CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction to a Study of the Women Political Elites in Bangladesh

In recent times women's participation in politics has become one of the research interests in the study of political participation.[1] There is growing research in this area and the finding that women are less active than men in any sort of political activities is one of the most thoroughly substantiated facts in the social sciences. Women appear to be less interested in politics, to be less informed about politics, and to display a lesser sense of political involvement nearly all over the world.[2]

Global studies show that in recent decades women's participation in politics has increased but their participation at an elite level is still extremely low.[3] In statistical terms, women are the most underrepresented group among the political elites of the world.[4] Women's representation at the highest level of government is less than ten percent in the world.[5] In very few countries do they make up even ten percent of the

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[1]   See, Sandra Baxter and Marjorie Lansing, Women and Politics - The Visible Majority, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983); Jane S. Jaquette, ed., Women in Politics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1974); Jim Barry, The Women's Movement and Local Politics, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1991); Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, The New Presidential Elites: Men and Women in National Politics (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1976); Margaret Stacey and Marion Price, Women, Power and Politics (New York: Methuen Inc., 1981); Melville E. Currell, Political Women (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 1974); Janet A. Flammang, ed., Political Women - Current Roles in State and Local Government (London: Sage Publications, 1984); Marianne Githens and Jewel L. Prestage, eds., A Portrait of Marginality (New York: David McKay, 1977).

[2]   Maurice Duverger, The Political Role of Women (Paris: UNESCO Report, 1955); Vicky Randall, Women and Politics (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982); Kathleen Newland, Women in Politics: A Global Review, Worldwatch Paper 3 (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, 1975); Women - Challenges to the Year 2000 (New York: United Nations, 1991).

[3]   Women - Challenges to the Year 2000, 1991, Ibid; Women in Politics and Decision-Making in the Late Twentieth Century - A United Nations Study (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1992); The World's Women: 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics (United Nations, 1991), prepared by the Statistical Office of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Division for the Advancement of Women, New York.

[4]   Robert D. Putnam, The Comparative Study of Political Elites (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p.32.

[5]   Women - Challenges to the Year 2000, op.cit., p.52.

entire public offices.[6] Available data reveal that in 1987, in the 124 countries which had Parliaments, an average of 9.7 percent of the members of the single or lower chamber were women.[7] In all countries, the proportion of women in official positions in the political parties is much lower than the proportion of women members in the party.[8]

Moreover, women's underrepresentation within the elite group varies little in the developed countries of the West or the less developed countries of the third world. Although political participation has been recognised as a minimal requirement of democratic systems, in the Western democratic countries, women constitute 9.9 percent of the national legislature while the corresponding figure for developing countries varies from 5.9 to 9.5 percent.[9] Thus the higher level of politics is almost universally the male's domain and participation of women in this domain remains an unusual phenomenon.

Bangladesh is one of the few countries where the government is headed by a woman. The leader of the opposition parties in the Parliament is also a woman. Both these women represent the dynastic tradition of South Asia which has driven them into politics on account of the legacy left behind by their charismatic politician father and husband respectively. The success of these women to attain the top-most positions in the country's political process is an exception to the general numerical underrepresentation of women at all levels of political offices in Bangladesh. These will be dealt with in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

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6   Ibid.

7   Women in Politics and Decision-Making in the Late Twentieth Century, op.cit., p.9.

8   Women - Challenges to the Year 2000, op.cit., p.56.

9   Women in Politics and Decision-Making in the Late Twentieth Century, op.cit., p.17, for details, pp.8-19.

Historically, the women of Bangladesh have a tradition of very limited participation in politics, hence all types of political activities are largely a male preserve. Although women of Bangladesh are legally entitled to participate in the political process and enjoy all political rights with men, only a few women have availed themselves of such opportunities. Consequently, Bangladesh has conformed to a worldwide pattern of limited political participation by women, particularly in the more active and public political roles. Over the past three decades, less than five to ten percent of the total members of the national Parliament of Bangladesh have been women.[10] In all main political parties except the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the number of women in high political positions is almost nominal. Thus like elsewhere, women's participation in the higher level of politics is not a common phenomenon in Bangladesh.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Like many other societies, in Bangladesh, women political elites are so rare that their very scarcity inspired the researcher's interest. Women account for only a handful of political elites who hold party or public offices. The few women who do become political office-holders in Bangladesh comprise an interesting elite group for study. From the perspective of women's overall condition in the society, they constitute an exceptional group of women.

In Bangladesh, women in general live in a strongly established patriarchal social and economic structure deeply ingrained in the cultural and religious traditions of the country. The constitutional and legal provisions in gender equality have not sufficiently modified the traditional values, customs and gender role expectations. Hence, politics

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[10]   Najma Chowdhury, "Women in Politics", paper presented at the seminar and workshop on <u>Women in Politics</u> organised by Dhaka Business and Professional Women's Club, Dhaka (January 28-29, 1994), p.6.

is still perceived as a "male domain" and "tough" full-time occupation.[11] It is viewed incompatible with women's expected roles and behaviour. Moreover, women are constrained by the cultural norm of a separate world for women. They are also handicapped by fewer opportunities to attain attributes such as education, occupation, organisational involvement, etc., which are considered important for participation in politics. Thus, women's lower propensity to political participation may be the reflection of their overall conditions in society. This can be better expressed by Shelley's comment on women in Bangladesh politics,

> "In the post colonial and predominantly poor Southern politics, politics constitute a daunting preoccupation even for typically aggressive men. As far as the doubly jeopardised women of these societies are concerned, politics should, and often do, represent forbidden territory. Politics require, and mean, money, access to power and wealth, knowledge and information..... For the overwhelming majority of women who are not only poor, illiterate but also condemned to serve a secondary and subsidiary role in tradition-bound and predominantly patriarchal societies, politics are in reality an arena of distant dream."[12]

In the above perspective, when most women in Bangladesh society are concerned and preoccupied with socially and traditionally prescribed feminine roles, when the country has little tradition of women's participation in politics, the few women who have been able to transcend the barrier to get a place in the "male bastion" like politics provoke research interest. The implications of the development of women as political entities can be an interesting research subject. It is important to know who the women who deviate from the conventional women's role and behaviour are. What kind of qualities and dispositions enable them to succeed in a dominantly

11 Najma Chowdhury, "Women in Politics in Bangladesh", in <u>Situation of Women in Bangladesh</u> (Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 1985), p.257.

12 Mizanur Rahman Shelley, "Women in Politics: The Context of Developing Societies of the South", paper presented at the seminar and workshop on <u>Women in Politics</u> organised by Dhaka Business and Professional Women's Club, Dhaka, (January 28-29, 1994), p.3.

male realm? The extent to which they have attained equitable position with men at the same level of political involvement also deserve special study. The logical persons to answer these questions are the women political elites themselves.

Although recent scholarship has begun to pay closer attention to the political participation of women, only a number of studies present systematic and thorough analysis on women political elites.[13] Furthermore, the existing information on women in politics, at elite or mass level, for the most part come from Western societies. The greater part of the work on women political elites has centered again exclusively on women in the United States.[14] Female politicians of developing countries has received very little attention.[15] This may be due to both the scarcity of women in high-level politics and to the difficulties in conducting research in this area.

In Bangladesh, over the past two decades, scholarly interest on women within a variety of settings has been stimulated by the initiative of the United Nations in upgrading the position of women together with the activities of non-governmental organisations. Politics became an area of interest among scholars, but only a handful of studies have dealt with women in politics. With the exception of one study by Jahan,[16] there has been no published empirical research on the women politician at the

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[13] The notable works are, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Political Women (New York, 1994), and The New Presidential Elite, op.cit., Susan J. Pharr, Political Women in Japan, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Elizabeth Vallance, Women in the House: A Study of Women Members of Parliament (London: The Athlone Press, 1979); Irene Diamond, Sex Roles in the State House (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977); Rita M. Kelly and Mary Boutilier, The Making of Political Women (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978); Chung-Hee Soh, The Chosen Women in Korean Politics (New York, 1991).

[14] Works on women political elites in the United States and in other Western countries have been reviewed in Chapter 2.

[15] Mentionable works conducted in developing countries are, Chung-Hee Soh, op.cit., P. Rangson, Women in the Parliament of Thailand: Their Characteristics and Attitudes, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, the University of Mississippi (1982), Roderic A. Camp, "Women and Political Leadership in Mexico: A Comparative Study of Female and Male Political Elites", Journal of Politics, 41 (1979):417-441; Elsa M. Chaney, "Women in Latin American Politics: The Case of Peru and Chile", in Female and Male in Latin America: Essays, ed., Ann Pescatello (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973); Mary F. Katzenstein, "Towards Equality? Cause and Consequence of the Political Prominence of Women in India", Asian Survey, 18 (May 1978):473-486.

[16] Rounaq Jahan, "Women in Politics: A Case Study of Bangladesh" in Asian Women in Transition, eds., Sylvia A. Chipp and Justin J. Green (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980).

national level in Bangladesh. There is a need to carry out research on these women, their position and status in the political structure of Bangladesh and their behaviour within it. The present study is an attempt to close this gap by providing information on the top female politicians of Bangladesh.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

There are two main objectives for this study. They are:

(1) To examine certain selected aspects of a group of women political elites in Bangladesh.

(2) To determine to what extent this group of females differ from their male counterparts in all selected aspects.

The study intends to examine some selected aspects of the women political elites in Bangladesh. These are, their composition and recruitment, political socialisation, political career patterns, perception and attitude. The major variables linked to these aspects will be covered in this study are demographic and socio-economic backgrounds, family origin, political socialisation, means of recruitment, party career, electoral participation, future ambition and perceptions of problems relating to women's electoral participation. Various aspects which will be explored in this study may be specifically expressed in terms of the following objectives:

(a) To study the personal characteristics and socio-economic backgrounds of women political elites in Bangladesh.

(b) To ascertain the process through which these women acquire their predisposition to politics and take up political careers.

(c) To determine the means and patterns of recruitment of women political elites in Bangladesh to the political party.

(d) To examine their political career and experiences.

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(e) To ascertain the political ambition of women political elites in Bangladesh.

(f) To analyse their perception of problems faced by women contesting Parliamentary elections.

(g) To analyse their attitudes towards the reserved seats for women in the national Parliament of Bangladesh.

The study will be concerned with the above objectives to provide a systematic view on women who are active at the national politics in Bangladesh. It will suggest the composition, the process of political socialisation and the general characteristics of a group of women political elites in Bangladesh. It will also analyse their status in the political sphere and their attitudes towards the problems relating to women's representation in the Parliament. Moreover, this group of women will be compared with a comparable group of men in each of the stated aspects to ascertain their difference, if any, and their relative position in the political sphere. The selected aspects as mentioned above will be analysed using data gathered on women political elites in Bangladesh. The data on females will be compared with those collected from a group of male political elites.

1.4   Scope of the Study

A small number of women who have occupied political offices at national level in Bangladesh is the chief concern of this study. They constitute a small minority of all the women who maintain their interest in politics and continue their involvement in an overwhelmingly male-dominated area.

Keeping the objectives of the study in mind, the term 'political elite' has been defined following Putnam as those "who have more political power than others".[17]

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[17] Putnam, op.cit., p.5.

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Political power derives from the position one holds in the political institution. Thus the term "political elite" will denote in this study Milbrath's top category 'Gladiators', those who hold party or public offices.[18] The present study has chosen to focus attention mainly on women who belonged to higher bodies like the Central Committees of central organisations of certain political parties of Bangladesh and who were the members of the fifth national Parliament - Jatiya Sangsad (1991-1995). These women are part of national political elites of Bangladesh and have been active in national politics. For the purpose of comparison, the study is also concerned with a group of male political elites who have belonged to the same body of party organisations.

Theoretically, political participation means the involvement of the individual at various levels of activity in the political system.[19] The various types of participation ranging from non-involvement to the holding of political office, are regarded as a subject of the concept "political participation".[20] Most political scientists consider voting in the election as the lowest level of actual participation while holding a political office is conferred as the top level of participation.[21] Milbrath calls the latter type of participation "gladiatorial" activities.[22] In the present study, the term 'political participation' refers to 'gladiatorial' activities such as holding party and public offices.

The study has thus confined itself to the analysis of those women who have been active in national politics in Bangladesh through holding party and legislative offices. It has limited its scope by focusing on their characteristics and some aspects of their political participation. The main concern of this study is the political actors,

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[18] Lester W. Milbrath, Political Participation, (Chicago: Rand Mc. Nally and Company, 1972), p.18.

[19] Michael Rush, Politics and Society (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1992), p.111.

[20] See, Milbrath, op.cit., pp.16-29; Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie and Jao-On Kim, Participation and Political Equality - A Seven Nation Comparison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Rush, Ibid, pp.112-113.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Milbrath, op.cit., p.18.

not the institution or organisations to which they have belonged. The reference to the institution or organisation will only come in the analysis where necessary. However, throughout this study, the female respondents are referred to as "political women", [23] meaning they are part of the political elites in Bangladesh.

1.5   Significance of the Study

It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter and it will be evident from the literature review in the next chapter that there is a dearth of research studies related to women political elites in developing countries, including Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, very little research has been conducted on women's participation at any level of politics. The study of women political elite may provide some understanding of some aspects of women's political participation in Bangladesh. Therefore, this research is in part an attempt to respond to this shortcoming.

This is the first attempt to study a group of women political elites consisting of party and public officeholders at national level in Bangladesh. As such, this study serves as a first step toward answering several important theoretical and practical questions which lie at the heart of women's participation in politics. The significance of this study lies in generating new data and information on women in politics from the perspective of a developing society like Bangladesh which is constrained by a whole host of socio-economic, traditional and cultural value systems. It is expected that, despite all the limitations, this study will be useful in future comparative studies on women political elites of developing nations, as well as on those of developed nations.

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[23]   This term has been borrowed from previous studies. In some studies, researchers have used 'Political Women' to refer to women active at different levels of politics. For example, Kirkpatrick confines her use of this term to the American female elites, who were the state legislators (See Kirkpatrick, 1974, op.cit., p.23). Pharr used it more broadly to refer to women who are politically active in Japan, whatever their level of involvement (See, Pharr, op,cit., p.7). In the present study, the definition of 'Political Women' is limited to female respondents, who are the women political elites in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, it is hoped that the study will add, in a small way, to the corpus of existing knowledge about women in politics in Bangladesh. The study not only expects to show the extent to which women political elites share certain given aspects with their male counterparts, but also hopes to provide a better understanding of their relative position in the political sphere, their aspirations and the practical problems that hinder their effective participation in political activities. This study also hopes to shed light on specific factors that constrain the women's greater quest for public office and consequently limit their representation to the national elective body like national Parliament of Bangladesh. It also hopes to provide insights into the problems of women's representation in the Parliament by focusing on the respondents' views on the existing system of reserved seats in the Parliament. Their opinion and assessment on the existing system could be of value for the future evaluation of the system.

Finally, this study hopes to trigger similar research on female politicians in Bangladesh, hopefully one which encumbers all female politicians across the country.

1.6   Theoretical Framework

There is little systematic theory relating the social, psychological and political variables to the participation in politics.[24] Furthermore, there is a dearth of theoretical explanation of women's political participation and behaviour. Women's political participation and behaviour is a recent phenomenon in political participation literature.

Social scientists mainly use two approaches to the study of political participation and behaviour. One is the sociological approach which emphasises social determinants of political behaviour, and the other is the psychological approach which upholds psychological factors responsible for shaping political behaviour.

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[24]   R.E. Dowse and J.A. Hughes, <u>Political Sociology</u> (New York: Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1986). p.288.

Research works on political participation have been dominated to date by the sociological approach,[25] while a large number of political scientists have taken social perspective or immediate environment as a major area of inquiry to understand the origins of political outlook, to identify factors that shape political behaviour and influence the range and degree of political activism.[26]

The core argument of the sociological explanation is that individuals are embedded in a matrix of social forces that orients them toward or away from political participation.[27] More specifically, this paradigm upholds social factors as basic and primary environmental stimuli which influence the individual's personality and interact with it to shape attitudes and behaviour. This assumption leads many political scientists to emphasise a person's position within the social structure in attempting to understand his/her orientation to the political object and level of political action.[28] The pioneering work of Verba and Nie, 'Participation in America'[29] favours this viewpoint and employs "the standard socio-economic model" of political activity with contemporaneous factors - e.g., social studies, civic attitude, organisational involvement, group consciousness, age, etc., as mediating variables. This model stands as the foremost explanatory model of participation to the researchers in the context of adult political participation.[30] A number of political scientists, e.g., Nie, Powell and

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[25] See for review of relevant research, Anthony M. Orum, Introduction to Political Sociology (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), pp.250-255; Rush, op.cit., pp.120-126.

[26] For example, Sydney Verba and Norman H. Nie, Participation in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p.134; Milbrath, op.cit.; Marvin E. Olsen, "Three Routes to Political Participation", Western Political Quarterly, 29 (December 1976):550-562; Verba et al., op.cit.; Paul A. Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Pathways to Participation", American Political Science Review, 76 (March 1982):94-107; and "Family Traditions, Political Periods and the Development of Partisan Orientations, Journal of Politics, 53 (August 1991):743-763.

[27] Herbert McClosky, "Political Participation", in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed., David L. Shills (New York: The Macmillan Co. and the Free Press, 1968), p.256.

[28] For example see footnote 26.

[29] Verba and Nie, op.cit., pp.125-127.

[30] Beck and Jennings, 1982, op.cit.

Prewitt; Almond and Verba, Milbrath, Verba, Nie and Kim[31] consistently suggest that an individual's social status, education, organisational affiliation, etc., strongly affect the likelihood of his engaging in various types of political activities.

Theoretically it is conceded that an individual's position within the social structure tends to affect political participation through its impact on political attitudes and cognitions which in turn, facilitate political activity. Nie, Powell and Prewitt conceive that the most important impact of social position is the creation of attitudinal resources that sensitise an individual to political messages and provide him the sense of competence needed to engage in political behaviour.[32]

Sociological explanations may provide some significant insights into women's political participation and can explain gender-differences in political behaviour. But this paradigm cannot offer a total approach to study the development and behaviour of a female political elite. By using the sociological approach one obtains limited explanation of gender-based participatory inequalities. Based on this approach, gender-differences in political participation can be explained by the fact that women have fewer socio-economic resources and have less ability to convert them into political involvement. Gender differences in resources (such as attitudinal resources derived from socio-economic status) and in other sociological variables, i.e., organisational involvement, group consciousness, etc., would suggest some special inhibition for women, but it does not cover the psychological roots of the problem.

The pervasive sex-difference in political participation has other social and cultural roots and is a manifestation of the general patterns of role differentiation

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31 Norman Nie, G. Bingham Powell and Kenneth Prewitt, "Social Structure and Political Participation: Development Relationships", Parts 1 and 2, American Political Science Review, 63 (June 1969):361-378, 808-832; Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965); Milbrath, op.cit; Verba et al., op.cit.

32 Nie et al., op.cit., p.825.

between male and female that exist in all societies. Throughout all cultures the male has historically been the public being, the female non-public being.[33] This ideological definition of the male and female defines a different life space for women and differential access to social resources. If a woman learns that politics is inconsistent with her socially sanctioned roles and therefore should not be involved with it, then her socio-economic status, educational level or other social variables would have limited contribution to the development of a female political activist. Thus social variables without encompassing the process of political learning are not fully able to explain how some women acquire positive orientation to politics, or why women are in general less interested in political participation. Social variables can only partially explain these facts. Thus, the sociological paradigm has limited applicability to the present study as it does not encompass the political socialisation process through which one acquires psychological propensity and attitude to politics.

The psychological explanation of political behaviour has two main streams. One refers to personality characteristics as these affect political views and behaviour.[34] The second one refers to the political effects of psychological process.[35] The former explanation views personality as a determinant of political activity and the later assumes socialisation as the cornerstone of personality differences.

According to the personality traits explanation, an individual possesses a stable and enduring disposition, personality traits and styles of behaviour, which are acquired during early years and develop over time. This individualistic dispositions manifest

[33] For details see, Jean B. Elshtain, Public Man, Private Women: Women in Social and Political Thought (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982).

[34] See for extensive review of the literature, Jeanne N. Knutson, ed., Handbook of Political Psychology (New York: Free Press, 1973).

[35] Steven A. Peterson, Political Behaviour, (California: Sage Publications, 1990). p.25.

themselves in significant ways throughout the individual's life time.[36] This assumption has led a number of social scientists to use such attributes (or dispositions) as aggression, dominance, authoritarianism in efforts to relate personality to political beliefs and behaviour.[37] Most of them have undertaken a variety of psychological perspectives - Freud's psycho-analytic theory, Maslow's needs approach, etc., in their efforts to identify personality traits that may have political consequences.[38] The contention is, many people may have similar life circumstances but only a few of them seem to respond to their circumstances with political commitment. Those are more apt to participate in politics, possess certain personality traits, such as aggressiveness, dominance, authoritarianism, etc.[39]

Theoretical assumption on the impact of personality traits on political behaviour bears some limitations, especially in explaining women's political behaviour. The reason is, personality traits which are considered predictors of political behaviour are directly determined by gender and considered male traits. Thus, the literature on the formation of personality traits which lead one to politics almost totally comprises of studies of males. This literature has shown almost no attention to female political behaviour.[40] Thus, the explanation of political behaviour in terms of particular personality traits does not say under what process or condition women may acquire personality traits needed for political participation such as, assertiveness, competitiveness, dominance, etc. Thus it offers no viable theoretical framework for a study of women political elites.

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[36] Kenneth J. Gergen and Matthew Ullman, "Socialization and the Characterological Basis of Political Activism", in Handbook of Political Socialization - Theory and Research, ed., Stanley A. Renshon (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p.436.

[37] Jeane N. Knutson, The Human Basis of the Polity: A Psychological Study of Political Men (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972). See also J.C. Davies, Human Nature and Politics (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964).

[38] For a review see, Fred I. Greenstein, Personality and Politics (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1969), chapter 1. Also see, Harold D. Lasswell, Psychopathology and Politics (New York: The Viking Press, 1960).

[39] Ibid.

[40] See, for example, Knutson, 1972, op.cit., Davis, op.cit.

Another stream of psychological paradigm of political behaviour emerged from the realisation that personal dispositions may vary from one situation to another and some personality traits correlated with political activism may be determined by the environment. It concedes that personality traits related to political activism are the result of socialisation experiences, which occurs in the environment.[41] Greenstein argued that, "the individuals psychological predisposition are themselves to a considerable extent environmentally determined, largely by his prior social experiences, though environmental stimuli are mediated through the individual's psychological predisposition".[42] Studies in developmental psychology have revealed a number of findings which stresses the child's immediate social and political environment as a source of relatively enduring attitudes.[43]

One of the leading views in the theoretical explanations of political behaviour is, political behaviour is psychologically and environmentally determined. Many political psychologists argue that personality and social environment seldom act independently of one another in affecting political attitudes and behaviour.[44] These are the result of the interaction of personality predisposition, social and cultural precipitants and the situation itself.[45] This view was established by studies of Maslow, Smith, Stone,[46] etc. Smith cautious to avoid the one-sided emphasis on the study of political behaviour. He advocates that a person's social environment is relevant to the development,

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41   Gergen and Ullman, op.cit., p.413.

42   Fred I. Greenstein, "The Impact of Personality on Politics", in The Social Psychology of Political Life, eds., Samuel A. Kirkpatrick and Lawrence Pettit, (California: Duxbury Press, 1972), p.23.

43   For a thorough review of this literature see Greenstein, 1969, op.cit.

44   See, Kirkpatrick et al., op.cit., p.18.

45   Knutson, 1973, op.cit., p.43.

46   Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation", Psychological Review, 50 (May 1943) 371. M. Brewster Smith, "A Map for the Analysis of Personality and Politics", Journal of Social Issues, 24 (1968): 18; William F. Stone, The Psychology of Politics (New York: Free Press, 1974), p.49.

maintenance and change of his political attitudes.[47] Smith further stresses that a person's life situation and socialisation experiences may predispose him psychologically. Thus, contrary to unidimensional emphasis, political psychologists stress the multi-determined nature of the behaviour and beliefs.

A socio-psychological paradigm offered by Kirkpatrick and Pettit views political behaviour as the product of the processes of political socialisation and perception in interaction with the personality and environmental, social and cultural stimuli.[48] Primary environmental stimuli is social and some social variables such as race, sex, socio-economic status, etc., are considered important determinants of political behaviour. The cultural component of the environment consists of social values, traditions and learned beliefs which are shared by members of society. In the interaction with personality, culture defines a normative orientation to action and standards of behaviour. This orientation and learned cultural proscriptions shape the more specific attitudes and behaviour that individuals exhibit toward political objects.[49]

The above explanation also includes political socialisation, a psychological process of acquiring predisposition to politics. The development of a "political" self depends on the learning and acquiring of an orientation toward politics. The process of political socialisation, or the learning of political values is considered to occur within a more immediate or intimate environment (e.g., family or peer groups, school etc.) and also within a broader environment.[50]

A theoretical explanation of political participation based on social and psychological perspective seems to be the theoretical framework of the study. In this

[47] M. Brewster Smith, "Political Attitude", in Handbook of Political Psychology, ed., Jeanne N. Knutson (New York: Free Press, 1973), p.79.

[48] Kirkpatrick et al., op.cit., p.11.

[49] Ibid, p.117.

[50] Ibid, p.11

study, as far as the variables of sex, social status, social structure (family), psychological process of acquiring personality and behaviour are concerned, an integrated theoretical framework with social and psychological components seems to be most applicable. Since the study intends to cover social, psychological and political aspects of women political elites, any one paradigm alone cannot be the appropriate theoretical framework of this study. It is, therefore, necessary to encompass neatly the present study in a conceptual framework with sociological and psychological components.

Smith provides an integrated social and psychological theoretical paradigm which seems to be an appropriate theoretical framework for this study. His theory holds social and psychological aspects of political behaviour. Smith reminds that political behaviour results from the interaction of psychological variables (socialisation) with three classes of variables:

(a)   The individual's larger social milieu;

(b)   The immediate social environment extending from birth through adult life within which the politician's personality develops (including sex roles learned); and

(c)   The immediate situation in which the behaviour occurs.[51]

In his theory Smith places emphasis on the interaction of social situation and personality in determining behaviour. He emphasises the importance of taking account of social factors as determinants of personality and the immediate environment within which people socialise and interact as well. Thus, Smith's argument takes into account the immediate environment which presumably shape women's attitude to politics, the environmental stimuli which prompt them to active participation and the immediate situation which may have some impact on their political behaviour.

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[51]   Smith, 1968, op.cit., pp.16-29.

1.7   The Conceptual Framework

How can this theoretical framework be used to study the political participation and behaviour of women political elites in Bangladesh? The conceptual framework of the present study as shown in Figure 1.1 is constructed on the basis of Smith's socio-psychological analytical approach.
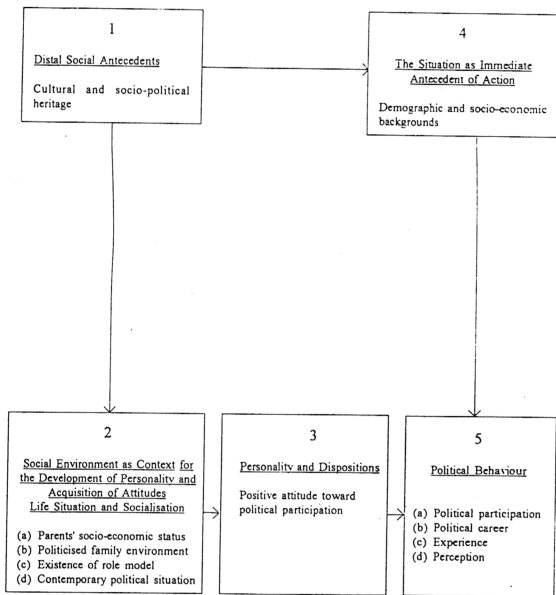
Smith argues that the distal facts of socio-economic, cultural heritage, etc., contribute to the distinctive features of the environment in which he or she was socialised.[52] Panel 1 refers to the cultural and socio-political heritage of Bangladesh that provide the broad environmental context within which women political elites exist. Society's prevailing gender-role ideology, cultural and social norms are important environmental determinants of women's social status as well as their political status. Having a look at these environmental factors will indicate how these impede women's development as public figures in Bangladesh.

Smith also emphasises the individual's more enduring social environment in which he/she becomes a sort of political actor.[53] The life situations and socialisation experiences of women shape their attitudes and perceptions to range of behaviour and roles. Panel 2 indicates the factors through which politics may become salient to a woman. Two aspects of the socialisation process may have stood out in the experiences of a political activist woman, through which she acquires different attitudes to her role in society and also receives psychological predisposition to politics. First, the parents' socio-economic status may influence the gender role socialisation and political socialisation of a woman, through placing her in a social milieu which encourages role redefinition, civic attitudes and involvement. Second, a politicised family, existence of role models in the immediate environment and the contemporary

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[52]   Ibid, p.18.

[53]   Ibid.

FIGURE 1.1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Distal Social Antecedents

Cultural and socio-political heritage

4

The Situation as Immediate Antecedent of Action

Demographic and socio-economic backgrounds

2

Social Environment as Context for the Development of Personality and Acquisition of Attitudes
Life Situation and Socialisation

(a) Parents' socio-economic status
(b) Politicised family environment
(c) Existence of role model
(d) Contemporary political situation

3

Personality and Dispositions

Positive attitude toward political participation

5

Political Behaviour

(a) Political participation
(b) Political career
(c) Experience
(d) Perception

Source: Constructed on the basis of M. Brewster Smith's Map for the analysis of personality and politics. See M. Brewster Smith, "A Map for the Analysis of Personality and Politics", Journal of Social Issues, 24 (1968): 17.

political situation may contribute to produce a female personality for public role and her predisposition to political participation.

Panel 3 refers to personality and dispositions. It indicates, through the process of socialisation and political socialisation as shown in panel 2, a woman's attitudes come to bear on her political behaviour. In other words, panel 3 suggests a woman's positive orientation and predisposition to politics which are acquired by the factors presented in panel 2. It may lead her to political behaviour. Panel 4 represents the situation as immediate antecedents of women's political activity, which contain their demographic and socio-economic background and possession of resources as necessary for viable political activity. Finally, panel 5 indicates, the nature of their political participation, career and experiences, political behaviour and perception, which might be largely influenced by their gender status and by the contents of panel 4.

Briefly speaking, according to the postulated framework, distal social antecedents - socio-cultural heritage - determine the nature of the wider environment, its norms and beliefs, in which a woman is born, develops and acquires orientation to life space, role and motives. It also indicates how a woman can acquire psychological predisposition to politics and translate her political proclivity into active participation. It is postulated that her immediate environment marked by her parents' socio-economic status and political concerns can be crucial in these respects. Moreover, a woman's given level of political participation and behaviour may be influenced by her personal and socio-economic characteristics. It necessitates having a look at the composition of women political elites.

1.8   Research Methodology

The present study is based on a survey conducted on women and men who are active at the national level politics in Bangladesh. This section will provide an

introduction to the various methodological aspects related to the study by spelling out the sampling procedure adopted for the selection of sample, data collection methods, the sources of data and the actual survey.

1.8.1   The Sampling Methodology

The target female group of this study consists of those who belonged to the Central Committees (CCs) of central organisations of selected political parties and who were members of the fifth Parliament of Bangladesh, which functioned between 1991 and 1995.[54] The target male group of this study was the members of the CCs of the central organisations of selected political parties.

A two-stage sampling procedure was followed for the selection of the study sample. The first stage involved the selection of a number of political parties from which male and female study sample could be drawn. The second stage involved first the selection of male and female respondents from these selected political parties and second the selection of females from the national legislature of Bangladesh namely the Jatiya Sangsad (JS), 1991-1995.

(a)   The Mode of Selection of the Political Parties

In the first stage, six political parties were selected from numerous political parties in Bangladesh. These are: the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the Bangladesh Awami League (AL), the Jatiya Party (JP), the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), the Workers' Party (WP), and the Jatiya Somajtantrik Dal (JSD,I). Considering the paucity of women in higher levels of party organisation, six political parties were chosen for drawing the sample.

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[54] During the period of field work - January 1994 to May 1994 - the fifth Parliament elected in 1991 was in operation. It was dissolved on 25 November 1995.

Although Bangladesh politics is marked by the existence of a large number of political parties,[55] only some of the parties can be differentiated by their organisational strength, influence and familiarity. The rest are either barely active or completely inactive in politics with very weak organisational strength and having almost no role and influence in the political arena.

Among the selected six political parties the first three - the BNP, the AL and the JP - are the major parties in Bangladesh. These three, together with the rightist party Jamaat-i-Islami (Jamaat), are the four dominant political parties in Bangladesh. The BNP was the ruling party with controlling a majority of seats in the fifth Jatiya Sangsad (1991-95). The AL is one of the oldest parties in the country. It was the main opposition party in the fifth Jatiya Sangsad. Recently it has formed a government winning the largest number of seats in the Jatiya Sangsad elected on 12 June 1996. The JP, on the other hand, was in power during General Ershad's regime from 1982-1990 (see Chapter 4). It had third place in the fifth Parliament in terms of number of seats. Thus these three parties were selected for drawing respondents because of their strength, power, and dominance in Bangladesh politics. The fourth political party, Jamaat, was excluded from the sampling frame. This was because the selection of respondents from the political parties for this study was restricted by their membership in the Central Committees of the central party organisations. Women cannot be members of any body of the central organisation of the Jamaat, except in its women's branches. Thus no women from the Jamaat could be included in this study sample.

The other three parties - the CPB, JSD(I) and WP were chosen for their relative importance in the political sphere. They are the main among the left-leaning

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[55] There is no available official estimation of the actual number of political parties. A recent study indicates that in the 1991 parliamentary elections of Bangladesh, the number of parties officially contested was 76. Besides the selected six political parties and Jamaat-i-islami, the others have no role and importance in Bangladesh politics. See, T. Maniruzzaman, "The Fall of the Military Dictator: 1991 Elections and the Prospect of Civilian Rule in Bangladesh", Pacific Affairs, 65 (Summer, 1992): 203.

parties in the country and are distinguishable by their long history, historical roles and relatively stronger positions than other minor parties.

Another important consideration for selecting the above mentioned six political parties was that most of the female political leaders and activists of Bangladesh with long-standing political careers and familiarity belong to these parties. Their presence is almost invisible in the other parties.

Thus, since the main focus of this research is on women who are active in national politics, the above mentioned parties were somewhat deliberately selected. It was felt that because of their dominance in Bangladesh politics, they could provide a sample set of female for the present study. The three major parties, particularly the BNP, the AL and the JP, have more women in their CCs compared to the others. Based on all the above factors, the selection of the six political parties can be considered logical.

(b)   Respondents in the Study

In the second stage, a sample of 40 males and 43 females was chosen. To get a set of national political elites on whom the study could be based, the male and female respondents were drawn from the Central Committee (CC) of each of the selected political parties. The CC was chosen for drawing the sample because of the comparability of positions across parties. Moreover, the CC is one of the higher bodies in the central organisation of a party in Bangladesh.[56] Although in all political parties, there is a top decision-making body, namely the Presidium or Standing Committee, it consists of a very limited number of leaders. In most of the parties, women hardly

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[56]   Some parties have different names for this body, for instance, in the BNP the name for this body is the National Executive Committee, in the AL it is called Working Committee, and in the JP, JSD, WP and CPB it is called Central Committee. Despite the differences in the name, in all parties concerned it is the second highest decision-making body in the central party hierarchy. Throughout the study it is referred to as Central Committee for convenience.

belong to this body. Hence this body was not considered for the sample. The following higher body in central party hierarchy is the CC. In all the selected parties, it was relatively a larger body with some female members. (A detailed discussion of women's representation in these higher bodies will be presented in Chapter 4.)

The list of members of the CC obtained from each of the party offices was consulted for the sampling procedure. The distribution of male and female in the CC by party is shown in Table 1.1. The total population of female members for the six parties was found to be 28, while for men it was 340.

TABLE 1.1
THE DISTRIBUTION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEES
OF THE SELECTED POLITICAL PARTIES OF BANGLADESH

Name of the Party	Male Members		Female Members		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
BNP	66	85.7	11	14.3	77
AL	58	89.2	7	10.8	65
JP	97	96.0	4	4.0	101
JSD(I)	29	93.5	2	6.5	31
WP	45	95.7	2	4.3	47
CPB	45	95.7	2	4.3	47
Total	340	92.4	28	7.6	368

Source: Information obtained from the respective political parties.
Note: BNP : Bangladesh Nationalist Party
AL : Bangladesh Awami League
JP : Jatiya Party
JSD(I) : Jatiya Somajtantrik Dal
WP : Workers' Party
CPB : Communist Party of Bangladesh

In view of the smaller size of the female population, it seemed difficult to make a meaningful empirical study of the women political elites, if they are drawn from only one political office such as the CC. Since the term "political elite" has in this study, been defined, as a person holding party or public office, it permits drawing the female

sample from public offices. Thus, considering the small female population in the CCs, female respondents were drawn from the women members of the fifth Parliament as well as from the CCs to make a rational study and to give more validity to the findings of this study. Hence, the actual female respondents and subject of this study are the members of CCs of selected political parties and the female Members of Parliament (MP) who were interviewed. The reason behind the selection of the fifth Parliament for drawing female sample was that it was in operation during the survey period.

However, considering the huge population of males available, male respondents were drawn only from the CCs. Using different sampling procedures for male and female would not affect the main objectives of the study, as its main focus is confined to individuals, namely political elites, and not to any particular organisation or institution. Since the study intended to examine certain selected aspects of the women political elites, institutional differences will not affect the findings. This is because the common characteristics of all respondents was "all of them were political party activists". All the female MPs who were selected to be respondents in the study were recruited from the party organisations to the legislative offices. This provides the justification why the female respondents drawn from two political offices - both party and public - have been treated as one group for the study. They were assumed to be a potentially fruitful source of data on women in national politics and also women in the party system.

It also should be mentioned here that, a different sampling procedure would not affect the comparability between male and female groups for the same reason as party involvement of all respondents. Moreover, it is shown below that more than half of the male respondents of this study held membership in the fifth Parliament as well as membership in the CC. Thus there is no question about the comparability between the two groups of respondents in the selected areas.

It has been mentioned that the female respondents were drawn according to a deliberate process designed to cover women party officials and legislators. Names and home addresses of members of the CCs were provided by the party offices on request and every name appearing on the list was contacted. Out of a total of 28 women, 26 (92.9 percent) completed the questionnaires and were available for interviews.

In the fifth Parliament, there were 35 female members of which five were elected directly from the single member territorial constituencies and 30 were elected for the seats reserved for women. It was later found that 11 women out of these 35 MPs had already been selected as respondents in the group of CC members. So, besides the 11, the remaining 24 female legislators were contacted. However, only 17 were interviewed because the others declined to be interviewed. Thus a total of 28 (80 percent) out of the total of 35 female legislators were interviewed. However, because of the overlap of CC membership and Parliament membership in the case of several women, the total sample size came to only 43. The sample size is unavoidably small, as the percentage of women at any level of political system in Bangladesh - national or local - is abysmally low. Thus any attempt to make a study on women political elites, would therefore inevitably be based on a small sample of women officeholders. Still the present sample size of women represents 82.7 percent of survey (female) population and is representative of women active at national politics.

It has to be further noted that female respondents from the BNP outnumbered those from other parties. This is primarily because the BNP has more women in its National Executive Committee (the name for the CC in the party) than the others, as shown in Table 1.1. Moreover, among the 35 female members of the fifth Parliament, 29 were also members of the BNP. All these contribute to the greater representation of BNP among the female respondents in the study.

Although the main emphasis of this study is on women, for the purpose of comparison a sample of male politicians was also interviewed. Male respondents were drawn from the CCs of six political parties. Their total number nearly equalled the number of females in the sample. Although initially it was decided to choose a large number of male respondents, some constraints forced the researcher to limit the sample size of males to 40 using a convenient or purposive sampling procedure. A random sampling could not be derived because of a number of reasons. The members of the Central Committees constituted party leaders who are always preoccupied and, as such could hardly be available for interviews. Moreover, during the first two months (January and February 1994) of the field-work, all leaders of major political parties were engaged in their electoral campaign for the city council elections scheduled to be held on 30 January 1994 and later in post-election activities. During this period they could hardly spare any time other than for their political interest. After the elections the interviewing process was again hampered by the political stalemate of the opposition which prolonged throughout 1994 and 1995.

Although the survey was conducted from January 1994 to May 1994, the researcher attempted to raise the size of the male sample and to draw more male respondents from each of the six political parties in October 1994. But the attempt was seriously hampered by the political turmoil which actually began from the middle of 1994. The main opposition party Awami League together with the other parties, began to boycott the government in Parliament and to oppose it in the streets. They demanded the government's resignation, and the holding of elections under a neutral caretaker administration. These demands were backed up by demonstration and crippling strikes, which continued until March 1996. In this situation, the researcher faced difficulties in making frequent visits to party offices and to arrange for interviews with the male respondents. Due to these reasons, it was not practical to follow the

same procedure used for selecting the female sample for the male respondents. Hence only 40 male respondents were interviewed to represent the male sample.

However, a limited size of male sample is not likely to affect the survey findings since the male sample demonstrated a high level of homogeneity. In addition, a large proportion of the male respondents like the female sample were also Members of the Parliament (1991-1995). It is not unusual in the field of social science to study a smaller sample if the sample is selective and demonstrates absence of heterogeneity. For example, one of the outstanding studies of Kirkpatrick was based on 46 female and 40 male state legislators out of a population of 457 and 7,243 respectively.[57]

1.8.2 Data Collection Procedure and Instrument

The data for this study was derived both from secondary as well as from primary sources, which are discussed below.

(a)   Primary Sources - Data From Questionnaire

The main tool used for collecting the primary data needed for this research was the questionnaire. Before undertaking the construction of the questionnaire, informal discussions were held with some of the political activists to ensure that the questions were easily understandable. The researcher then discussed the amended version of the questionnaire with some scholars and other party activists.

The questionnaire was drafted on November 1993 and were pre-tested with the 30 women leaders of the central committees of the women's wings affiliated with the BNP, AL, JP and Jamaat-i-Islami in December 1993. Necessary modifications were made in the questionnaire in the light of experiences gained during the pre-testing.

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[57] See Kirkpatrick, 1974, op.cit.

The items in the questionnaire were determined on the basis of an extensive review of available literature to ensure their future comparability and reliability. The questionnaire used in this survey consists of five parts. The first part was designed to obtain information on the demographic and socio-economic background of respondents. It covers such items as sex, marital status, age, educational qualifications, occupation, income, regional origin, etc. For female respondents, questions were asked on the educational level and occupation of their spouses. The second part is concerned with the educational levels of parents, their occupation, social position and political background of family. Part 3 deals with information about the respondents' earliest political interest and the process of political socialisation. Part 4 contains questions about respondents' political career and experiences such as recruitment to party organisation, total length of party involvement, length of present party affiliation, experience in running party and public offices, electoral participation and political aspiration. Part 5 includes questions on the respondents' perception of reasons for women's lower participation in election contests for the national Parliament and the respondents' attitude toward the existing system of reserved seats for women in the Parliament.

The original questionnaire was in Bengali - the national language of Bangladesh. The English version is provided in the Appendix 1.

(b)   <u>Secondary Sources</u>

The secondary data consist of information from books and journals containing the theory and research findings related to various aspects of women's political participation at an elite level. This source of data serves some important purposes.

Firstly, the data obtained from this source provided the insights into formulating the theoretical and conceptual framework, the aspects related to women political elites

that should be covered in the study and the measurement instruments that were available for measuring the different variables analysed in the study. Secondly, the research findings derived from these sources provided the rationale and need for undertaking the present research effort on women political elites. The sources of secondary data were mainly obtained from the University of Malaya Library, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Besides that, information on the historical role of women in Bangladesh society and politics, the different aspects of Bangladesh society, culture, political system, etc., were gathered from literature, seminar papers, newspapers, party publications, published official government documents, reports, and biographical sourcebooks, etc. These were obtained from the Dhaka University Library; Bangla Academy Library; Dhaka; the Library of the National Parliament; Election Commission of Bangladesh, Dhaka; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka; Women for Women Library, Dhaka; and Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

1.8.3 The Survey

The actual survey consisted of administering questionnaires to the selected male and female samples and also conducting detailed interviews with the individuals concerned. The survey was carried out from January 1994 to May 1994.

Each respondent was personally interviewed by the researcher with the help of the questionnaire. Women CC members were interviewed in their homes. All women legislators were interviewed at the hostel for Members of Parliament during the regular Parliament sessions when the members were in Dhaka, the capital city of the country. All but three of the male respondents were interviewed in Dhaka, as the headquarters of all political parties are located here. The three male respondents were interviewed in Chittagong.

The interviews with each male respondent ranged from one to three hours, but in all cases of female respondents, the session ran much longer and in many cases it extended over several meetings.

The aim of the in-depth interviews was to collect as much information as possible for a better understanding of women's involvement in Bangladesh politics. The personal interview technique, however, permitted follow-up questions to ensure accuracy and depth in various respects. Moreover, besides the structured questions, informal discussions were held with the female respondents to get better information about their political socialisation experiences, reasons for becoming active in politics, party career and experience, etc. Moreover, discussions were also held with both the female and male respondents regarding problems of women's political participation, particularly in electoral contests, and about the existing system of reserved seats for women in the Parliament. This helped to resolve many of the qualitative issues that could not be handled by the structured questionnaire. It also enabled the researcher to realise the respondents' actual perception of the said problems. Moreover, informal discussions permitted the researcher to tap the respondents' views (with their permission) on several issues, which are quoted in some parts of the analysis later.

However, all respondents were given assurances that the information and the politician's identity would be kept completely confidential. They were told that no names would be mentioned any where in the research report. In order to obtain necessary information for the study, a number of women leaders belonging to the women's wings of different political parties and women's organisations were also interviewed. A list of interviewees is provided in Appendix 2.

1.9   Processing and Analysis of Data

The completed questionnaires were carefully scrutinised and answers were edited and coded with predetermined coding plans. The responses were coded and

fed into computer for statistical analysis. The basic statistical method used to determine gender-differences in most variables and to analyse the relationship between the selected variables was the chi-square test of statistical significance. The computed value of the chi-square has been compared with critical chi-square value up to 0.05 level of significance. If the computed chi-square value exceeds the critical values up to standard 0.05 level of significance, then the association between the variables is considered statistically significant.

Cross-tabulations have been used in Chapter 6 to observe possible significant association between the educational levels of fathers and the educational attainment of women political elites; between the time of earliest political interest and the political socialisation agent, between the time of earliest political interest and factors related to political participation.

Two formats are used to present data in the study - tables and the direct quotation of respondents' statements, followed by description and analysis of the data. For a more realistic and revealing interpretation, statements made by female respondents have been directly quoted in Chapter 6, where the analysis is centered on political socialisation experience of women political elites of Bangladesh. In addition, apart from quantitative data, qualitative analysis was found to be more effective in describing the opinions held on problems of women's electoral participation and representation of women in the Parliament through reserved seats which is described in Chapter 8. This chapter is mainly based on qualitative data and interpretation with quantitative data. Individual view or collective views on these two issues have been quoted frequently for the purpose of qualitative analysis.

1.10   Problems and Limitations of the Study

In the interviewing process the researcher encountered a number of problems. First, in Bangladesh, very little attempt has been made to survey the male and female

political elites at the national level. Thus the respondents were less exposed to the survey-based research. In some cases, the respondents were quite apprehensive of the purpose of the entire exercise and tried to avoid the researcher. The researcher had to devote a lot of time persuading them of the real purpose of the survey.

Secondly, many respondents initially showed reluctance to answer question involving their family income. Even when they were persuaded, they hesitated to mention actual family income. The family income was usually understated by respondents.

Thirdly, as has been indicated before, respondents, especially the male politicians, were not easily available in many places and several visits had to be made to get the required information. Moreover, as has been discussed earlier, the unstable political situation, tension between the ruling and opposition parties on several issues prompted the researcher to be satisfied with a small male sample.

However, despite these problems, nearly all the respondents were quite cooperative to discuss on an informal basis various topics, particularly on issues of women's electoral participation and the reserved seats for women in the Parliament. They commented freely on these matters and expressed frank opinions.

As is common to all case studies, the present study suffered from some limitations. Firstly, it was not a nationwide study as the study was confined only to national political elites. It would have been quite interesting to conduct a parallel survey on women at local level or women from the general population for comparative purposes. Constraints of both time and funding, and manageability precluded this. Thus findings may prove to be useful only to the study of women at the national level. Secondly, the small size of male sample prevents the researcher from making any broad generalisations regarding male political elites.

1.11 Presentation of the Study

This study is organised in nine chapters. Chapter 2 which follows this chapter is a review of the available literature on the subject. Chapter 3 describes the historical and anthropological background of Bangladesh, the social setting and relationship, and the norms of the division of labour. Discussion on these aspects may provide the background information and idea about the nature of the environment in which women under study exist and perform their roles. This chapter also reviews women's general status in society depicted by their legal status and demographic characteristics. It may facilitate our understanding of distinctive features of women political elites that differentiate them from the general women in Bangladesh.

Chapter 4 describes the political history of Bangladesh and past history of women's political participation. It also describes the political status of women in Bangladesh.

A full analysis of the data collected by the survey is presented in the four subsequent chapters. In order to determine the distinctive characteristics of women political elites of Bangladesh, and to find out their composition and attributes, Chapter 5 examines their personal characteristics and socio-economic backgrounds. Chapter 6 explains the process through which the women political elites of Bangladesh develop as political beings and take up political careers. It analyses their political socialisation experiences and discovers the factors that push them across the threshold of the political sphere. Chapter 7 attempts to reveal the political career, experience and aspiration of women political elites. Chapter 8 analyses respondents' perceptions of the problems of women's larger participation in electoral politics. It also investigates respondents' attitude to the reserved seats for women in the national Parliament of Bangladesh.

Finally, Chapter 9 draws on the conclusions of the findings.