needs and contributions are seen less valuable than men confirming what Sen has defined as 'perceived contribution'. They accepted male dominance and cannot think of violating their husband's position⁸. This self-perception of being secondary then translated into acceptance of male authority⁹. Compared with men, the women interviewed most of them have occupied lower job with limited wages such as college teacher, second-class civil servants, etc and the head of the household is the person with strongest attachment to the labour force. Thus, Mrs. Jasmeen Khandaker aged 37 said

I am a government officer and my income is only 7629 Taka according to the government pay scale. My husband is an employer of private bank and his income is nearly 45 thousand taka. Comparing to his salary my income is nothing. Definitely, he should control family authority; I do not feel this is irrational.

The lack of 'perceived contribution' also meant that women are providing money but they cannot utilize it for themselves. Because they have to invest it for fulfilling, the family needs. This reflects their unchanged traditional thinking where woman's needs are muted and children's needs and husbands demands flourishes. These perceptions show that men work to support their families; women work because of need. We see here that the woman who gives her salary to her husband, to use, not only fails to exercise her agency in this activity, but also perhaps believes that the man

⁸ If women's awareness is conditioned by society they can be said to suffer from false consciousness(Goyal,1997).

⁹ Men and women have almost completely separate responsibilities and spheres of work ,physically in terms of income generation(Amin,1997)

of the household is the chief breadwinner¹⁰; a concept, which Kabeer says, would come naturally to a woman in Bangladesh¹¹.

Many women are getting access but not gaining the bargaining power where co-operation fails. Middle class women have a significant social value in the society. So having limited resources women cannot think of violating the norms by getting separation or divorce. Another respondent, Mrs. Maleka aged 45 was the principle of a renowned college in Dhaka city. Recently her husband got married again without taking her concern but she has accepted this act silently. Thus, she comments

I have a good position in the society. I have three daughters; the eldest one well matured for marriage. I can divorce my husband as I earn a lot but I cannot think even, to divorce him due to my children's life and their future. If I get the separation, it will bring disaster for my daughter's life. In our society no one family will accept any daughter if she is from any broken family. Due to my own satisfaction, I cannot kill my daughter's life. Therefore, I accepted this fact as a part of life. My daughter's life is more important for me.

Least people could say anything' - that is the main concern of this woman. It shows that socio-cultural demand rearranged the family diplomacy, which brings silence towards women. This woman consciously negotiated with this vulnerable life without taking the support from the law, because her social status is more important than justice is. Middle class women have distinct status where social respect is the basic thing to ensure their social position. Here, gender, social class, religion interact to shape the experience of this woman. There is a paradox here because it presumes that the person who is by self-interest occupied in the market place are at the same time inherently selfless within the family. Women here habitually subordinated their needs and choices in execution of what expected from them as a mother and a wife. These statements painted an image of intimacy and dependence encouraging many women to view gender inequality less critically. A person's bargaining power is also determined by the strength of her or his fall-back positions hereby woman bypass their capacity because social norms and

¹⁰ Female seclusion is an important symbolic expression of status differentiation within the society (Amin, 1997).

¹¹ Amin (1994) stated that 'women earn considerably less doing equivalent job as menand that men's positions have higher status rankings than women's. It is well known in Bangladesh that women's swage work is less rewarding in monetary terms than men's wage work .and more physically strenuous and oppressive than women's household production work

core responsibilities made them out of order¹². Wages allowed women to step out the protection of tradition temporarily but failed to give any permanent solution.

Decisions on Property and Purchase of household goods: Decisions on property and purchase of household goods are the second issue of this domain, where property rights are another major ingredient for reestablishing patriarchal values and thoughts. It is clear that some authority is given to employed women to purchase the short term daily products which do not have resale value. But in case of long term products full authority were captured by husbands. Because in the eyes of patriarchy ‘assets as power’ so this power cannot be shifted into women’s hand. Hereby bargaining power completely controlled by male- who has more money.

Thus Mrs Shapana aged 37 second class government officer agreed by pointing out that

I think all women whether employed or non –employed should have the same right to exercise their agency in the family’s decision making process. In a middle class family like ours we have only once purchased a land for housing or a house. So when we think to purchase the long term property both of us consulted about the price, size and the location but definitely the final decision was undertaken by my husband and all properties are in my husband’s name. I do not have any objection as he is earning more.

Hereby we can locate that intersection between gendered labour market and patriarchal priorities produces the space where money specially speaks for men and sometimes encourages male members to ensure their perceived satisfaction within the household¹³. is another critical domain in household level.

Decision on Family planning: In response to the question of family planning process most of the women declare that they are accessing full freedom for making their decision. I assume that contemporary Bengali family has already limited their number of children due to financial and time crisis. In Bangladesh due to rapid inflation, children in middle class families are considered as Cost. Most of the wife’s have

¹² Goyal claimed it as ‘capability falsification’, when they devalue their real capabilities’ (2007).¹².

¹³ The same insecurity is evident in the reaction of the Minister of Agriculture to Agarwal’s seminar on gender and land rights in 1989’ Are you suggesting that women should be given rights in land ? What do women want? To break up the family (cited in Agarwal,1994:281).

greater power in matter concerning children. A newly married wife Mrs Jesmin aged 24 working in a college expressed her views:

We do not have any plan to have more than one child and we decided mutually.

Here we found that intersection between class and modernity encouraged women's decision making power which re-challenges traditional thoughts in our society. This situation appears to be moving forward very slowly towards 'equality means modernity' between husband and wife.

Decision on what school children should join: Selection of children's school is another area to bargain. In Bengali society child's education has great importance because altruistic behavior cultivated by parents out of self interest to ensure that their children will look after them in old age. So the type of school is a vital issue for the career of their children. So it is 'father' who plays a decisive role in this matter. But children's home work, class preparation, exam preparation is fully maintained by women as a part of domestic work. But when children do well, all credit goes to school because school selection is mostly determined by father. This is the part of family politics where women never receive any direct recognition as well as nobody congratulates her for their enormous effort and success. Thus Mrs Tahera Begam 35 aged administrative officer shared her frustration and said:

I have utilized my whole life for my children's better education, better future. I have invested my relax time for their exam preparations. But when my daughter's SSC result came out, our relatives congratulate to my husband and appreciates the school not me.

Hereby intersection between patriarchy and unpaid house hold work misuses women's incredible capacity by ignoring their perceived contributions.

Control on access to mobility: .Mobility control is a strong device of this patriarchal set up. It was very interesting that all of the employed women equally responded that they are suffering from mobility restrictions in the name of purdah as a new form of gender subordination. Sometimes husbands violated to restrict women's access to freedom and movement because violence as a way of retaining control. The employment of women is burdensome where women detract from the ability to control their movement properly. Mrs. Ratna Chowdhury aged 28 old working in a private company explained that her husband was suspicious about her sexual integrity because her job demanded that she will work at the evening and she has several foreign male clients.

My Shaheb (Husband) did not like my sales career, which has flexible work hours and socializing with customers, particularly men. My husband tried to control my work schedule on a regular basis and he wanted me to be at home by 5 pm but my job required me to go out often, even outside business hours. When he could not control my schedule, he became suspicious, arrogant and jealous. When I answered back to him because of his unreasonable jealousy, it took two minutes that he slapped me or pulled my hair. He often threatens me that he would kill me if he caught me dating other men. He was angry unnecessarily I returned home from work at night. He would ask many irrelevant questions. When he was not satisfied with my answer, he would become angry and begin destroying things in the house.

The above statement described that abusive behavior associated with a woman's occupational status and financial success can produce jealousy¹⁴. It is noticeable that this husband attempted to repress his wives career development or made his wives become totally dependent by prohibiting them from outside work¹⁵.

This case indicates that intersection between class, religion and traditional culture interacts and reproduces vulnerable situation for women.

¹⁴ As a result women's work is considered as a source of tension vulnerability and may be a 'distress sale'; a symptom of deteriorating rather than improving their quality of life (Kabeer, 1997).

¹⁵ 'If women are married they are protected from harassment of others but risk exploitation by their husband' (Salway,2000;702)

Women's income is leading far from empowerment which may represent a further dimension of exploitation. Kabeer arguments make this situation more clear that 'women's wages may reflect differing interpretations of power itself and the extent to which new forms of regulation and exploitation in the market are accompanied by the reinforcement of old forms of regulation and exploitation of home' (1997:3). Hereby women negotiated with patriarchal justifications without considering her 'perceived interests'.

Findings support and confirm that income earning is not the only factor that increases women's decision making power or intra-household position. Empirical data shows that women's earning responsibilities were not allowed them to cross the pre-existing gendered relations which are the basic requirement of patriarchal society. For example increase in earning reduces economic stress but it introduced additional tension and struggle within the household that happened in the case of Ratna has shown in this study.

In the event of divorce, if a woman can support herself financially and live on her own, leaving a husband is likely invite strong social disapproval. Women sacrificed her interest for sake of their children's future. A great deal of emotional involvement re-establishing the existing hierarchies where women's actual needs and interests, ultimately resilience of the pre-existing gender division of labor within the home. So no doubt total conjugal power captured by husbands except the area of family planning. For example, women typically deny themselves an equal entitlement to household resources because they perceive it as being appropriate that other members should have first claim (Sen, 1990).

3.3 CONCLUDING REMARK

This section has attempted to 'unpack the black box' of the household to reflect the intra-household relations, women's position and their decision making abilities. It focuses on intra-household gender relations in which co-operation and conflict occur simultaneously. This chapter mainly indicates the institutional setting and vulnerability

context that shape and mediate the middle class women's access to capital. It was clear that when middle class women earn income, men tend to withdraw their contribution of resources for household provisioning. However outside earning appears to have slightly increased women's power in family decision making, but husbands still tend to retain the final say in major domestic decisions. It is prominent that women admitted their husband's superior position and indirectly surrender her new status as a bargaining tool and readmitted herself as a good wife. Bargaining in the household is often in a hidden condition in the middle class society where emotional manipulation destroyed women's capacity to draw her own expression. The empirical adequacy of conventional bargaining capability typically defended by showing that women's earning source makes no difference because women's earning does not bring any severe change on the bargaining table. This means that it is the spouse with dominant position that determined the other members family position -women are the other.

3.4. The presentation and data on unemployed women

This chapter I will discuss the perceptions of unemployed women who are full time homemakers like the previous section. I will share here some perception delivered by husbands about women's outside work and their wife as a homemaker. This will bring here a different look of reality. In the context of Bangladesh, most of the husbands nurtured the patriarchal principle that a good breadwinner is a man whose wife does not have to enter in the labour force¹⁶.

3.5 Perception of husbands of unemployed women about women's employment

Most of the male partner responded that women's wages negatively affected the balance of power within marriage and particularly women's income destabilizes the relationship in marriage then it is better not to work outside for money.

Mr. Belal expressed his opinion on women's employment that working wives become competitors of their husbands who bring conflict in family life rather than conjugal happiness. Thus he shared that

I am not against women's work if they want to and if they are eligible they have every right to work. But we are a Muslim majority country so we should take our religion in consideration regarding all these matter. Islam says men and women are created as complementary forces. They are given certain responsibilities. Men are made sole provider of the family that is sole bread earner and women are made as home maker. If we try to reverse these roles there will be conflict. Partnership will be broken between husband and wife. They will become competitors. That is not expected. Why do I want my beloved wife to be my competitor .so according to me women do not need to work outside. It is difficult for them to balance between two responsibilities: private and public. For a secondary role (income earning) women cannot ignore their sole responsibilities as home maker. Beside women are better teaches for their children. Children learn their ethics and morals from their mothers. In a country like Bangladesh women are very vulnerable. Who will ensure their security? My wife's security is my concern. You don't expect other people to

¹⁶ Women's household work is commonly recognized as invisible because home based work is enormously seen as less valuable than work. According to Agarwal's description work is valuable which brings cash.(1997)

take care of it. Do you? I think home provides women the security and also space to maintain their responsibility well. I think my wife thinks similarly. She is quite comfortable with her life and that is more important. She is not interested to work. She wanted to study and I allowed her to study after our marriage. She passed BA after the marriage. Whether she work or not women should have a better education as there are the people from where our children learn the most. Considering all the fact if a woman wants to work she should. But in case of my family I don't find any need as my wife has enough to spend and other responsibility to do for her family. I just can't go against my religion. Can I?

Most of the men believe that only husband can ensure wives' secured life after marriage. They blamed that outside world is not a secured place for women. As a man he has blamed other man's behavior.

According to me women do not need to earn if their husbands earn a sufficient income because women are made to play their role as mothers, wives etc. I don't want my wife to do a job because the work sphere is men's place. There are too many men in an office which is very insecure for women. My wife will have to be acquainted with his male colleague. I know men ...I know my wife will have no bad intension to mix with them. Can you ensure that all men will be with good intension? I am just trying to protect her from unpleasant experience. My wife is educated which was really needed to take care of our children. Being educated doesn't mean everyone has to work for living. I am providing my wife whatever she needs. There are lots of family where men do not earn enough there women need to work and earn otherwise women have other important work to do. Beside if my wife works who will take care of my mother and my children?

This testimony unpacks that man do not have any trust on man's attitude towards women. As a man he can also feel that man can be a severe threat towards women's security. Eradat Ali another married person expressed his view about women's outside work that

I think women have to stay at home for the sake of their own security as well as family needs. Most of the women lose their loyalty and respect towards their husbands when they join any job. At the same time if a husband is inadequate to earn enough to run his family needs, he feels belittled. In this circumstances women show their extra boldness, which does not match with her feminine identity as a mother and a wife. As a wife it is her first and foremost

responsibility to show loyalty to her husband. As a wife she cannot be a competitor for her husband. Family peace is very important rather than solvency. I do believe that outside earning creates space of conjugal dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction. I do feel that my wife should not work outside because it is not healthier for family life. I have married not for bringing any complex situation, for my life.

Md .Ariful Haque working in a multinational company commented about the quality of a successful wife

“My wife does not work”-she is a housewife and I like it. I believe that a good wife is a woman who can tackle her home peacefully, who can keep up with progress of his husband’s job, who can adjust to his husband’s social standing carefully.

The statement clearly indicates that most of the men belong to traditional thoughts and their mentality is very outdated, closed minded. They do not have any respect towards reproductive work as they do not count it as a work; they don’t care about women’s freedom, individual agency. Now I would like to discuss for the second part of this chapter ,where I represents women’s capability ,bargaining power and their agency in terms of Intersectionality .

Control over income and perception of non-employed women about household expenditure:

The household expenditure is a countable part when there is only husband earns. It is noticeable that most of the housewives have little independent sources of income where male relatives are essential to their well being.

Household Budget management expenditure: The study shows most of the homemaker acted as a budget keeper but husband kept actual management policies. She receives it from her husband who has the power to determine what portion of money she shall use. Thus housewife has no independent claim on the housekeeping money for the fulfillment of her personnel interests. Hereby women’s status is determined by husband’s status and it seems like a matter of pride for housewife.

Thus Mrs Foujaia Roji aged 36 was interested to do any kind of job but she did not join anywhere as her husband dislikes it. In the decision making process she has expressed her views that

I decide the family needs but definitely I have to ask it to my husband. Look I don't earn. It's my husband's money. I don't have any entitlement to his money. I decide and manage household according to my husband's instruction. For small family needs like spending for my children's education and tuition classes I can decide whatever I feel right but if I need to start a saving account or scheme in a bank that are needed to be consulted with my husband. Though we do not live in joint family but still my mother in law has a great influence on my husband's life and decision making.

Mrs. Tahera Begam aged 37 years expressed her views like this way.

To control income I need to earn but I don't. There are lots of reasons that restrain my access to income. I have already mentioned that I used to work but I had to let it go for children sake. According to my husband in adolescent children need their mother more. As he was earning enough for the family so we didn't need an additional earning source. Other members of my in-laws house supported this view. I think attitude towards working women is still very negative which restrain women's access to employment. As women are thought to be sole home maker and child caretaker so situation becomes worse. The question is why do I need to earn when I have enough from my husband?

Women are suffer from lack of awareness of self –interest which restrain their access to employment .Women receive less because their contributions in household are seen as being less valuable than men, Sen (1990) terms 'perceived contribution response'. Hereby intersection between patriarchal thoughts, traditional culture and class values privileging men and depressing women's individual agency.

Decisions on Property and purchase of household goods: In Bangladesh Muslim inheritance laws allow a daughter one -half the share received by a son. In practice, women frequently receive less than their rightful share and do not claim for fear of causing further bitterness in the home. Property strengthens male power, disempowered women. Within the household the cultural construction affects to deliver women's appropriate bargaining power, norms impinge among other things, where women's ability negotiates their rights and property claims within family .Mrs. Motin aged 37 said that

*It is God, who has decided that men should get more property than women.
Definitely there is a scientific reason. Why should I disrespect this Islamic law?*

Moreover we can see that intersection between patriarchy and religion beliefs prepared women to subordinate their personal well being, which increase men's stability to make personal claims on household resources. Middle class families have realized that proper nurturing of children is a matter of cost relating to their salary status. Most of them have appreciated the government policy that; 'either son or daughter two children's are enough'.

Decision on family planning: It was visible that most of the families are taking family planning seriously whereby women are getting full support from their husbands and making their decisions about family size jointly. Thus Mrs. Rehna aged 31 said that

I have one daughter and we have decided to have no more children. My husband's also having no demand for son .The decision of family planning is being taken by both of us.

Hereby intersection between class status and modernity ensured equal rights between husband and wife.

Decision on what school children should join: Children's school enrolment is another significant issue where full time housewives have 'no voice' and 'no opinion' to make the decisions. Husband believes that housewife have less knowledge about the outside world. Wives seemed to have blind confidence on their husband's decisions. Actually disconnection from the outside world made women incapable to interact with their own agency and suffering from weaker bargaining power. Men's power and women's dependence and inter gender diplomatic attitude interacted and create a source of gendered attitudes and keep the gender power relations alive. In this regard Mrs Jebun Nahar aged 34 said:

My husband knows more than me. So he has the full authority for the selection of our children's school. My husband has definitely chosen the good school for our children because our children's future is directly connected with us.

Hereby intersection between patriarchal values, traditional culture and men's strong attachment with the labour market reinforces women's dependency towards men. Women's awareness is conditioned by the society. Women are more capable to realize that they deserve better but less capable and less caring to see that they can do better. In Bangladesh the market place is classified as a male arena and men are responsible to purchase the household food needs.

Control on access to mobility: Most of the housewives accepted this phenomenon silently as a part of patriarchal and religion norms. The power of purdah lies more in limiting women's capabilities to challenge gender role prescriptions. Through the daily practice they developed the horizontal relations of solidarity with one another this shows women have adopted strategic silence.

Another respondent Mrs Selima Khatun aged 35 is not allowed to go out freely especially to the market. She also thinks that respected women should never go to a market because it is not a good place for women. Thus she claimed that:

I do not prefer to go to the market (Kacha Bazar) to purchase fish, meat vegetables and other kitchen items. Actually it is not a matter of fear but it is a matter of izzat (prestige) to go to the market place (Kacha Bazar). There is a firm perception that only a woman who belongs to a lower class family goes to the Kacha Bazaar. Women who can eat by staying within the home are given greater values. Everyone gives value to women who work within the home. I firmly follow the Islamic belief that only men should be involved in outside work. I can even stay without food but I can't lose my prestige at any cost.

The above fact reveals that intersection between religion and class position created a culture of decency of dependency and culture of silence which had interlocked women's lifecycle into the patriarchal framework. Gender roles enforce a strict division of labour in the home that requires women exclusively responsible for household production and men acquire skills for market activities. The assertion paints a picture that complete dependence on men encouraging many women to view gender inequality less critically. Mrs Lutful Nahar aged 36 have faced a very difficult situation and described the collaboration between husband and 11 year -old -son that prevented her working outside :

My husband doesn't encourage me to work outside because he says he earns enough for us. He earns about \$ 3000 dollar per month as a shop keeper in Italy. He needs a lot of money because everything is very expensive. So every month he may send 10,000 taka. I told him that I could work inside the house by translating or editing the news paper. But he said no. I tried to do it secretly but my son informed him 'Father my mother is working in home by editing the local magazine. And he said 'No you can't.

It is important to note that women as well as men legitimize male control over women's work participation. Therefore intersection of oppressive patriarchy and traditional culture situated women's agency and their controlling power. In our patriarchal society, role of breadwinning is integral to men's identity, which automatically placed women as a weak decision maker. Nahar's husband continued opposing her employment because he felt his wives employment placed the question of his own bread wining capacity. Thus women are manipulated both as producer housewives and as consumer housewives.

Women are suffering from lack of aware of self interest which restrain their access to employment. Some of the fulltime homemakers had been employed¹⁷. They stopped working due to their husband. Sometimes a husband cannot accept that his wife will occupy higher position in the society. It becomes a matter of jealousy and husbands suffer from inferiority complex when he finds her wife to be higher official personnel. Mrs fatema Jahan 43 aged shared her life story and claimed that she is now a housewife due to her husband.

Case Study: 1

Fatema Jahan is a housewife with two children. Her husband is a Deputy Director in a multinational organization. Her docile housewife life started after she had resigned from her job in a multinational development organization in 1988. Initially her husband was very supportive about her job. In a very short period of time she became chief of one of the components in her organization. Then the problem started arising. She used to earn one lac per month which was around double of her husband's salary. She said, "I never knew I will become my husband's worst competitor ...when your own house is a site of competition it is very difficult to continue the highly paid job." When she asked her husband about buying their own apartment by her own money the ego conflict took the worst face. Her husband started to misbehave and continuously used to poke her to resign from her job. In the very early phase she tried to negotiate but her in-laws made the problem worst. When she was on peak of her career taking care of her children emerged as a big issue. Fatema's daughter was 11 years and son was around 7 years old. According to her mother in law, "your (Fatema) biggest asset is your children and before anything else they need their mother most in their adolescent." Fatema's husband supported this view as it served his purpose to domesticate Fatema. Everyday there used be fights related to her job. Once she decided to get a divorce and live her life the way she wanted to. But her children were the main reason for whom she had to restrain herself to take any such decision. Then again divorce is not seen as a very superior break when that is initiated by a woman. Her husband continuously pressurizes her to attain a job as a school teacher which will provide her a quality time for her housework and children. Fatema said, "For ten years I was perfect household manager, a good wife, a good mother; in a few months I had become the worst homemaker as I earn more than my husband." Fatema's husband always used to say when argument took place regarding their job that, "you know your income is an

¹⁷ White(1992) documents innovation and originality in how women negotiate the challenges they face within the family and community.

additional thing for my family. Why do you need to earn when we have enough. Why do you need to work so hard when I am giving you the chance to relax? You can do something else to use your spare time besides working in an NGO.” Fatema said regarding this comment, “for him my earning was additional thing when I was the sole provider for all household expenses including his cigarette. According to my in laws and husband my profession was part of my hobby. I always thought how come every one thinks women work to pass their spare time? How come they never think it as an active part of my identity? I always wanted to tell my husband that if a hobby is generating so much money why you don’t you resign from your job and relax, let me take care of the family.” The conflict was affecting her children badly. The only thing she could do to give her children their healthy home environment back is to resign from her job. She tried her level best to negotiate with her husband but he was too adamant to understand her position. So finally in 1998 she resigned from her job and became a full time homemaker. Fatema’s daughter is 21 now and she is studying BBA in a private university. Whenever she asked what is her future plan she always answer that she does not know .The only thing she knows is that no matter what after a certain period she becomes a stay at home mother just like her own mother. Fatema said this hurts her a lot because the incident changed her daughter’s dream to be independent.¹⁸

The above situation shows that a husband cannot accept that his wife will occupy higher position in the society in comparison to him. It becomes a matter of jealousy and the husband suffer from inferiority complex when he finds his to be higher official personnel. Women are constantly in struggle to become a good mother and a good wife. Women frequently tolerate unsatisfactory marriages despite psychological abuse and the absence of emotional support. Women negotiate with their access to decision making and mostly sacrifice their position of power because of their children. Women are more conscious s about their children’s upbringing than becoming a sole decision maker in the family. Gender norms encourage women to make sacrifices and to compromise to keep their husbands happy. Solutions to conflict most commonly involve compromise on the part of the wife. Fear that a divorced or deserted daughter will place an extra burden on the household take the form to continued transfer their capability into disability.

3.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter significantly examined the intrahousehold situation of unemployed women. Through considering the above cases we can say that household as a political arena because it forces confrontation with questions of gender and hence power. Most of the women expressed that their husband's objection was the main reason for not working. Women respected and accepted whatever decisions undertaken by their husbands. Female mobility is extremely shaped by Bengali traditional culture and a variant of Islamic doctrine. Material dependency reinforced by an ideology that unemployed women have no independent claim and authority on the housekeeping money for fulfilling their own needs.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Introduction:

In this chapter, I will do a comparative analysis of the responses between employed and unemployed women, considering their agency. Data does not show much in terms of overt agency. It would be interesting to see that which strategy women usually apply to tackle the household diplomacy. The comparison between these two groups will address the main research question, whether outside earning are giving extra support for gaining empowerment of women or not?

4.1 Comparative analysis of the responses from employed and unemployed women

Women's entry into public life offers a form of empowerment is literally visible. But practical situation is little bit different. The study has revealed that when financial pressure challenges men's adequate economic capacity, women get the chance to take men's position as economic providers but cannot challenge men's authority. It has been revealed that women's income as a supplement than a replacement for male wages. So earning an income is not sufficient to alter women's traditional position. Employed women failed to challenge not only hegemony of patriarchy, but mediating structures of class, religion in Bangladesh which ultimately disempowered women. The overall analysis shows that there is not much difference between employed and non employed women in relation to household decision making process. It is true that majority of the men and women argued that women made considerable gains by employment but this is nothing but economic independence only.

However, they held often contradictory views that employed women had advanced their life by getting the exits options but simultaneously claimed that outside work are bringing a burden to their lives which were a double disadvantage. In both groups power and authority are still almost entirely controlled by men. Employed and unemployed women are both customarily expected to bear the reproductive activities and take care of the children. For example in the event of divorce, women can withdraw her marital responsibility but not her parental duties. Both of them have the same capacity to exercise their property rights.

In both cases husbands consult with their wives but ultimately husbands have the final say as it involves a substantial amount of money. Both groups of women control their income within kinship systems that have accorded power and authority to women in their relations with men. The data Shows that husbands generally do not interfere with daily expenditures .

As a result both of the employed and unemployed women can take part in a limited number of decision making processes. Mobility is still a big mark for both employed and unemployed wives. In households the gendered division around the control of economic activities and gendered differences in consumption patterns and control of cash are strongly identified by men. Those who are housewives are suffering from home related inequality whereas employed women are suffering from both home as well as work related inequalities. We can redefine their household position by saying that an employed woman is a part-time home worker and the unemployed woman is a fulltime home worker. When women earn, they spent on the interests of the household as a whole or especially on children, and thus it confirms to the traditional gender identity, which is committed with motherhood. In both employed and unemployed cases, women take up fertility control seriously because additional child cost is not bearable and considered as an extra load for them. Hereby employed and non-employed women's attitude and position remain alike.

Women may not use their economic status as bargaining power, to maintain the relationship. Most of the unemployed women are suffering from home-related inequality, whereas employed women are suffering from both home as well as work related inequalities. Family structure also determines the household decision-making process and expenditure in a different way. As housewife of a single family woman have some control over basic household chores, but housewives from joint family had to share sole control over household chores with their mother in law or sister in law, sometimes with both.

It was visible that joint family structures sometimes serve as a barrier of egalitarian role between husband and wife. In the language of Mrs. Parveen aged 27 said that:

I take most of the decisions after consulting with my mother in law. Some time my mother in law play vital role in deciding what to cook, what to buy for the family even which school my children should study .without my father in law's decision no larger purchase is made. Before investing in a new business my husband's seek his permission, before buying a new TV or refrigerator we ask our in laws. So yes in a sense, they play an important part in taking household. My husband gives his full salary to my mother in law who lives with us. My mother in law manages the fiancés and determines the family decisions. My husband is very happy with this. An ideal woman's duty is to submit not bargain. I am doing my responsibilities well so why do I need to bargain. I am really trying to be perfect homemaker so there is no factors, which made are bargain with my husband and in laws. I have all the right I am supposes to get.

The statement makes me one thing clear that it is a common technique and attitude in our society that senior women incorporated the same masculine behaviour to maintain the social order to readdress junior women's subordinate position. Whitehead pointed out that, gender is a moving target precisely because gender power constantly reasserted. A joint family is a curse for the women because family structures serve as barrier to conjugal understanding rather than single families. Thus, Mrs.Lubna aged 34 years said

There have lots of domain where my husband's money is being utilized. There is basic household need –food, clothes, bills etc. beside that I have two young children one is five and a half and another is only two years old .So taking care of them and provide them with all food , education and health facilities is also a

crucial domain of expenditure. I have my mother in law living with us .so her medical treatment is also needed to be taken in concern.

The qualitative data shows more similarities and fewer differences between these two groups. In a single family, the entire power controlled by men it has been replaced by eldest members in joint families not to women. However, I want to flag here five sets of relevant findings:

- a. Both employed and unemployed women's agencies situated as they failed to challenge the patriarchal bargaining power. Hereby income plays the negligible role in changing inequalities in gender relations because women suffer from (a visible) gender power relations in the decision making process. Since income has no noticeable impact in increasing access to market because it leaves women dependent on their male relatives and becomes inevitable that women will lose their control over income. Access to economic resources alone is not necessarily sufficient to make women empowered and combat inequality because their disempowerment is not determined on economic assistance only.
- b. In principle income as a means for ensuring women's empowerment but available results show that income can give women certain level of independence but reinforces new kinds of dependence and subordination in the society.
- c. Earning money is not the same thing of controlling income.
- d. Sometimes extra tension or domestic violence is created in a family when the wives earn more than their husbands .
- e. Where employment and income do not increase extra power of women who earn, we see here that the lack of income does not seem to decrease power of women who do not earn.

4.2 Multiple Experiences of women; resilience's women's capacity

The analysis in chapter three shows how there are multiple discrimination.

In addition, intersectional vulnerability of all middle class women interviewed. Hence, the overall larger social milieu, which outline the diversity of experiences, since family institutions are, not separate from different other social institutions.

Women's employment is a modernization process where patriarchy meets with modernity. But in Bangladesh the so called modern employment opportunity is almost gender biased where patriarchy and gender biased labour market produces male domination. Gender though remains a blind spot in this new institutional social arrangement.

Thus women's quality of life, which is the central point of capabilities are hardly available to them. The life story of Maleka confirmed that dominant patriarchal notions internalized by women which prevented them from accessing their proper agency. Their freedom of agency is constrained by social, cultural and religion factors, which intentionally make them, disqualified. The strength of patriarchy in Bangladesh and closed nature of household have restricted their mobility in the name of purdah.

In the policy making process planners only used gender lens and captured the point that women are poorer than men due to lack of economic access. Thus, income opportunity can empower women. Therefore, as a measure they offers different job opportunities, income generating programmes. Capability approach is still dominated by male centered conception. However, they could not trace that adding income is not the only solution as they are suffering from multidimensional oppressions. The case Ratna shows that income brings another tension in her life. Application of Intersectionality lens this study identified that interaction of gender with religion, class, patriarchy, gendered labour market and unpaid reproductive work are the major layers of preventing women's capability to exercise their agency. Hence gender and other factors can affect the conversion of the characteristics of the commodities into actual

functioning's. Firstly Gender relations are some- how equated with the most intimate aspects of our cultures. Secondly, culture and tradition were immutable and static. Lastly, that religion is culture. Culture serves as constraints on working for equitable gender relations.

4.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter compared employed and unemployed women's situations and discussed the institutional and contextual vulnerability in which the middle class urban women live in Dhaka city. Gender division affects the behavior and this affects the utilization of income and exacerbates gender –related tensions within urban households in Dhaka city. The study has shown that women are suffering from lack of confidence, mobility, assertiveness and willingness to take decisions. It has been revealed that women were unable to challenge the gender subordination in the household. This confirms the view that these household fit the ideal type described 'as the belt of classic patriarchy' (Kandiaty, 1988).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarises the findings of the study and conclusions from the above discussions. In this chapter, the first section discusses the theoretical implications of the data and the limitations of Sen's model. In addition, the next section discusses implications for policy formulation and possible areas for further research.

5.1 LIMITATIONS OF SEN'S MODEL

This research work contributes further evidence to the feminist critique and challenges Sen's main proposition of household bargaining model states that:

'outside earnings can give women a better breakdown position, a clearer perception of her individuality and well being, higher perceived contribution to the family economic position' (1990:144).

By bringing here, relevant issues and locating the limitations of this model the study tried to reformulate this proposition. The data shows that it is not surprising that outside income had not apparently strengthened women's family authority but sometimes confirms family burden, conjugal conflict and domestic violence.

This study has discovered that despite the wives earning, husbands are still perceived as the breadwinners and main actor who contributes more to the household while women are perceived as the side actress who are dependent on men. Women's acceptance of 'male as the family manager' - is a complex interaction of cultural tradition as well as economic circumstances. Thereby women's entitlement converted them into disempowerment in the household level and this disempowerment reinforces their dependency towards men, which reconstruct their common belief that men are the actual breadwinner reduces their capacity to challenge the traditional patriarchal norms. Women failed to make here legitimate claim on her own earnings therefore they are remaining as less creative agent in the society.

In Bangladesh, gender division of labour commonly assigns unpaid domestic activities to women; it never justified whether these women are involved in a job or not. . . . Certainly, women's choices often affect their capabilities and demolish their lives because their limited -choices have disproportionately damaging their capabilities. Therefore, they negotiated more rather than exercising their agency for creating any visible position in family life.

This paper reveals that most of the women have very low income and access to other assets which implies that they have weak 'fall-back position' and thus more likely to compromise. Sen's model particularly denied emotions, love, care that bind household members. For example, child rearing is a major liability for women whose benefits cannot be captured by women only, who devote their time and energy for them. These non-self interested behaviours are seen in bargaining models only as constraints on women's self interest rather than an objectives in their own rights. For example, employed and non-employed women have sacrificed their property right, as they are committed to social norms of the family.

Sen's household bargaining model given full priorities to the outside work by ignoring the inside work, which is the basic body of household domain. This model failed to see that women heavily burdened by household reproductive work, which reduces their physical and mental capacity to challenge the traditional household behaviour. In this way bargaining table, accepts men's order give them strong bargaining power and rejects women's values. On the other hand this model only applicable to locate the husband-wife relationship but the data shows dislocate intergenerational relationship (Father -daughter, mother -son, mother-in -law and daughter -in -law) affected conjugal relations between husband and wife. Sen's model has emphasised the household situation in a simple way but denied to focus the situations wherein household contains an extended family.

As we saw in this study the case of Fatema which brings here another significant issue that outside earning could be a source of conflict and violence, which is supporting evidence to challenge the logical framework of this model. These factors can sharply impinge on the accuracy of theoretical formulations, empirical predictions and policy formulations. Mentioned above by considering the value of women's work within household:

Outside earning + Inside earning = Double activities means double power =
break down the gendered power relations.

Considering the domestic diplomacy we can re-conceptualize that household as a diplomatic zone where men play the diplomatic role and keeping the channel open between power and domination for reconstruction of gendered needs, and gendered bargaining power. Thus we can say that earning money is not the same thing of controlling income.

5.2 New DIRECTIONS FOR FEMINITS RESERACH

The evidence from this study adds to the feminist literature on the significance of the household literature in policy formulation. First, the need for reappraisal of theories and so-called policies that treat the household as a unit cannot be overemphasized. Second, theories and policies should consider the institutional context of women vs. men, especially in the patriarchal societies like Bangladesh. Third, Socio cultural norms should be re-examined that largely shape the choices and actions of men and women in and outside of the household. Feminist should propose planners to make a room to address diversity in which women can articulate.

However, most of the policies consciously or unconsciously avoided the structural causes, which humiliated women and stopped them to enjoy the equal access to resources. Cultural norms do not favour women and rarely taken into consideration in formulation of policies and planning of intervention process. It is very important to shift the focus from approaches that treat women as victim of development. The planners should consider that woman, as a social agent there is a vital necessity to take an agent-oriented approach concentrated on women's agenda. The major commitment of this approach will be to focus that policy should not be only income based the degree of quality of life should be given equal weight.

Providing income is one of the ways of enabling women to acquire assets and become productive and as a tool of emancipation of the feminine condition. Theoretically, income emerges as a self-motivated means of increasing women's capabilities. However, a number of social power relations shape the experiences women in a different way. Because there are inseparable connection between individuals and social relations, in which they are embedded (Turker 1998, cited Basu: 2008; 66). Planners mainly respond to practical needs without considering the strategic needs, which preserves and reinforces gender inequalities. We need claim women's situational agency in reaching at social choice.

Conventional policies have proven to be largely ineffective because it has failed to see the different layers of realities. Thus, social dialogue and public debate is more powerful for transforming traditional mentalities or cultural norms. There is no doubt that only social dialogue can address the discrimination against women because dialogue takes different roots, new ideas and bring diversity. Women should engage themselves more actively in a constructive debate with policy makers and negotiate the conceptual and policy issues that affect them directly. Wieringa claimed in the question of transformation that 'women should learn to define their own problem' (1994:844).

This study spells out the nature of the domestic politics in middle class households of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Perhaps the most unexpected conclusion, which can be drawn from the above discussion that there is not much difference between employed and non-employed women in relation to household decision-making process. 'Patriarchal structures create gender –asymmetries endowments ,risks and constraints which penalize autonomous behaviour for women but also offer them provision and protection if they remain within its parameters; this is the basis of patriarchal bargain'(Kabeer,1997:300). Bangladeshi households based on a situation where women enjoy relatively separate decision-making power. However based on interviews we can conclude the section that new opportunities of wages employment for women have brought diversity in their life. Firstly, it has changed the labour market situation by giving different options for women. Secondly, it has given the satisfaction to women to ensure a better life for their children. Thirdly, it has ensured double opportunity to women; some to renegotiate the gendered power relations, some to reject.

However, middle class women in Bangladesh still revolve around their households, husbands and children. In conclusion, we can say that employment of urban women in Bangladesh does present a limited challenge for changing gender power relations. In terms of mobility, control over material resources and protection of individual self interest –women renegotiated with an unequal status as a result they accept unsatisfactory relationships, which undermine their agency in unacceptable ways. The study shows that men are hardly willing to take more responsibilities but ready to blame women for any household problem. Women’s strategic needs are must to be addressed if we feel their situations are to be improved. Recently policy makers are slowly coming to recognize that households are complex unit and sites of conflict and domestic violence. However, day-by-day women are creating invisible revolutions through their everyday activities for changing their immense barriers and trying to break out the gender power relations, which are traditionally embedded by their family and society. They are trying their best to know the road map for changing their current status and replacing their common traits, which will thus create a new era of development.

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Annex I:

Questionnaire on decision making at household level.

Please read the following question carefully before starting the questionnaire.

About the questionnaire

Assalamualikum. I am Tania Haque, Lecturer, department of women and gender studies, university of Dhaka. The present study will mainly focus on whether there are differences between employed and non employed women in specific areas of decision making in household level .

The purpose of this present study to examine the proposition that women's empowerment can be acquired through employment and access to education through a case study of urban middle class in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The standard policy prescription for women's empowerment is employment and education. Access to income in particular is seen as improving the bargaining position of women in the household, providing a base for their empowerment within the household and also in society. The neoclassical economists whose paradigm dominates 'mainstream development policy' fail to consider the power relations within the household. Mainstream studies treat household as a simple single unity, and ignore internal differences and domestic politics, where women are frequently subjected to domination.

Economists and policy makers focus on earning data which locate only individual and household income without justifying about how income is distributed or controlled within the household. In the family the power and family authority are still mostly controlled by men. In Bangladesh the traditional sex role in the family is based on male or father dominant. Hereby the society is based on an idealized norm of male superiority; the domestic domain is a space of hierarchal relations between genders and generations. But in many households in Bangladesh, the gendered divisions around the control of

economic activities and gendered differences in consumption patterns and control of cash are strongly identified with men. How women apply their agency is the subject matter of this paper and this appear is intend to show how middle class women in Dhaka are trying to expand their boundaries of social space through outside earning. Values and norms reinforce inequality between men and women in general and husband and wife in particular .The emphasis on middle class wage earner and non wage earner women will help answer the question who can exercise their agency and how, within the household decision-making processes. This study will investigate the issue of women’s empowerment by comparing the experience of employed and unemployed educated middle class women.

There is a need to harmonize research, policy and action to improve the conditions of women and I hope that this study can contribute towards such a linkage. These data and information will help me for continuation of this research work successfully. Your participation in my research work would enormously helpful for me not only in enriching my research work but also in suggesting an improvement in the existing policies.

Confidentiality: The information you provide in this questionnaire will be treated confidentially .Your personnel details will not be mentioned and nobody will be identified in the report.

Personal and professional information:

(You do not need to write your name)

Sex; Male Female

Age group 20 yrs- 25 yrs
 26 yrs – 32 yrs
 33 yrs - 40 yrs
 Above

- Duration of married life

-
- Present status 0 Housewife or 0 Employed (Designation.....).
 - Total service length
 - Pattern of the family 0 Joint family 0 Single family
 - Size of the family

1. In your own word, please write what do you mean by empowerment?

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2. What is the source of income?

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3. If you are a wage earner, do you have the full authority to spend this money? Or you need to take permission from your husband?

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4. Where does the income go in all different domains of household needs?

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5. Who decides your family needs? Is there anyone else in the family who plays an important role in decision making?

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6. Do you have any voice in planning the monthly budget? Or is that managed by someone else? What is your role in the control and management of the household budget?

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7. Do you have any contribution in your family income? If yes then does it help you to exert any decision in your family ? / If no , do you think that money is a source of power which can help you to exercise your agency ?

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8. What portion of income you can utilize for yourself? Do you get any family prescription, that how will you use it?

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9. Do you need to consult with any member of the family to make use of own income?

If yes with whom?

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10. Do you think that income is strengthening your family position? Does it really help you in your decision making?

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11. What factors directly affects your bargaining power?

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9. Are other household members also part of the decision making process? If yes who are the key people?

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10. In which part of income, you have the control and in which part you are restricted? What is your share of control on family expenditure?

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11. What are the social/cultural/religion factors that constrain you to be an active agent of income control?

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12. As an active member in the society, how can women overcome these common barriers? (In your opinion).

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13. Do you think that **only income** is a source of household bargaining power? If yes explain why and how .If no explains, which other factors are also countable?

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13. What do you think, which strategy can help women to capture the nature of equal control in their life?

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Further specification:

1. Who makes the final decision to purchase property?

- a. 0 Husband
- b. 0 Wife
- c. 0 Husband and Wife Jointly
- d. 0 Wife' and 'others'
- e. 0 Husband and others (mother in law)

2. Who makes the final decision to purchase household goods (long-term major purchases such as TV, cars, refrigerators, washing machine etc. to short-term small ones like food, clothes etc.)?

A Long term goods (Food, Clothes, Furniture)

- a. 0 Husband
- b. 0 Self
- c. 0 Husband and self jointly
- d. 0 Self' and 'others'

-
- e. 0 Husband and others (mother in law)
- B Short term goods (House, Land, Car etc)**
- a. 0 Husband
 - b. 0 Self
 - c. 0 Husband and Self Jointly
 - d. 0 Self' and 'others'
 - e. 0 Husband and others (mother in law)
3. Who makes the final decision what school the children should join?
- a. 0 Husband
 - b. 0 Self
 - b. 0 Husband and self jointly
 - c. 0 Self and 'others'
 - d. 0 Husband and others (mother in law)
4. Who decides about the number of children you would like to have?
- a. 0 Husband
 - b. 0 Self
 - b. 0 Husband and Self Jointly
 - c. 0 Self' and 'others'
 - d. 0 Husband and others (mother in law)
5. Who controls your access to mobility?
- a. 0 Husband
 - b. 0 Self
 - b. 0 Husband and others
 - c. 0 Self' and 'others'
 - d. 0 Husband and others (mother in law)

Annex II