A Preliminary Consideration on the Status of Rural Women in Bangladesh:  
A Case Study on Dugasi Mouza of Mymensingh

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1. Introduction

The reality of women’s lives remains invisible to men and women alike and this invisibility persists at all levels beginning with the family to the nation. Although geographically men and women share the same space, they live indifferent worlds. The mere fact that “Women hold up half the sky” - does not appear to give them a position of dignity and equality1. It is important to differentiate between the status of women in Islam and the present status of women in the Muslim world. It is also important to appreciate the vast diversity of the Muslim world, with its varying levels of adherence to Islamic injunctions, with regard to the status of Muslim women. In a world-wide population of 1.5 billion Muslims, the status of women varies from culture to culture and often within the same culture. Thus the stereotypical image of the oppressed Muslim woman with limited or no access to education is just that, a stereotype based on gross misinformation. To say that women in Muslim countries do not have the same rights as women in the West assumes that the general status of women in the West is worthy of emulation by Muslim women, something that even ardent Western feminists would disagree with strongly. It is therefore important to understand that the status of Muslim women need not be viewed through the prism of the aspirations of Western women. Therefore, improving the status of women in the Muslim world requires more and not less adherence to Islamic injunctions2.

The status of women in Muslim countries differs qualitatively from the ideology of Western culture. Women have fewer legal and social rights, and experience a history of general and pervasive marginalization3. The custom and culture is one that doesn’t give women their own voices easily, and they are having subservient status under culture, society, and law. Women have minority status, and so are under the guardianship of their father or brother prior to marriage, when they remain under the guardianship of their husband. Marriage practices in Muslim countries also marginalize and subordinate women. Women are allowed to have one husband, though some countries permit men to have more than one wife4. Women’s empowerment has been pointed out as an indispensable condition to reduce poverty in developing countries of the world.

Bangladesh has endured more than its fair share of natural calamities and the economic and

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political uncertainties that accompany them⁵. Rural women traditionally have played an important role in a wide range of income-generating activities. There has been tremendous population growth in Bangladesh for the last three decades. In Bangladesh women comprise nearly half of the total population which means huge potential to be used for socio-economic development of the country⁶. This is very important and significant that three-fourth of the total women is from rural settings, among three-fourth most of the women spent a life not only rural setting but also as aborigines. But the status of the women is much lower than that of women in every spare of life. The status of rural women in Bangladesh is the direct result of the patriarchal values embedded in the socio-culture pattern reflecting systematic subordination and inequality of women. Rural women in Bangladesh are dominated by a patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system, which enforce the social and economic dependence of women on men and prescribes the relative lower status of women⁷.

1.2. Aim of the study

As one of the first studies in the post-independent era noted ‘The lives of Bengali women rarely appears as the subject matter of any literary or research work’. There are a very few journal about the rural women in Bangladesh, that’s way I am interested to explore and briefly explain about the topics. Most of the villages are representing the whole country in economic, social, educational and all others area. This paper aims to draw a holistic picture based on sample study based on villages in Bangladesh and the legal status of rural women in Bangladesh.

1.3 The objective of the study

The objective of this study is to focus light on the real status of rural women in Bangladesh. No development objectives can be achieved without making women self-reliant. Every study has to undertake a plan preparation with some objectives. In the light of above discussion and situation of this village the study was carried out with the following objectives:

➢ To find out the obstacles of women empowerment in rural Bangladesh.
➢ To know the how education play the vital role of women empowerment in rural Bangladesh.
➢ To know the how Bangladeshi rural women make contribute to it’s urban economy.

2. Demographic profile of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the high-density countries of the world. According to the UN Gender Development Index, Bangladesh is ranked 121st out of a total of 146 countries worldwide. Total Population in Bangladesh: 163,654,860 (July 2013 EST).⁶.
Bangladesh experienced one of the most rapid increases in urbanization in South Asia over the past 50 years, making it the third most urbanized country in the region, after Pakistan and India. Despite strong urban growth, Bangladesh’s urban transition is broadly in line with urbanization of countries at a similar stage of economic development.

Table 1. Age structure Year 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>% of Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>27,393,912</td>
<td>26,601,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>18.80</td>
<td>14,337,930</td>
<td>16,377,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>37.60</td>
<td>29,091,046</td>
<td>32,455,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>4,775,062</td>
<td>4,625,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 above</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>3,918,341</td>
<td>4,078,723</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bangladesh Demographics Profile 2014

Urban population is increasing mainly due to rural urban migration. In 2007, approximately 4.5 million people have migrated internally, of which 75 percent have moved within rural or urban areas. Over 480000 people have moved from rural to urban areas in that year. Most of the Bangladeshi women live in the rural areas, even though women now are widely migrated to urban areas for the employment and start living permanently in urban areas. Bangladesh was characterized by a large population structure with a large concentration of children and an imbalance in the sex ratio. Over time, the fertility rate has declined remarkably that significantly affected population composition.

2.1 Education:

In Bangladesh, female education has been accorded a low priority in Bangladesh due to poverty, social directives for female seclusion and the low value of girls. However, the situation is changing in recent time. Since the world Declaration on Education for all (1990), the government introduced various measures to intensify basic education for all with particular focus on female education. Numerous affirmative actions were also introduced to enhance female literacy. However, there remains a considerable gap in enrollment literacy as well as the significantly higher proportion of female dropout from the system is still a major concern.
2.2 Disparity of Literacy Rate (<7 years of age) by Sex:

The percentage of literate children also varies according to the sex.

Table 2. Current situation and future projection of literacy rate (7 years of age) by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>50.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014*</td>
<td>60.68</td>
<td>55.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gender Inequality in Bangladesh: A Statistically Analysis

Despite considerable progress in the percentage of literacy rate, still it is lower than the expected\(^{10}\). However, the percentage of the literacy rate both for male and female are increasing but it is occurring at a slower rate than that of the previous year. Facilities related to education such as the "Food for Education" stipend scheme for girls up to Class 12, which exist in rural areas, do not exist in urban areas\(^{11}\).

2.3 Women's Employment:

Women’s participation in the labor market has increased since the mid-1980s. The Bangladeshi employed labor force is estimated at 41.7 million or at 54.6 million using the extended definition and it increased in size by nearly 5 million since 1990-1991\(^{12}\). In other words, around one million people enter the Bangladeshi labor force annually. The share of female employment between agriculture and nonfarm work is changing. The nonfarm sector is generating female employment at an increasing rate mainly due to the fact that government and nongovernment interventions are more concentrated in this sector. The occupational pattern of employed persons and the annual growth rate by major occupation from 1990-1991 to 1995-1996 shows that the growth rate of females employed in the sales occupation is the highest (51.1 percent) among all the major occupations. The second highest growth rate is observed in the case of production labor. While the growth rate of the male labor force has increased steadily (1.7 percent) in agriculture, forest, and fisheries, the trend is negative (-1.1) in case of females.

Women’s participation in economic activities shows great variations by gender, by nature of activity, and place of residence. For example, more than three quarters of employed women of 15 years and above are found to be unpaid family laborers as opposed to less than a tenth who are self-employed and a few (6 percent) contract workers. On the other hand, a large number of men are self-employed (47 percent), followed by contract laborers (26 percent). Only a few (13 percent) work as unpaid family helpers\(^{12}\). The agriculture sector is overwhelmed by unpaid family workers who are disproportionately represented by women. Self-employed or own account workers are predominantly found in the trade, hotel and restaurant, transport, storage, and communications sectors where men’s involvement is sizeable (nearly a quarter) and
women’s is negligible. Every four out of five workers in the construction sector are day or contract laborers, although this sector is represented by only 3 percent of the employed men and less than 1 percent of women. For women in the rural areas, the number working in the construction sector is likely to be higher. However, a sizeable chunk (nearly one fifth) of unpaid family helpers is found both in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors and women disproportionately represent them. Hence, even in the informal sector, women are not only concentrated in a few sectors, but also their labor is largely consumed without any remuneration. By way of contrast, although men are also overwhelmingly found in the informal sector, they are mostly involved as self-employed or own account workers, suggesting their greater access to resources and economic opportunities.

In financial year 2011-12 an amount of Tk. 5.31 billion were disbursed among 0.27 million women as agricultural and rural credit for crop production, running agro processing and agricultural related small business & activities, so that they can change their economic conditions.13

2.4 Bangladeshi rural women’s contributions to its urban economy:

Right now it is shown that the women have great interest in participation in paid employment and within the household and wider society. Traditionally, women’s mobility from home to outside arena is highly restricted by social norms and cultural practices, especially rural women generally have little freedom of movement. Right now women entrepreneurs are mobilizing their social capital. Nowadays quarters of all women are self-employed or engaged various activities in urban areas as a result of greater economic opportunities available in the cities. It is conceivable that the women earners are disadvantaged in terms of their monthly income. The average monthly income of men was Tk. 2,073 ($30.94) compared to just Tk. 686 ($10.23) for women (2005)14. However, right now some sectors in urban areas do offer greater monthly income for women that allow women make positive contribution to household and to nation’s economy. The following table represents income variations for women in different sectors in urban areas.

Table.3. Mean monthly income by category of women workers (in takas-Tk.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Women Workers</th>
<th>Average Monthly Income</th>
<th>Maximum Monthly Income</th>
<th>Minimum Monthly Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPZ garment workers</td>
<td>3014($44.98)</td>
<td>3403($50.79)</td>
<td>2305($34.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaka garment workers</td>
<td>1706($25.46)</td>
<td>2019($30.14)</td>
<td>1248(18.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed workers</td>
<td>1799($26.85)</td>
<td>2606($38.89)</td>
<td>1256($18.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other wage (day labor) workers</td>
<td>919($13.71)</td>
<td>1215($18.13)</td>
<td>699($10.43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note 1: An export processing zone EPZ is defined as a territorial or economic enclave in which goods may be imported and manufactured and reshipped with a reduction in duties / and/or minimal intervention by custom officials.
From the above table it is plausible that women represent variety sectors of economy. These sectors comprise merely with rural women. Now women get better opportunities in industrial sectors and consequently they are having greater benefits. Apart from the industrial sector, women also have other self-employment that also provides them with various opportunities. Traditionally women in Bangladesh merely engaged in wage working activities, but now compare to this wage earning women the industrial sector women can earn more income. Rural women do not have higher certificates, but they can easily get employment in various garments sector with little training.

2.5 Health and Nutrition:

Maternal malnutrition is a chronic problem in rural Bangladesh. Even though the country is self-sufficient in rice production, the diet of rural people is very low in energy and micronutrients because households do not have access to the resources they need to grow or purchase enough food. Girls and women often eat last and least in the household due to the persistence of cultural practices that favor boys and men. Consequently, mothers do not eat enough food to meet their energy and micronutrient needs, particularly during pregnancy when these needs are greatest. Particularly for women, the high nutritional costs of pregnancy and lactation also contribute significantly to their poor nutritional status. Under nutrition threatens both the health and survival of mothers because it increases their susceptibility to life-threatening diseases and their risk of dying, especially during childbirth. A recent small-sale study of carried out by NSP survey 2000 of 57000 women revealed that almost one half (45%) of rural mothers and one third (34%) of mothers in urban slums have a BMI less than 18.5 kg/ m² and are undernourished.

According to 2011 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS), in Bangladesh, 30 percent of pregnancies were unintended. The total intended fertility rate was 1.6 which is quite lower than the total fertility rate (TFR) 2.3. This means that if all unintended pregnancies could be eliminated, the TFR would drop below the replacement level of fertility immediately.

2.6 Violence against women:

Gender violence, namely violence against women, is now defined very broadly to include anything “involving use of force/coercion with an intent of perpetuation/ promotion of hierarchical gender-relations in all social structures: family, community, workplace and society”. The types of violence commonly committed against women in Bangladesh are, domestic violence, acid throwing and burning, sexual harassment and indecent assault, rape, kidnapping and abduction, trafficking and importation for immoral purposes and forced prostitution.

The various circumstances included were - not completing housework adequately, refusing sex, disobeying the husband, or being unfaithful. The most commonly agreed upon reason for which beating was accepted as justified by women, was when the wife was unfaithful. About 45 per cent of urban and 35.8 per cent of rural women agreed that a wife had a right to refuse
sex under all circumstances mentioned and 5.3 per cent urban and 11.3 per cent rural women agreed to none ideology, which to a large extent is responsible for the internalization of female inferiority through a process of socialization, customs, religious laws and rituals\textsuperscript{17}.

2.7 Other forms violence against women:

2.7.1 Domestic Violence:

The WHO multi-country study reported, from the data collected by ICDDR, B-Naripokkho survey, that 53.3 per cent in the urban and 79.3 per cent of women in the rural area believed that a man had a right to beat his wife under certain circumstances\textsuperscript{18}. Due to patriarchy and in the absence of adequate empowerment situation of women, domestic violence by men against women is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh – both in rural and urban areas. It is more pronounced among the poorer and relatively less educated class. Generally these types of violence against women are done by the males. Power and control over resources were most frequently at the core of events leading to the use of violence in domestic situations. Patriarchy subordinates women through existing social norms and values. This system allows men to dominate women within their families and also allows men control over the productive resources. As a result, traditional value under strong patriarchy tends to trigger, dictate and provoke different forms of violence, including domestic violence against women in Bangladesh.

2.7.2 Rape:

Early sexual abuse is a highly sensitive issue that is difficult to explore in survey situation. The WHO survey reported that levels of sexual abuse before the age of fifteen years ranged from 1 per cent or less in rural Bangladesh to 7.4 per cent in Bangladesh city. Strangers were the most frequently mentioned perpetrators in the urban areas of Bangladesh. However, very low level of sexual violence by non-partners for women over 15 year was reported (0.5% in rural and 7.6% in urban areas) in Bangladesh. Higher level of non-partner violence was reported in the urban than in the rural areas. The extremely low level of violence by non-partners reported in Bangladesh may be a function of the great stigma associated with sexual violence in these rural settings. The early age of marriage prevailing in the society offers protection from the risk of sexual violence, through the guardianship of the husband. In 2002, a total of 1434 cases of rape were reported and 35 per cent were gang rapes and 10 per cent were rapes followed by murder. A study in Bangladesh showed that 32 per cent of women working outside their homes experienced disruption of work due to incidents of domestic violence\textsuperscript{20}.

2.7.3 Early marriages:

In Bangladesh where early marriages are arranged for a majority of girls, it was found that maternal mortality among teenage mothers was double the national figures. The trend of early marriages limits educational opportunities among adolescent girls and deprives them of opportunities in life. Bangladesh has the highest rate of under-16 marriage in South Asia, with about half of the nation’s girls marrying before reaching their mid-teens. Also, statistics reported by the Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey establish that the prevalence of child
marriage in Bangladesh is among the highest globally. Although the practice of child marriage in Bangladesh has been decreasing over the last 30 years, it continues to be a major problem. Under the Child Marriage Restraint Act, the minimum legal age for girls to marry is 18 however, 75 percent of women aged 20-49 were married before age 18, one of the highest rates in the world. Disturbingly, many children in Bangladesh are married even younger; a 2006 study found that one-third of women in Bangladesh aged 20-49 were married before they reached the age of 15\textsuperscript{20}. The practice of arranging child marriage remains commonplace, especially among poor in rural areas and urban slums, where most families regard the onset of puberty as the point at which a girl is ready for marriage. The incidence of child marriage between 1998 and 2007 has been estimated at 64 percent in the country: 53 percent in urban areas and 70 percent in rural areas.

3. Case study
This part is based on primarily data collection and personal experience has been inserted for deeper understanding. The study is basically based on the review of primary and secondary literature including books, annul reports, newspapers etc. Relevant information is also collected from internet browsing. A questionnaire containing 33 questions was used to collect data for this survey and 232 responds. Primary data have been collected from one village (Dugasi Mouza) of Bangladesh through open and close ended questionnaires and interviews of the respondents. In the context of collecting data for this research, sample has been taken randomly and data have been collected from the respondents through questionnaire. After collecting data and information from the study area through questionnaire and interview these have been carefully reviewed, classified, tabulated and analyzed.

Obviously, most of the villages are representing the whole country in economic, social, educational and all other areas.Dugasi Mouza is general village in Bangladesh which represents the other village of Bangladesh and it’s near from Mymensingh District. That’s way I tried to explain about the rural women life in Dugasi Mouza.

Mymensingh is a district and a city of Bangladesh situated near the river of Brahmaputra. It is one of the 16th old district towns of Bangladesh. Being almost 400 years old, Mymensingh has a rich cultural and political history. The city is located about north of Dhaka. There are 12 upazila in Mymensingh district. Phulpur upazila is one of them. Phulpur upazila was turned into an upazila in 1983. The upazila consists of 20 union parishads, 377 mouza and 411 villages.

Within 20 union Parishads of Phulpur Upazila KAKNI is the ninth number union Parishad. There are 18 villages and 6 Mouza in KAKNI union Parishad. Dugasi Mouza is one of them and the mouza number is 179. Dugasi Mouza is situated at north east side of Mymensingh district and south side of PHULPUR upazila and the distance between Mymensingh and Dugasi Mouza is about 34 kilometers. On the north side of Dugasi Mouza is Karkuchikanda (Mouza no 167), Rangsa River flows in the south side of this Mouza, on the west side Bagirpara and on the east side Mozamia Kanda.
3.1 Population

The total population of the Dugasi Mouza is 1325.

The total number of male is 698 and the total number of female is 627. The birth rate in KAKNI union parishads (include Dugasi Mouza) is 1.34 percent. Some of the villagers (some time with family or without family) migrated temporarily or permanently to other places for their livelihood.

3.2 Education
Most of the people of Dugasi Mouza are illiterate. That is 37% of the total population. The education system of this Mouza is very poor, at the said Mouza the number of the Government primary school is one. After completing primary study if any student of this village wants to go secondary school they have to go other village because without primary school here there is no any education institution. 49% women of Dugasi Mouza are illiterate.

![Figure 4: Education Rate Of Dugasi Mouza's Women](image)

The numbers of teacher of Dugasi Government primary school are 4 and total number of students is 469. Within these total students girls are 228. The students of Dugasi Government primary school come from five villages like Dugasi, Bogirpara, Mukamia kanda, Mushkanda, Kurkusikanda but Dugasi and Mukamia kanda’s student must have to come this school for study. It’s is decided by the government of Bangladesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Child survey</th>
<th>Admission (depend on age)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Own school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8+</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9+</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The questionnaire survey

3.3 The life of a rural housewife from the case study

Women bear essentially full responsibility for cooking. Usually women cook twice a day, eating leftovers for the third meal. Caring for domestic animals (feeding, cleaning, and other care) is also the responsibility of women, in rural areas. Thus the income earned is counted as part of the husband’s contribution to the family, rather than the wife’s. Most women reported getting up very early in the morning — between 4:30 and 6:30 a.m. Most women report going
to bed between 9 and 11 p.m. Women are also responsible for keeping track of every family member’s needs, from the smallest baby to the elderly relatives who live with them. Who needs what at what time of day is all the responsibility of women. Below I have tried to outline a rural women daily life which represents the rural women life.

Table.5. Daily life of Fatema and her huband

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Fatema’s work</th>
<th>Kamal’s work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.30am-5.00am</td>
<td>Getting up from sleep</td>
<td>Getting up from sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30am-10.00am</td>
<td>Sweeping home, prepare breakfast and lunch</td>
<td>Go to fields for working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>together, cleaning home, feed their cows and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chicken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00am-12.00pm</td>
<td>Take breakfast and wash plate and dishes,</td>
<td>Take breakfast and go to shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>take the cows out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30pm-4.00pm</td>
<td>Make fuel uses the cow dung, wash daily</td>
<td>Work in the shop and take lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>using cloths, feed their cows and chicken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>take care mother in law take lunch, sews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cloths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00pm-7.00pm</td>
<td>Prepare dinner and clean the house</td>
<td>Back to home and look after the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>domestic animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.00pm-9.00</td>
<td>Take dinner with family</td>
<td>Take dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30pm-10.30</td>
<td>Go to bed for sleep</td>
<td>Go to bed for sleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The questionnaire survey

Despite having taken full responsibility for taking care of the chickens, ducks, goat, or cow, when women sell livestock they give the money to their husbands for the family’s use. Women’s work was defined as ‘housewife’. The life of a rural housewife Fatema, is 40-year-old (born 1975 in Mymensingh District) housewife living in the Dugasi Mouza in Mymensingh district (after her married). She studied through class 10 in Mymensingh Government High school, and then got married. Her husband Kamal is 45 year old working at own shop at Tarakanda bazar and he does his little farm work himself. They have one son and two daughters. After finishing SSC, her son age is 19 years old stopped studying. Her older daughter is 15 years old preparing for the SSC exams, and her younger daughter age is 5 year old has just started school.

Fatema gets up at 4.30am-5.00am every morning, as the morning is a very busy time for every rural woman. After her sweeping the home, she goes out to prepare food for her family. Afterwards she continues sweeping and mopping the floors. She is fortunate that they have a tube well near the home, so she does not have to travel far to get water. Kamal gets up like his wife and go to the fields and after doing some work in the field he goes to the shop. He has small grocery shop where he sells daily using products. Fatema’s son helps his father in their shop. Every afternoon he prepares food for the cows. Fatema feeds this to the cows every morning, and then begins cooking breakfast and lunch at 5.30am-10.00am. She always cooks two times one is breakfast and lunch together and another is dinner. In breaks in the work, she tutors her little daughter. She straightens up the home (makes the beds, puts clothes away, etc.). When the food is ready, she feeds her children. After her daughters eat, they go to school. The elder daughter’s school is far from their home. It takes 30 to 35 minutes by walk. She and
her cousin always go to school together her school start from 10am and end at 4.00pm. Younger daughter school is very near to home, it takes 5 to 8 minutes by walk. She always goes to school with her class friends who live very near to their house and her school starts from 9.00 am and end at 12.00 pm. In the mornings, after everyone else has eaten, Fatema takes the cows out and cleans their shed; sometimes her son comes home and takes the cows out him. She uses the cow dung to prepare fuel, which she stores for use in the winter, and sometimes she sells it.

Sometimes Kamal comes home for lunch, other days Fatema sends her son with his lunch.. She also takes the chickens out to feed. In cultivation season he is always work to do on a farm and that time his son look after their shop. Fatema and Kamal are always busy. Before evening, she finishes her cooking for dinner, in order to save on lamp fuel. They eat early. She does the cooking and serves the family herself, though sometimes her older daughter helps her. Fatema elderly mother-in-law age is 65 years old lives with them. Fatema also must take time to give affection to her husband and children. She says that women have no free time; all time is occupied with work. But if she does find a free moment, she sleeps or sews. She also feels that all housework has an economic value; she believes that it is neither possible nor right to try to put a monetary value on it. Most of the women in Dugasi Mouza like Fatema, have no time for their own. In sum, virtually all housework is performed by women. As a result, many women said they had no free time. It is interesting to note that there was very little difference in the time spent on household work, or the exact activities constituting “housework”, in different parts of the country. The main difference in terms of specific tasks carried out was between urban and rural areas, with rural women being engaged in a wider variety of tasks than urban women. However, urban women in different cities, and rural women in different parts of the country, engaged in similar tasks, and women everywhere spent a large amount of time on housework, regardless of whether they also had a paying job.

3.4 Women statuses of Dugasi Mouza

The women statuses of Dugasi Mouza are as follows

- Maximum rural women in Dugasi Mouza have no opportunity to do outside/paid work just doing unpaid home work.
- Only one primary school in Dugasi village. If they want further study they have to go Tarakanda High school but it is very difficult for girl because the road and transportation system is not good.
- Beside academic knowledge they need some training like poultry, fishery, and small business.
- Rural women in Dugasi Mouza have very limited and conventional types of sources
of information.

- Although villagers have TV for entertainment but electricity is not sufficient. They have no other entertainment.
- Lack of Government and NGO's activity for development of women's status.
- Due to lack of hospital women's have to go to City for critical physical problem and the women have lack of health knowledge.
- Lack of social awareness.

There are some obstacles of women empowerment in the study area. Women are deprived of getting proper empower mental facilities all over the Bangladesh. In the study are, I have tried to find out the main obstacles of women empowerment.

The study has found that some guardian are illiterate as well as ignorant and for this reason some guardian are not willing to send their female child to the educational institutions. 53.60% guardians of the women are illiterate. They have no knowledge about the importance of education and no knowledge about the development of women empowerment. So, most of the women remain uneducated in the study area. Though some NGOs are arranging awareness programs among the guardians, they, in fact, are not getting aware of sending their female children to the educational institutions. They think that women education is not essential. So, for their lack of awareness some women still remain uneducated in the study area. They are not aware about the role of their female child in building up the nation or making the country develop. So, for the lack of awareness about the importance of education women in the study area have been deprived of getting higher education.

Economic development is the pre-requisite of sorts of development. It is supposed to be considered that women lead their life in economic hardship as they are not engaged in earning activities. They are engaged in doing some household works. In calculating the economic status of respondents some parameters have been taken into consideration. These are land, farm, pond, garden etc.

3.5 Result

Conducting the study some obstacles of women empowerment have been found in the study area. There are some causes responsible for women empowerment. In this study it has been found that women are not self-independent and able to carry out their study for not being proper conscious of the importance of education made by of their guardians. Women are neglected in the study area. The enrollment ratio between male and female students is far difference. Dropout rate of the female students is lower than male students in the study area. Although 100% poor students have the opportunity of getting stipend and training though in primary level and only 40% poor female students as well as 10% poor male students have the opportunity of getting stipend in secondary level but 95% students do not have ability to manage educational expenses. It should be extended within very short time so that enrollment ratio can be increased. The results of the study show that women education and empowerment
in the rural areas is lower than the urban areas. In regard to the role played by women 
education results show that there are many obstacles in women empowerment such as, 
shortage of women educational institutions, family restriction, religious legislations, early 
marriage, illiterate guardians etc. It burns and destroys the life of girls. As a result many 
women are depriving of their empowerment process. The Government of Bangladesh and the 
U.N. World Food Program launched the School Feeding Program (SFP) in chronically food-
insecure areas of Bangladesh. It has a dual purpose: to encourage children to enroll and stay in 
school, and to reduce hunger in the classroom so that the students can concentrate and learn 
better.

4. Conclusion:

Having discussed the concept of the women status in Dugasi Mouza, I thought a few 
recommendations may be suggested for improving the lot of women in this respect. These has 
been shown bellow

➢ To increase the expenditure of women education and training.
➢ To innovate awareness building course for women.
➢ To create practical training facilities for women.
➢ To increase women participation in health, education, agriculture, industry and 
development sectors.
➢ To ensure the participation of women in local and international forums.
➢ To ensure the security of women along with the removal of violence against them.
➢ To ensure equal partnership of both male and female in empowerment.

In conclusion, there is no question that women are involved in a tremendous amount of work 
that has significant value to family, society, and the nation. Bangladesh’s socio-cultural contexts 
restrain its women to work freely and to enjoy the same right with men. Since most of the 
women live in rural areas, they are deprived of advanced education and the light of modern 
life. It is conceivable that the women in Bangladesh are now much aware about their rights 
and they know what they should do to make equal contribution with men.

In Bangladesh, the government has committed considerable resources to the development of 
religious schools - madrassas - and other Islamic educational institutions. It seems that girls 
and women have not benefited significantly from these developments. As a result, the status 
of women would increase, and the treatment of women by their family members, as well as 
officials, would be likely to improve, contributing to a more gender - equal society as well as a 
wealthier nation.

Finally, the limitation of this study should be discussed. This study is only able to explain the 
statuses of rural women, for that reason need more data and briefly clarified. Maximum data is 
collected from old data source. More detailed empirical work on the rural women issues and 
knowledge flow remains an important avenue of further research.

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A Preliminary Consideration of the Status of Rural Women in Bangladesh: A Case Study of Dugasi Mouza in Mymensingh

Ummey Habiba Rathna

Abstract:
Women in Bangladesh are not a homogeneous group; they belong to the rich, middle, and poor classes and are from different cultural and ethnic minority groups. They are also differentiated by rural and urban settings. Although women constitute half of the population, various indicators reveal that the status of women is much lower than that of men. Women’s literacy rate is only 43.2 percent, much lower than the 61.0 percent literacy rate of men. Despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality and legislative and other affirmative interventions, the status of Bangladeshi women is, on the whole, dismal. The practice of Purdah (seclusion), although changing, is still socially valued. Social norms, education, employment and legal rights, and gender inequality in Bangladesh are all perpetuated by patriarchy. Women’s empowerment is the burning question not only in Bangladesh but also across the world. However, women are particularly neglected in various sectors in Bangladesh. Only training and educational programs can effectively empower women. This article seeks to deepen the understanding of women’s status in rural Bangladesh, mainly dealing with women’s real conditions in Dugasi Mouza, Mymensingh district. With regard to the role played by women’s education, results show that there are many obstacles to women’s empowerment, such as a shortage of educational institutions for women, family restrictions, religious legislations, early marriage, and illiterate guardians.

Keywords: Women, Status, Rural Bangladesh, Mymensingh, Dugasi Mouza