A Chronicle of the Global Movement to Combat Violence against Women: The Role of the Second-Wave Feminist Movement and the United Nations: The Perspective of Bangladesh

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A Chronicle of the Global Movement to Combat Violence against Women: The Role of the Second-Wave Feminist Movement and the United Nations: The Perspective of Bangladesh

By Anisur Rahman Khan[1]

Abstract

Violence against women strikes countless women in epidemic proportions across the globe. At present, it is treated as the most pervasive violation of human rights and a serious impediment for development. Shockingly, for many years, a huge culture of silence was associated with the acts of violence of men against women. The second-wave feminist movement of the late sixties and early seventies brought the issue into public discourse, provided a theoretical foundation to analyse the problem and commenced an all-out campaign to redress the problem. For the second-wave feminist movement, patriarchy or unequal power relations between men and women is considered as the root cause of violence. Influenced inextricably by the influx of the second-wave feminist movement and its analytical framework, the United Nations (UN) has put the issue formally on the global agenda and set off a series of strategies and programmes to eliminate the problem. Hereafter, violence against women is no more a matter of silence. This paper, through the content analysis method, offers a chronological account of the whole gamut of the journey from 'silence to outbreak' concerning violence against women. Then again, it critically scrutinises the implications of this global journey at the local level. As such, it takes Bangladesh as a case and finds that despite having lots of interventions in place, violence against women is a serious problem for women. It is because of the throttlehold of patriarchy that confronting violence against women seems to be somehow arduous. Nonetheless, evidence shows that the influx of second-wave feminism and subsequent proceedings of the UN concerning the issue of violence against women have had some kind of influences on Bangladesh as well. Understandably, the global movement to combat violence against women has a local appeal as well. Nevertheless, the movement to combat violence against women is a continuous process. Sensitising men and boys for developing healthy gender relations and involving them in the movement are some of the suggestions given in this paper.

Key Words: Second-Wave Feminist Movement, Patriarchy, Violence against Women, United Nations, Bangladesh

Introduction

Violence against women is perhaps the most pervasive form of abuse, a universal phenomenon that transcends all divisions of class, race, religion, race, ethnicity and geographical region (Pickup et al., 2001:11). It is widely spread in every nation and society, and it is so common that some experts consider it as a 'normal' aspect of women's lives (Levy, 2008:1). All

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over the world women are bound by a common thread of violence at the hands of the state or armed groups, the community or their own family. It is a global epidemic, a tool of violation of women's human rights (Amnesty International, 2004:iv). This epidemic engulfs millions of women across the world. It is a serious impediment to women's free and full participation in society and brings harmful consequences for women. Violence against women is one of the leading causes of death for women through murder or suicide (Cheung et al. 1999:2).

Today, violence against women is recognised as a significant global problem, and people are more and more aware of the frequency and consequences of various types of violence, such as domestic violence, rape, harassment at work, sexual abuse and other phenomena for most of which there was not even a name until the 1970s (Romito, 2008:1). The attempts to stop violence against women have involved the development of political networks at local, national and global levels. There has been a globalisation of demands to restrict men's violence against women by the use of legal regulation and to provide resources to women who have suffered from violence. Movements to protect women from men's violence and sexual assault were found at the end of the nineteenth century under the banner of 'Global Feminism'/International Women's Movement (Walby, 2002:540). Global feminism provides links to women activists at both national and international levels and explains how to address particular causes of women's concerns such as violence. Due to strong advocacy from feminists and women activists, in the last three decades of the 20th century the United Nations (UN) and other international and regional agencies have also taken up the issue as a global concern, a breach of women's human rights and also an impediment to development. The global feminist movement has paved the way in breaking the 'culture of silence' associated with violence against women and generated a tremendous outbreak against it across the globe. As a result of this, there is awareness, knowledge and resistance against the acts of violence against women.

Based on the pivotal premise focused on above, through this paper, an effort is employed to make a historical account on the background of the problem, how it evolved as a global concern, how it was analysed and what achievements have so far been achieved on a global scale in redressing the problem. Finally, this paper considers Bangladesh as a specific test case in order to scrutinise critically and meticulously whether global efforts on violence against women have had any significant fingerprint at the local level. In this regard, the seminal focus will be on how feminist antiviolence activism and the efforts of the UN have been absorbed, assimilated, appropriated and dealt with by the state.

Objectives of the Paper

This paper attempts to make the following contributions to the literature on violence against women:

1) to explore the role of the second-wave women's movement in analysing violence against women and raising the issue as a matter of global concern;
2) to investigate the role of the UN in analysing and addressing the problem of violence against women;
3) to explore the implications of global movement (both feminist & the UN) to combat violence against women in the context of Bangladesh.

Methodology

This paper aims primarily to excavate the historical course of the global movement against violence against women and the modus operandi of analysing the problem. Therefore, it records chronological events depicted in secondary documents using principally a content analysis method. Through a heuristic document search, many secondary documents, i.e. academic literatures, journal articles, online resources, statistical data, and national (Bangladesh) and international documents have been reviewed in this paper. It provides both exploratory and explanatory analyses around some major areas such as: second wave feminism and violence against women, feminists' analysis of violence against women and the role of the UN on violence against women. It also sheds light on the context of Bangladesh as a specific case. In addition to these, the paper also uses and analyses some contemporary critical cases of violence in support of the context. Based on the analyses, some broad observations and conclusions have been made in this paper.

Violence against Women: The Phenomenon

Though violence against women has universal pervasiveness, there is no universally accepted definition or terminology for violence against women. Definitions of violence against women differ in line with various perspectives and orientations, including theoretical, political, policy responses to human rights and developmental interventions (Pickup, 2001:11). On the other hand, it has its local, national and time-specific definitions, shaping and formations. An act that is not treated as violence in one situation or time may be treated as such in another situation and time (Hearn, 1998:16). As the paper debunks the idea of developing a global linkage between the domains of the feminists and the UN, it is indispensable to know how the leading feminist activists have indeed defined violence against women; it has also been defined by the UN.

Traditionally, researchers have focused on the term 'violence' as a behavioural act that causes physical injury or harm only (Gordon, 2000:749), and focusing on only physical harm produced a very narrow definition (Pickup, 2001:11). But when women activists took the initiatives to resist the discriminatory and exploitive treatments against women, they challenged such widely accepted definitions of violence and included those acts which were previously considered acceptable (Kelly & Radford, 1998 in Muehlenhard & Kimmes, 1999:234). Therefore, the definitions of feminist researchers include a much wider and explanatory domain which encompasses not only physical violence but also sexual, psychological, emotional violence as well as harmful cultural practices against women and girls (Senn, 2000:482). In the above circumstances, some of the widely used definitions of violence against women given by feminist scholars are stated below.

One of the most comprehensive definitions was given by the leading feminist Liz Kelly (1998 in Levy, 2008:3), who says violence against women involves "behaviour that is violent, uses physical force or threat, [and] is intimidating, coercive, [or] damaging to women"; it includes "physical, visual, verbal or sexual acts that are experienced by a woman or girl at the time or later as a threat, invasion or assault" and acts "that have the effect of hurting or degrading her and/or taking away her ability to control contact [intimate or otherwise] with another individual." The important features of this definition are that it has shifted the focus far from mere 'physical violence' and included some other types of behaviours such as sexual, verbal and

visual as violent acts. Moreover, this definition has spotted the effects of violence on women. Seemingly, the effects are not only physical but also psychological and social.

Another renowned feminist, Jalna Hanmer (2000:2020), states: "violence includes physical, sexual and emotional abuses which can be the result of compelling women to act in particular way or of constraining their actions." This definition indicates that violence condoned against women curtails women's rights, choices and decisions. Apart from feminists, a good number of definitions have also been provided by various international declarations, conventions or reports particularly under the framework of the UN.

The foremost definition of violence against women was given by the UN through *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104).* The Declaration has defined violence against women in Article 1 in the following manner:

> Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (UN, 1993:3)

The important aspect of the definition given by the Declaration is that it refers to the gender-based roots of violence which are a mechanism to push women to subordinate status compared with men (UNICEF, 2000:2). This definition of violence against women is broad and self-explanatory and maintains a strong relevance to the definitions given by the feminists. Notably, the above UN definition is one of the widely agreed to international definitions on violence against women.

Prevalence of Various Forms and Practices of Violence against Women: A Global Overview

The prevalence of violence against women is universal, although globally the forms and practices of violence against women are different. It has its local, national and time-specific shaping and formation. An act that is not treated as violence in one situation or time may be treated as violence in another situation and time (Hearn, 1998:16). It is evident in the whole life cycle of women starting from pre-birth stage to girlhood through adolescence and adulthood (WHO, 1997 in Dios, 1999:154). In the following, a snapshot of the global scenario of violence against women has been captured.

The recent aggregated factsheet prepared by UN Women (nd*a*) on the prevalence of violence against women on a global scale reveals that 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is yet to be considered a crime, 80% of the estimated people who are trafficked annually across national borders are women, 100 to 140 million women have experienced female genital mutilation, 7 in 10 women in the world have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetimes, 60% of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16, more than 100 million girls are missing due to prenatal sex selection, over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, 1 in 4 women experience physical and sexual violence during pregnancy, and the annual estimated cost of intimate partner violence in some countries is calculated from USD 1.6 to USD 5.8 billion. As well, UNFPA (2005:65) estimates that gender-based violence kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer, and its toll on women's health surpasses that of traffic accidents and malaria combined.

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The World Bank (2013) estimates that direct medical costs and productivity losses amount to between 1.6% and 2% of gross domestic product annually for violence against women globally, which is about the average annual public spending on primary education in a range of developing countries. According to UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, the problem of trafficking in women and girls has increased in recent years as part of the "feminine side" of globalisation. For example, in Southeast Asia, women and girls are being trafficked for the sex industry as well as for sweatshop labour, forced marriage, and street begging (Levi, 2008:48).

Specifically, there are numerous forms of violence against women practised in various regions and countries. Honour killings[2], for example, are often condoned by women's and girls' own family members in order to preserve the family honour. The practice is most common in Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, particularly in India and Pakistan. It is also reported in other parts of the world, such as Latin America and Africa (Blanchfield et al., 2009:9), and also in some western countries specifically within the migrant minority communities. According to UNFPA estimation, around 5000 honour killings take place per year in countries where it is practiced (HBVA, nd). Dowry-related violence is mostly prevalent in South Asian countries such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Victims might be attacked or killed by in-laws and husbands for not bringing enough dowry during and after marriage (Blanchfield et al., 2009:9). It is the major source for domestic violence in countries where dowry is a compulsion. It is estimated that one woman in India dies every hour in dowry related cases (The Guardian, 2012). Female genital cutting (FGC) or female genital mutilation (FGM) is common in many African and Middle Eastern countries. FGM is practiced on the pretext of cultural tradition or hygiene. Women and girls who have undergone FGM face dire consequences ranging from infection (including HIV) to sterility and also devastating psychological effects (Amnesty International:2013). Child and adolescent marriage is particularly prevalent in parts of the Middle East, South Asia and Africa. In such cases, girls as young as 10 and 12 years old may be married to older men (Blanchfield et al., 2009:9). Preference for sons rather than daughters is a feature of many societies. This practice is particularly prevalent in South Asia, Sub-Saharan African countries and of course in China after the adoption of the one-child policy in 1979 (Pick-up, 2001:88-89). According to UNFPA (2005:67), prenatal son selection in several Asian countries has led to the elimination of millions of girls. In Asia at least 60 million girls are missing. Prenatal sex selection is one of the reasons for that. Acid violence[3] on women is particularly practiced in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ethiopia and China (Anwary, 2003:306), killing or stoning women through misuse of *fatwa*[4] is practiced in many Islamic countries, and violence against older women in the name of witchcraft is also a very common practice in some parts of Africa and India (Pick-up, 2001:94). In countries like Bangladesh, Thailand, Brazil, Canada, Kenya and Papua New Guinea, more than half of all murders of women are committed by their present or former intimate partners (Dios, 1999:154).

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[2] Honour killing is the "unlawful killing of a woman for her actual or perceived morally or mentally unclean and impure behaviour" (Hassan 1995 in Grewel, 2012). Honour killings are murders by families of family members who are said to have brought shame on the honour and name of family (Sheri & Bob Stritof 2005 in Grewel, 2012).

[3] Acid violence is a vicious form of aggression against human beings. Sulphuric acid which is thrown on a human body causes skin tissue to melt. It often exposes bones below the flesh, and sometimes dissolves the bones. Most attacks are directed towards young women to destroy their physical appearances (Swanson, 2002).

[4] In Islam, *fatwa* means a religious verdict issued by a well-versed *mufti* or religious scholar on certain debateable questions of personal or social interest. Fatwa is necessary when sufficient explanation is required from the Holy *Quran*, *Hadis* and other Islamic doctrines (Hossain, 2002). However, in practice, half-educated local religious leaders through the s*alish*, or informal village tribunal, often punish women for their involvement in their self-defined immoral activities, such as extra-marital affairs, pre-marital pregnancy, marrying a non-Muslim and on issues concerning oral divorce pronounced by husbands (Farouk, 2005).

Let us now look at an Indian rape case on a public bus that brought an unprecedented, tremendous outburst around the globe. This case emphasizes the need for to accelerate the global movement against violence, as new forms of violence continue to emerge. Of course, rape on a public bus is an unusual practice and a gross violation of women's human rights.

Rape on Public Bus in New Delhi, India[5]

New Delhi, the capital of India and also known as the 'rape capital'[6]. On December the 16th 2012, a 23 year-old female physiotherapy intern experienced gang rape on a bus while she was travelling with her male friend. Once aboard the bus they found there were only five men on the bus. Notably, the number includes the driver and his four allies. All raped the woman mercilessly. The incident took place in a neighbourhood located in the southern part of New Delhi. The female student and her male companion were on their way back home after watching a movie. They boarded a bus at 9:30 p.m. The driver assured them that the bus was going towards their destination. Once the bus started moving, they became suspicious as the bus deviated from its normal route and its doors were shut. When her friend objected, the group of five men ridiculed them, asking what they were doing alone at such a late hour. When the woman's friend tried to intervene, he was beaten with an iron rod and became unconscious. Then they took the woman to the rear of the bus, beating her with the rod and raping her while the bus driver continued to drive. Medical reports later suggested that the woman suffered serious injuries to her abdomen and genitals. The damage was so serious, according to doctor, as an iron rod was used to penetrate the genitals. After the beatings and rape ended, the attackers threw both of them out from the moving bus stark naked. Then the bus driver allegedly tried to drive the bus over the woman, but she was pulled aside by her male friend. Recovered by a passer-by at midnight, they were taken to a hospital with the help of police. Later, on 26 December, followed by a cabinet decision, she was taken to Singapore for better treatment. But her condition deteriorated so extremely and ultimately she succumbed to death, making all efforts by the world famous doctors abortive. She died in Singapore on 29th December, 2012.

Discussion & Analysis

Exposure of this incident to the public sparked serious public protest from the civil society, women's organisations, media and masses of people in the whole of India. Many scholars described the incident as the foundation of a popular movement to end violence against women in India. There was huge international repercussion as well and in its wake many countries' protesters were inspired by the Indian protests and focused their local issues against violence and rape. Thousands of people have expressed their anger both on the streets and through the virtual world. The incident provided the momentum for women activists and civil society members to put in place their demand for protection of women and reform in criminal justice system. In reaction to the incident, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued the statement: "Violence against women must never be accepted, never excused, never tolerated. Every girl and woman has the right to be respected, valued and protected." UN Women called on

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[5] The case is developed on the basis of the reports and discussions published in various on-line newspapers.
[6] Leading Indian newspaper The Hindu has termed Delhi as the rape capital indicating the prevalence of rape in the city. The Hindu on 22/4/2013

the Government of India "to do everything in their power to take up radical reforms, ensure justice and reach out with robust public services to make women's lives more safe and secure." The rape victim is globally now known as 'Fearless.' The USA has granted the victim the 2013 'International Women of Courage Award'. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen expressed his concern about the incident stating: "violence against women has an immediate effect on human life because half the people in the world are women."[7]

The incident represents vivid evidence on how women's rights to free movement and bodily integrity are being jeopardised by the heinous attacks of men. India is an important tourist destination, yet after the incident the image of 'Incredible India' has been broken into pieces. The incident has resulted in foreign tourism falling by 25% on average, and a bigger drop of around 35% is marked for women tourists[8], indicating that women irrespective of society and culture feel helpless against the fear of violence. Violence, even practiced in a particular context, might have a negative global fingerprint. Women activists and the UN have to do a great deal of work to eliminate violence from the world. Paradoxically, this is not such an easy job, but the global outrage as shown for the above has paramount importance. With this specific incident as a backdrop, let us shed light on how the issue of violence against women has been recognised as a matter of global concern and how the culture associated with violence against women is being broken.

The Role of the Second-Wave Feminist Movement

Violence against women as a problem for women was first addressed with the development of second-wave feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s particularly by radical feminists through sharing experiences in consciousness raising and support groups (Matthews, 1994:9). In fact, since the 1970s there has been a phenomenal growth in regional, interregional and international networking among feminist groups (Miles, 1996 in Taylor, 2004 et al. 517). The second wave feminism was the major impetus in raising public awareness of the extent and seriousness of violence against women. Feminists organised speak-outs so that women could talk openly in a supportive environment of their victimisation (Renezitti & Bergen, 2005:2). It is noted that social movements often come in a wave. Numerous groups such as women, ethnic and religious minorities and workers all raise their voices to change their social, political and economic circumstances (Hattery, 2009). Second-wave feminists adopted and adapted Simone De Beauvoir's reasoning in her *The Second Sex* (1949) that oppression of women is debunked on their socially constructed status of 'Other' to men. Beauvoir's identification of women as 'Other' helped articulate a common understanding for women as alienated from humanity. The idea of women as 'Other' is intrinsic to patriarchy (Murphy, 2007:205). However, the term 'second-wave' was coined by Marsha Lear to describe the increase in feminist activity in the USA, in the UK and other European countries from the late sixties onwards. Betty Friedan's ground-breaking book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) also heralded the course of second-wave feminism (Jeninati & Groves, 2007:82, 84). Notably, liberal feminists in the Western world were particularly influenced and inspired by this book. Liberal feminists maintained that the discontent experienced by many middle-class women in Western societies was due to their lack of social power and political influence (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006:11). In this connection it is relevant to mention that first-wave feminism refers to the organised feminist activity which evolved in

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[7] All the information regarding the incident was collected from various on-line newspapers.
[8] Report published in the Hindustan Times on 31/3/2013. It is one of the leading newspapers in India.

Britain and the USA in the second half of the 19th century and relied primarily on various independent and sporadic activities of eighteenth-century feminists. They primarily challenged lack of access to education for women, unequal employment opportunities and unjust marriage laws. The major achievements by the first-wave feminist movements were: opening of higher education for women, reform of secondary education for girls, and married women's property rights. The first-wave feminists remained active until the outbreak of the First World War (Jeninati & Groves, 2007:21). It is further mention worthy that the second-wave feminism also began in the USA and in Britain. Radical feminism and liberal feminism lay the cornerstone for this second-wave feminist movement in the USA. Although the women's movement in Britain had an independent beginning, it was influenced by radical feminism from the USA. However, in Britain, the influence of socialist-feminist thought had been more influential in the overall production of the movement than in the USA (Dobash & Dobash, 1992:23).

The second wave of feminism with all its consciousness raising, support groups, public marches and rhetoric brought violence to the mainstream discourse. Freedom from violence is one of important items on the demand agenda of second-wave feminism. Although, at the beginning of the women's movement, violence against women was an unspectacular issue, when the second-wave feminism took the issue to heart it received international recognition as a problem for women (Dobash & Dobash, 1992:12). Alternatively, this new global feminism was expedited by the creation and popularisation of the composite concept of 'violence against women' (Weldon 2006 in Johnson, 2009:19). It is to note that the second-wave feminists were campaigning around seven specific demands such as: i) equal pay for women, ii) equal education and job opportunities, iii) free 24-hour nurseries, iv) free contraceptives and abortion on demand, v) financial and legal independence, vi) an end to discrimination against lesbians and women's right to define her sexuality and vii) freedom from intimidation by threat or use of violence and an end to male aggression and dominance (Jeninati & Groves, 2007:89).

Once violence against women got space in the mainstream issue for women's concern, it started to get momentum as a significant focus in feminist theory and practice. It was the beginning of a new era when feminists started to examine and speak about their own experiences of violence. Feminists also started to provide support to victims of violence and abuse (Maynard & Winn, 1997:176). During this period feminism successfully gave the problem a new dimension and made the abuse of women and girls a global concern instead of a mere private and personal problem (Bart & Moran, 1993:148). The idea of 'the personal as political' was the central focus of feminist work on violence against women which helped subsequent attempts to theorise, research, campaign and support work in this area (Radford et al., 1996:2). Feminists arrived at a decision that the personal problems of women can only be solved through political means and political actions (Pateman, 1989:131). 'The personal as political' reflected strong commitment to do something collectively to change the suppressive conditions of women across the globe. 'The personal as political' was the radical way of understanding the patriarchal ideology of domination over women.

In analysing the problem of violence against women, the second-wave feminist movement categorically identified patriarchy as the root cause of the problem. In fact, opposing patriarchy was the driving force of feminist/women's movement. In feminist understanding patriarchy is the root causes of all sorts of discrimination and exploitation against women, including violence against women. 'Patriarchy' provides fundamental understandings in regard to the causes of women's exploitation. During the second-wave feminist movement Kate Millet provided the theoretical underpinning of 'patriarchy' in her book, 'Sexual politics', which helped

subsequent analyses to identify the causes of women's oppression (Jeninati & Groves, 2007:116). 'Patriarchy' determines women's position in society. In patriarchal culture men dominate women and take all the advantages gained by subordination of women (Mooney, 2000:86). In feminist theory and practice the term patriarchy was applied to identify the origin of women's oppression (Stacey, 1993:54), and it was a very useful term in the feminist movement which helped to express all the oppressive and exploitative relations, actions and characters that affect women (Mies, 1986 in Stacey, 1993:53). It is a mechanism that gives men the opportunity to exercise the practices of domination, oppression and exploitation of women (Walby, 1990:20). Rich (1977) defines the concept in the following manner:

> Patriarchy is…a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men-by force, direct pressure or through ritual, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under male…(cited in Maynard and Winn, 1997:177)

In feminist understanding, patriarchy foretells of the pattern of domination that men enjoy over women in society and specifically within their personal relationships (Maynard & Winn, 1997:176). In this line the central idea of the feminist perspective on violence is that violence is a reflection of unequal power relations between men and women and it also helps to maintain those unequal power relations in society. Thus, feminist analysis of violence against women focuses on male-dominated or patriarchal culture, on power and on the relations between men and women or gender (Bogard, 1988 in Jasinski, 2001:12). Domination and the exercise of power over women are fundamental mechanisms to all historically constructed and maintained discriminatory practices against women (Dobash & Dobash, 1992:16). Patriarchy favours male dominance in all spheres of life. Male dominance is reflected in all patriarchal social, political, economic and ideological institutions and practices. Patriarchy, thus, stands as the root cause of violence against women. Patriarchy provides the perceived idea of the superiority of men over women. Violence is a potential method of sustaining that superiority.

Feminists, along with their attempts to provide a theoretical framework about violence against women, have also focused on ways to redress the problem. Initially, the second-wave feminists targeted two forms of violence, such as wife beating and rape. It is further to note that until 1970s wife beating was viewed as a private matter, a problem of a few dysfunctional couples. Sexual abuse, on the other hand, was viewed as a crime committed by mentally unstable men or men who were provoked by women (Renezitti & Bergen, 2005:2). These two were the early concerns of the second-wave feminist movement concerning violence against women. Feminists established the rape crisis centres in Berkeley and Washington, D.C. in the USA in 1972 and the first refuge centre for battered women in England in 1972 (Kelly, 1988 quoted in Maynard & Winn, 1993:100). During this movement rape had an advantage over other forms of violence in that it united women who had suffered the crime, irrespective of status, values and beliefs (Edwards, 1989:18). Rape is a kind of terrorism that limits women's freedom of movement and makes them dependent upon men (Griffin, 1971in Mooney, 2000:90). In feminists' understanding, rape is an outcome of the traditional socialisation process that encourages male-dominant behaviours and women's weakness, submissiveness and inferiority (Scully & Marolla, 1993:28). In fact, rape acts as a mechanism of male control over women to keep women in their place (Brownmiller, 1975 in Schully & Marolla, 1993:28) and is a result of

a long-standing tradition of male dominance (Jasinski, 2001:12). From the 1970s, feminists also started to examine the extent, meaning and range of violence against women at the domestic level (Wilcox, 2006:15). Feminists first brought wife beating into the public domain and they launched an all-out campaign, raised public awareness and subsequently gained sympathy for the victims, which helped women's aid groups in their activities to provide support for battered women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979:2, 3). The root of wife abuse is grounded in the subordinate status of women and in their subjection to male authority and power that have been institutionalised in the patriarchal family structure and supported by economic, political and religious institutions as naturally, morally and legally justified (Dobash & Dobash, 1979:33, 34). Men, by exercising their absolute power, control women at the domestic level.

Protecting abused women and addressing violence against women involved efforts directed at reforming the criminal justice system (Dobash & Dobash, 1992:28). Therefore, the battered women and anti-rape movements of second-wave feminism targeted the criminal justice system in protecting women (Bart & Moran, 1993:151). In the 1970s, feminist campaigns against violence against women highlighted how the legal system mistreated victims. They raised many concerns about the limitations of the criminal justice system as a means of stopping violence against women and identified that the support to women victims was seriously undermined by the patriarchal biases of social services and the criminal justice system (Bart & Moran, 1993:150). Feminists found the grasp of patriarchy is prevalent within the criminal justice system as well. Therefore, they emphasised the need to reform criminal codes so that these codes could better reflect the experiences of women who are victims of violence. They also worked to make the criminal justice system more responsive to the needs of victims (Tjaden, 2005:1). As a matter of fact, feminists tried to introduce new laws and procedures to facilitate the prosecution process for violence as well as to provide better support services to victims (Bart & Moran, 1993:151). In this way, their efforts helped to introduce or reform laws and the criminal justice system in many countries of the world.

It is evident that globally feminists made a significant imprint in raising consciousness in redressing the problem of violence against women. Contribution of second-wave feminism in analysing and addressing the problem of violence against women is immense. Violence against women was a matter of silence all over the world throughout the history. It was feminists who had broken the silence, provided a ground-breaking theoretical framework to understand and explain the whole gamut of the problem. In addition to that, they also provided straightforward guidelines on how to solve the problem. Since the problem of violence against women is nowadays talked about in so many circles, it is often forgotten that feminist movement was the force that dramatically uncovered and exposed the ongoing global reality of violence against women (Hooks, 2000:61). The struggle of second-wave feminists has forced national, regional and international agencies to come up with means and ways to address the problem. Today, the UN is playing the leading role of the global movement against violence against women. Linking women's organising efforts worldwide in regard to violence against women to the UN have provided a new dimension in redressing and understanding the problem (Merry 2006 in Johnson, 2009:20). In such circumstances, let us now look into how the UN entered into the scene and what significant advancements have so far been made due to the influence of the UN on a global perspective and importantly how it has responded towards the underlying philosophy of feminist movement concerning the root cause of violence against women.

The Role of the United Nations (UN)

The UN responded to the efforts and demands of second-wave feminists and women's activists in a number of ways. Violence against women emerged primarily in the domain of the UN through the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) when women activists came and worked together under the common framework of the UN through various international and regional women's conferences (UN, 2006:8). The United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) and various UN conferences held towards the end of the last century had brought attention to violence against women on a global scale, and confirmed a commitment to campaign for international and national laws which will protect women from violence (Pickup, 2001:52). The UN Decade provided a special context within which women from across the globe and diverse background could focus on the position and condition of women (Antrobus & Sen, 2006:143).

The *First World Conference* on women was held in 1975 in Mexico City with the themes of equality, development and peace. Although the *First World Conference* did not explicitly mention actions in eliminating violence or the nature and extent of violence but drew attention under the united efforts against violence against women stating that all over the world people should be united to eliminate violations of human rights committed against women and girls such as: rape, prostitution, physical assault, mental cruelty, child marriage, forced marriage and marriage as a commercial transaction (UN, 1975:7). The outcome of the conference was a direct response to the ongoing movement of second-wave feminist towards violence against women. Seemingly, this conference was just a beginning in bringing violence on the global agenda by the UN.

The Second World Conference on Women held in Copenhagen in 1980 first adopted a resolution on violence in the family as a health concern and called for development programmes to protect women from physical and mental abuse (UN, 2006:13). The Declaration promulgates to extend research on domestic violence and presses the need to establish centres for treatment, shelter and counselling victims of violence and assault (UN, 1980:34). After the conference, public health globally has been adopted as a potential approach to address violence against women. Researchers, activists and public health practitioners marshalled the process of understanding the problem and in preventing its occurrence using this approach (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002:3). According to Dean (2004 in Tjaden, 2005:2), there are some important differences between public health and the criminal justice system. The public health approach defines similar types of acts to those defined by the criminal justice system. Moreover, the public health perspective includes acts that psychologically harm women, including acts of deprivation and neglect, and puts more emphasis on the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. The public health approach is broader than the criminal justice system since it includes those acts which are not commonly treated as criminal (Tjaden, 2005:4). It is to remind that the second-wave feminist movement primarily emphasised on criminal justice approach as an immediate means to redressing violence. Public health approach, on the other hand, suggests that violence can be prevented or reduced the ways the public health concerns have been prevented or reduced around the world (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002:3).

The Third World Conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985. This conference confirms violence against women as a societal problem and urges the governments to affirm the dignity of women and intensify efforts to establish or strengthen the mechanism of providing assistance to victims of violence through the provision of shelter, support, legal and other services both in the family and in society. It also urges the governments to undertake increased public awareness, establish policies and legislative measures to ascertain its causes and to

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prevent and eliminate violence (UN, 1985:70). The issue of violence against women was more prominent at the *Third World Conference on Women* in Nairobi in 1985 (UN, 2006:8). This conference stressed the need for preventive and legal measures and comprehensive policy measures for the world States.

While violence against women was fundamental to the provisions of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* adopted in 1979, it was not specifically addressed in the original *CEDAW* articles (Cheung, 1999:3). But in 1992, the assigned Committee to monitor the implementation of the *CEDAW* adopted General Recommendation No. 19 that recognised violence against women as a form of discrimination that hinders women's ability to enjoy rights and freedom equally with men. Moreover, it specified the state parties' obligation to take into consideration such discrimination when reviewing their laws and policies (UNICEF, 2000:3). General Recommendation No. 19 of CEDAW defines:

> violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence
> that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental
> or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations
> of liberty (UN Women, nd*b*:).

The important point to note is that the General Recommendation 19 recognises that violence against women nullifies or impairs full enjoyment of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms and it further recognises that state parties should take appropriate measures to eliminate violence against women (UN Women, nd*b*). The most important feature of this Recommendation is that it looked at violence against women as a means which deems to deprive women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms (Cheung et al., 1999:3).

Today, violence against women is globally viewed as a breach of women's human rights. The *World Conference on Human Rights* in Vienna in 1993 provided the opportunity for a Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights. The World Conference on Human Rights brought activists from around the world who were working on issues relating to violence against women. In the conference, it was demanded that there would be a UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the United Nations Human Rights Commission would create the post of UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. Within six months (1993) the United Nations General Assembly passed the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104). The Declaration* came up with a mandate to deal with violence against women as a human rights issue (Amnesty International, 2004:69). According to the *Declaration,* violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women and not only creates a means by which men can dominate women but also prevents the full advancement of women through discriminatory practices (UN, 2006:15). The first comprehensive definition of violence against women was given by the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104).* The definition was stated earlier in this paper. Nonetheless, the *Declaration* has categorised violence against women in Article 2 in the following manner:

> (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including
> battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related

violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs. (UN, 1993:2)

According to the *Declaration* different forms and practices of violence are perpetrated by the family, community and the state and cause a great deal of physical, sexual and psychological harm to women. The definition of violence against women and its categorisation have provided a foundation and a guideline for further investigation and labelling of forms and practices in the context of specific socio-cultural milieus. Consequently, the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104)* has a significant global implication on how to analyse, categorise and address the problem in different situations.

The appointment of the UN Special Rapporteur by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1994 for analysing, examining and documenting different forms of violence against women has further strengthened the recognition of violence against women as a human rights concern (Reilly, 2007:118). The role of the Special Rapporteur was to monitor the problem around the world and to recommend initiatives to eliminate the problem at the local, regional and international level (Cehung et al. 1999:4).

The *Fourth World Conference on Women* in Beijing in 1995 included elimination of all forms of violence against women as one of the twelve areas of concern and suggested pragmatic actions to be taken by the states, the United Nations, international agencies and non-governmental organisations (UNICEF, 2000:3). *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,* which was adopted by 189 states, confirmed that violence against women is both a violation of human rights and an obstacle for women to fully enjoy human rights. The Beijing Platform for Action identified twelve (12) critical areas of concern that require urgent action to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace and one of these areas was violence against women. As a critical area of concern, *The Beijing Declaration* firmly stressed the need to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls and urged the states, international community, civil society, NGOs and private organisations to take strategic actions against violence against women (UN, 1995:4 &16).

Following these conferences and declarations, towards the end of the last millennium violence against women gained a new momentum rather than only being considered as a criminal justice or a public health issue (Tjaden, 2005:3). It is to mention here that the UN conferences provided a unique opportunity for women activists around the world to meet on a consistent and a continuous basis and share their knowledge and experiences and act for visible change on a global scale (Antrobus & Sen, 2006:144). Recognition of violence against women as a human rights issue is an outcome of the long standing struggle of feminists and women activists and, of course, an important milestone. At this point, it should be mentioned that the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women also recognised violence against women as a long-standing global movement and remarked:

the violence against women movement is perhaps the greatest success story of international mobilisation around a specific human rights issue, leading to the articulation of international norms and standards and the formulation of international programmes and policies. (Coomaraswamy, 2005:2 & 3)

However, understanding violence against women as a human rights concern does not preclude other approaches to preventing and eliminating violence, rather it encourages and strengthens initiatives in all areas to prevent and eliminate violence against women (UN:2006:14). For example, towards the end of the last millennium, movement against violence against women gained some momentum. By Resolution 54/134 of 17 December 1999, the United Nations General Assembly designated 25 November as the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*. Global women's activists have marked that day since 1981 in commemoration of the brutal assassination in 1960 of three women political activists in the Dominican Republic (UN, nd*a*). The Optional Protocol to CEDAW (adopted in October 1999), on the other hand, gives women an opportunity to seek redress at the international level for violation of their rights as stated in the Convention. Victims of violence and those acting on their behalf can now make a complaint directly to the CEDAW. This protocol has also allowed the CEDAW committee to undertake investigations of systematic and calculated abuses against women (Amnesty International, 2004:73). CEDAW has become an important international tool to help civil society groups around the world to put pressure on governments to initiate positive actions to combat violence against women (UNFPA, 2007:v).

The UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) was established under UNIFEM (presently UN Women) by the General Assembly resolution 50/166 in 1996. The UN Trust Fund is the only multilateral grant-making mechanism exclusively devoted to supporting local and national efforts to end violence against women and girls. Up to now, it has delivered more than USD 86 million to initiatives to violence against women in 128 countries (UN Women: nd*c*). Other UN conventions and actions have also reaffirmed the commitment to fight against violence against women. The *International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)* in Cairo in 1994 recognised the necessity to eliminate violence for the sake of empowering women (UN, 2006:19) and the *Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court* in1998 is a major development in addressing crimes of violence. The *UN Convention against Transitional Organised Crime* in 2000 and many other regional and international treaties agreements have opposed violence against women (Amnesty International, 2004:70, 71).

More importantly, in the last millennium violence against women also gained importance as a developmental issue from the policy level. Violence against women is a major threat to social and economic development. One of the major achievements of the last millennium is to establish linkage between violence against women and development. For example; the Human Development Report (HDR) came up with a connection between human rights perspectives and developmental interventions (Pickup, 2001:4). In 1995, the UNDP first introduced the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM) in human development report. Many of the indicators used to assess the GDI and GEM are directly or indirectly linked to violence against women. If deliberate efforts are made by any party to obstruct women's development and empowerment, these end in violence. Therefore, the HDR rightly represents an assessment of violence against women. Violence against women as a development concern was also recognised in the *Millennium Declaration* in 2000, in which the

General Assembly of the United Nations declared its commitment to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (UN, 2000:7). Recognition of violence against women in the Millennium Summit is a significant advancement. Violence against women undermines and constrains the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly including those set in the areas of poverty, education, child health, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and overall sustainable development. Ultimately, the persistence of violence against women is inconsistent with all the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2006:22). If violence against women is not eliminated MDGs will remain unfulfilled since women's rights are invariably tied to every MDG (UNICEF, nd*a*). WHO (2005:5) states that in order to achieve the targets and goals of the MDGs, a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the links between gender inequalities and violence against women must be developed and implemented.

In the new millennium, efforts against violence against women have increased. One major study was conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) from public health perspective in 2005 titled '*WHO's Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women*' and it confirms that violence against women is widespread and deeply ingrained, and has serious impacts on women's health and well-being. It further confirms that yet no other major problem of public health has been so widely ignored and so little understood (WHO, 2005:22). '*Ending Violence against Women—From Words to Actions: Study of the Secretary General*' which emerged in 2006 included an all-encompassing list of forms and practices violence against women. This study has detailed forms and practices of violence that are perpetrated by the family, community, state and also during armed conflict. Battering, marital rape, sexual violence, dowry related violence, early and forced marriage are the major forms and practices which women might meet in the family context. Within the community acts of violence include femicide, rape and sexual harassment, trafficking and forced prostitution. State agents may commit violence on the streets or in state custody. State laws and policies might control women's sexual behaviour by imposing policies of forced sterilisation, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, virginity tests and forced marriages. During armed conflict different forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence are also perpetrated by both state and non-state actors (UN, 2006:40-53). Notably, the *Secretary General's Study Report* and the *Declaration* in 1993 both covered a wide range of forms and practices that are extended in both the public and private spheres. But the *Secretary General's Study Report* prepares a comprehensive list of various forms and practices of violence based on empirical studies conducted across the globe, which appears to be an important source for researchers, women's activists or state parties.

Over the last decade or so, most of the global efforts to curtail violence against women have been heralded by the UNIFEM and later by the UN Women which was created in 2010. Creation of the UN Women is a historical step towards achieving gender equality and eliminating all forms of violence. It works on several fronts towards ending violence against women and girls. It also supports data collection on violence against women and facilitates new learning on the issue (UN Women: 2011). *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* and *Say NO to Violence against Women* are the two main global campaigns against violence against women which are being moved forward by the UN Women. The UN Trust Fund is also being managed by the UN Women. Launched in 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General's *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* campaign aims to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources in order to redress and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in all parts of the world. This campaign has stressed the need for engaging men against violence

against women. Without involvement of men it would be extremely difficult to fight against violence against women. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, therefore, expounds (UN, nd*d*):

> "All of us—men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders—have a responsibility to help end violence against women."

> "Break the silence. When you witness violence against women and girls, do not sit back. Act."

The UN Secretary-General has identified five goals which his *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* campaign aims to achieve in all countries by 2015. These goals include; (i) adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls, (ii) adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans, (iii) strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls, (iv) increase public awareness and social mobilization, and (v) address sexual violence in conflict (UN, nd*d*). Launched in 2009, *Say NO to Violence against Women,* on the other hand, is designed to support the *UNiTE* campaign through social mobilisation. *Say NO* records what individuals, organisations and governments worldwide are doing to end violence against women. It encourages that everyone has a role to play in combating this global pandemic and the time to act together is *NOW* (UN Women, nd*e*).

Also, in November 2012, the UN Women launched *COMMIT* which calls upon governments worldwide to take new and concrete steps to address violence against women and girls. Around 48 countries have responded to the call and taken initiatives ranging from new legislation as well as ratification and implementation of international treaties, expansion of services and social mobilisation campaigns to redress violence against women (UN Women nd*f*). However, the commitment of UN to end violence against women from the world is on the move. For example, International Women's Day is celebrated on 8th March annually and the 2013 theme was '*A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women'*. In addition to that, the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57) which took place at the UN Headquarters in New York during 4-15 March 2013, adopted the *'Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls'* as its priority theme. The theme focused on two key areas: prevention of violence and the provision of support services/responses to survivors of violence (UN Women, nd*g*). It is further noted that other leading UN organisations such as UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNHCR, and WHO, in addition to their normal activities, are also making significant contributions to the interventions against violence against women.

The above chronological depiction confirms that there has been an impressive advancement over the last forty years in the field of violence against women. Accordingly, the ways violence against women is now globally being addressed is an outcome of the efforts made by the feminist/women's movement, which must be duly commemorated. Feminists have demonstrated their enhanced roles, commitment and leadership in local, regional and international forums to break the traditional 'culture of silence' associated with violence against women. The re-emergence of global women's movement has certainly succeeded in raising awareness on different issues of concern including violence against women and acted as a political forum at the international level (Antrobus & Sen, 2006:142). Finally, it came as a responsibility for the UN to shoulder on subsequent activities to accelerate the movement.

Hence, the role of second-wave feminists and the UN in redressing violence against women is both supplementary and complementary.

From Global to Local: The Perspective of Bangladesh—the relationship between patriarchy and violence

The Global feminist movement is quite aware that action at the global level must have resonance at local and regional levels if the movement is to be meaningful for every woman in the world (Antrobus, 2004:20). Keeping this underlying vision of the movement in mind, in this section, I provide a brief overview on how issues of violence against women have been addressed in Bangladesh. The rationale for choosing Bangladesh as a test case is that as a South Asian country it falls into the domain of a 'classic patriarchy' (Kabeer, 1988:95), and according to feminist understanding patriarchy is the root cause of violence. In this sense, Bangladesh is an ideal example to examine the relationship between patriarchy and violence. Secondly, as a citizen of this country, it comes as an ethical responsibility for this author to unearth how Bangladesh has responded over the years against the pressure of women activists and the UN in regard to violence against women.

In Bangladesh, the issue of violence against women has been a concern mainly from the 1980s (Yasmin, 2000:np). The pressure from women activists who themselves were influenced by the global second-wave feminist movement and the UN had helped to raise the issue of violence against women as a matter of social concern. In Bangladesh, the feminist debate on violence against women has focused on patriarchy as the underlying cause of violence. It must be acknowledged that transnational networking through global feminist movements has positively affected key policy changes related to violence against women at the local level, and it was the case with Bangladesh as well (Chowdhury, 2010:315). It is mention worthy that women's movement in Bangladesh encompasses three major 'strands' such as; women's rights activist groups, women's research and advocacy organisations, and women's non-governmental organisations (Jahan, 1995 in Beckwith, 2000:437). All these three 'strands' were significantly influenced by the global women's movement. For example, before the 1980s, violence against women was not considered a social issue in Bangladesh. Police and government machineries started to keep records and make some policy interventions during that time (Zaman, 1999:42). These efforts were seemingly in line with the global feminist movement and worked to intervene in the existing criminal justice system primarily to support the victims.

Around the mid-seventies women-friendly organisations in Bangladesh mobilised around legal reform and law enforcement to make women conscious of their rights. They then protected women's interests in marital disputes by intervening in traditional mediation councils. Campaigns for a uniform family code and laws to criminalise dowry and polygamy gained substantial footing. As a result of this, the first legal intervention was the enactment of the Dowry Prohibition Law in 1980 (Hossain, 2006). In 1973, 'Women for Women' was established by the few committed women professionals and academics as a research and study group. Since then it has been engaged in research, information dissemination, advocacy awareness and motivational programs with a view to ameliorating the situation of women (Islam, 1998). Notably, the first academic study on violence against women was carried out by Akanda & Shamim in 1985 under the auspices of this feminist group in 1985 and was followed by Guhathakurta's study in 1986. Many NGOs had also been established during that time with

particular targets of women's rights and women's empowerment. Activism against violence against women has always been an important move of women centered NGOs in Bangladesh.

In recent times, most of the UN interventions in Bangladesh have emerged from the UN Women. It has been working with the government, academic and civil society organisations to end violence against women Young people, policy makers and women migrant workers are intensively involved with the UN Women interventions. For example, as part of the Secretary-General's *UNiTE to End Violence Against Women Campaign*, the UN Women have brought drama into street with the goal to engage more young people in programmes to eliminate violence against women and to change the mindset that such violence is a 'private or personal matter' but rather a societal problem. It has also organised a nationwide debate competition on the subject 'violence against women'. Through the debate teachers and students of participating educational institutes committed themselves to taking steps to end violence against women (UN Women, nd*h*). The MDGF (nd) has designed a joint programme to address the issues of violence against women in comprehensive manner through a three-tier strategy such as, i) encouraging adoption of new policies against violence against women; ii) changing attitude of men, women, girls regarding VAW and discriminatory practices; and iii) protecting survivors through rehabilitative programmes. As well, the UNFPA's campaign against violence particularly targets how to engage men in the programmes as part of UN campaign of *Say NO to Violence* (UNFPA, nd*b*).

In response to international conventions and pressure from women activists, several anti-violence laws have been enacted and initiatives have been taken over the years, such as Dowry Prohibition Act 1980 (repealed in 1986); Cruelty to Women (Deterrent Punishment) Ordinance 1983, the Acid Control Act 2002, the Acid Crimes Control Act 2002, the Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children (Amendment) Act 2003 and the Speedy Trial Tribunal 2002. Moreover, the One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC), and the Safe Custody Homes for women are established (GOB, 2005:13). Multi-sectoral programme on Violence against Women of the government is now the most important intervention strategy which works in an integrated inter-ministerial approach with targets at reducing the incidents of violence against women and providing rehabilitation and counseling services to the survivors (GoB, nd).

Despite having all these good efforts in place, the practice of violence against women is deeply embedded in the social structure of Bangladesh, and it has put women's lives at risk throughout the country (Farouk, 2005). In 2000, the United Nations identified Bangladesh as a country which retains the worst record on violence against women (Khan, 2005:219). In Bangladesh, violence against women appears in a myriad of forms, ranging from wife abuse to rape, dowry killings, acid throwing, sexual harassment, passing *fatwa* on women, sexual slavery through international trafficking in women and many other forms. Some information in regard to various forms and practices of violence against women might include globally the highest rate of acid attack incidents taking place in Bangladesh, and these account for a total of 9% of the burn injuries in the country (Farouk, 2005), religious leaders in Bangladesh have sentenced many women to be publicly flogged or stoned to death for having violated what they consider the norms of Islamic law through passing *fatwa* on them (Amnesty International, 1996:67), approximately 7000 women and children are trafficked every year from Bangladesh and most are sold to brothels or forcibly engaged in bonded labour in neighbouring countries or in the Middle East (BNWLA, 2011:44). Everyday forms of domestic violence in Bangladesh are a part of normative order in social relations and they only come to light if they result in serious injury or death (Siddiqi, 2006:207). The demand for dowry is the major cause of domestic violence, and it

is widely prevalent as a social evil in the country (Farouk, 2005). Early and forced marriages are two traditional harmful practices against women in Bangladesh, and approximately 75% of girls are married before the age of 16 (Barkat & Majid, 2003:4). Nearly 2 out of 3 women in Bangladesh have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lives (UNFPA, nd*b*). The brief information above provides a level of understanding that women in women are very vulnerable in regard to violence of men. Let us now pay attention to the following two recent rape cases in Bangladesh.

Rape on Public Bus in Bangladesh[9]

1. Just within a month of the horrific Delhi gang-rape, an 18 year-old Bangladeshi garment worker girl was raped in a moving bus in the outskirts of the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka. The garment worker was on her way to her village home. It was the evening of 26 January, 2013 when the Delhi victim was still on a death-die situation. Her Bangladeshi sister was travelling on a bus from the capital Dhaka. After all the other passengers got down at Manikganj bus station, the driver and his helper told her that they would go near to her village home. She believed them and remained on the bus sitting. When the bus started running, suddenly the bus helper shut the window. First the bus helper forcefully raped her, and after him, the bus driver raped her. Finally, with an intention to kill her they threw her out of the bus in a similar manner as the Delhi culprits did. However, the victim luckily survived.

2. Just within another month of the previous incident, on 22th February, 2013 at night, a housewife was killed as she jumped out of a moving bus to avoid rape on Dhaka-Aricha Highway, Bangladesh. The victim was just 18, travelling the bus with her husband. The couple boarded the bus at about 11:30 p.m. to visit a relative at a small town near the capital. There were seven to eight miscreants on the bus in disguise as passengers. On the way, they switched off all lights of the bus, beat the husband up and snatched all valuables from him. Later they approached to victim, took her to back seat of the bus and tried to rape her. At one stage, the victim jumped from the window of the moving bus to avoid rape and got injured critically. The miscreants then pushed her husband out of the moving bus, but he luckily escaped to encounter major injury. Immediately, the injured husband, with the help of local people, rushed to a nearby hospital with his wife, and later to Dhaka. But on their way to Dhaka, the victim took her last breath on that dreadful night.

Discussion & Analysis

The above two consecutive incidents have stronger relevance than that of Delhi rape case. The perpetrators of sexual violence in Bangladesh consider women as a mere sexual object and a potential source for fulfilling men's sexual desire, and above all it is a means for them to control women. Like the incident of India, the Bangladesh incidents provide a confirmatory evidence that Bangladeshi women are also extremely helpless not only at home and but also outside home. In addition, it proves that any form of violence that can be practiced in one place may also be practiced in another place—violence transcends local to global and vice versa. Although not on

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[9] Cases developed based on various reports published on-line in Bangladeshi newspapers on the incident.

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the same scale as Delhi, local feminists and women activists also placed their strong protest against these two incidences that occurred in Bangladesh.

However, despite some important legal and policy interventions and the influence of women activists and the UN, why is violence against women still a critical problem for women in Bangladesh? For this we need to look at the structural formation of patriarchy in order to examine whether patriarchy has sufficient strength to stand as an impediment against the interventions of violence against women. In this regard, a brief overview on the patriarchy of Bangladesh will be given in the following section. Secondly, we also need to look into how wilfully Bangladesh has responded to the obligations of the UN. Does patriarchy stand as an impediment for the government of Bangladesh to conform to the obligations of the UN and the demands of local feminists or women activists in regard to violence against women? Specifically, the responses of Bangladesh government to the obligations of CEDAW will also be examined.

Patriarchy in Bangladesh: A Draconian Enemy for Violence against Women
The social structure of Bangladesh maintains a patriarchal, as well as a patrilineal and patrilocal system (ADB, 2001:3). Patriarchy is at the heart of this society. Walby (1990:24) has distinguished two forms of patriarchy: private and public Family is the basic private patriarchal institution where patriarchal roles and regulations are primarily maintained, nurtured and reproduced. The birth of a son brings joy and hope for a family while a daughter receives a very cool reception. A boy is treated as an asset to the family since it is expected that he will shoulder the familial responsibilities and honour of the family. Conversely, a daughter is simply a burden (Zaman, 1999:41). Her position in the family is compared to the idea of 'watering the neighbouring tree; you take all the trouble to nurture the plant but the fruit goes to someone else' (Kabeer, 1988:101). She is treated as a bird of passage, a guest in the natal home, a thing to be preserved for an outsider to take away or a piece of property which will eventually be handed over (Mannan, 2002:52). Such patriarchal and patrilocal ideologies discriminate against daughters in every respect. As a girl matures she becomes used to various discriminatory practices. She learns of the preferential treatment received by her brothers, her father and other male members of the family, including good food, good clothing, education, and health facilities, all of which are preferentially offered to men. She also becomes aware of the fact that the family's aim is to get her married early and, subsequently, for her to live with her husband's family. She is traditionally expected and taught how to be a docile daughter, an obedient wife and a reliable mother (Kabeer, 1988:101). Many Bangladeshi girls are forced to marry soon after puberty; this is partly to free their parents from an economic burden and partly to protect the sexual purity of girls (UNICEF, 2001:2). The patrilineal descent and inheritance system also plays a major role in the subordination of women. The patrilineal descent system relates directly to determining the place of women in society (Mannan, 2002:51). A boy is prepared for his future patriarchal roles and grows up with the name of his father. Hindu law does not provide any inheritance to daughters while Muslim law allows women half the share of sons but creates a system in which most Muslim women do not claim this property. However, as sons are valuable assets for the maintenance of patriarchy, the more sons a woman bears the more status she will enjoy in the husband's family. The preference for sons makes women vulnerable to different forms of violence (Zaman, 1999:41). Failure to produce a male child can have various severe consequences for a woman (Mannan, 2002:52). Moreover, in terms of social and cultural

expectations, women are always expected to be sexually available and compliant for their husbands (Rashid, 2006:37).

There are also many discriminatory practices in the public sphere of patriarchy. Women's rights to equality and affirmative action in regard to ensuring equality is guaranteed in the Constitution of Bangladesh; however, in practice, initiatives are limited and progress is very slow. Many state policies and programs are seemingly gender-biased. For example, the National Women's Advancement Policy of Bangladesh, monitored and implemented under the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs, calls for "appropriate employment for women" (Siddiqi, 2006:199). The term "appropriate" surely means restricting women to certain types of jobs which are similar to their performed responsibilities at the domestic level. On the other hand, women are hardly visible in the administrative, managerial, professional and technical services of the government (ADB, 2001:12).Women are potential sources of cheap labour in these profitable businesses. For example, in the ready-made garment manufacturing sector, the main export-earning sector of the country where women have the largest labour force participation, they earn 22-30% less than their male colleagues on the basis of the pretext that men work in more skilled jobs and they are more qualified for those jobs (ADB, 2001:12). On the other hand, the exercise of political rights is also limited for women. Society is very conservative about their activity in active politics, participating in elections and exercising franchise (BNWLA, 2011:11).

The above brief overview confirms that patriarchy is deeply ingrained in both public and private spheres. Patriarchal ideologies and norms have a stronghold to maintain the domination of men over women. Due to the traditional patriarchal socio-economic system, structure and mindset, violence and injustice against women are common phenomena in Bangladesh (Aminuzzaman, 2011:3). From their childhood, women live in such a typical patriarchal structure which permits and tolerates all sorts of inhuman treatment of them (Farook, 2005). That is why patriarchy works as a draconian enemy for practicing violence against women. This assumption nicely fits with the theoretical analysis of global second-wave feminists on how patriarchy becomes the root cause of violence against women.

Although the Bangladeshi feminist movement recognised patriarchy as the root cause of violence, it could not make a strong standpoint from emancipation of women from patriarchal system. Since the root cause has not been shut down, the problem of violence still prevails with an iron grip in Bangladesh. In most Asian countries it is the common phenomenon that a campaign against violence against women primarily focuses on protection of women rather than assertion of liberation of women from patriarchal structure (Cheung et al., 1999:8). In a similar opinion, Guhathakurta (2004:193) said that although women's movement in Bangladesh continued to consider patriarchy as the standard category for analysing women's oppression since the 1980s, mainstream discourse remains the same. They have only aimed to provide supports to the victims rather than liberating women from patriarchy. But it does not necessarily mean that women's movement in Bangladesh has not brought any significant outcome. It has, at least, introduced a strong legal and rehabilitative support mechanism for the victims of violence. Moreover, it maintains a strong linkage with global feminism for particular cases of violence as well. For example, acid attacks became a major issue of debate amid a resurgence of women's activism in the early 1980s and when the government of Bangladesh failed to provide basic medical care to acid survivors, women activists in Bangladesh were able to contact international activists and put pressure on the government of Bangladesh to provide necessary and crucial medical care to victims. Such interaction helped to bring international resources available to acid survivors in domestic social struggles (Anwary, 2003:306). It indicates that the Bangladesh

feminist movement also has a global appeal and global resemblance. Nonetheless, since patriarchy in Bangladesh has a very strong ideological foundation, it might require some more time to bring changes in the patriarchal social structure and to eliminate violence against women. At this point, let us now look at the Bangladeshi government's responses to the obligations of CEADAW which is the major international instrument to eliminate all sorts of discriminatory practices from women. Discriminatory practices against women lead to violence perpetrated against women in all societies.

CEDAW and Bangladesh: Patriarchy Still Works as an Impediment

Bangladesh has treaty obligations to protect human rights under a number of international human rights instruments, such as the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing PFA 95, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Bangladesh ratified the CEDAW in 1984 with reservation on four Articles: 2, 13(a), 16(1)(c) and (f). Later, the Government of Bangladesh withdrew its reservation on Article 13(a) and 16(1)(f) but did not reconsider its stand on Articles 2—pursuing a policy on the elimination of discrimination against women—and 16(1)(c)—the same rights and responsibilities as men during marriage and at its dissolution (Aminuzzaman, 2011:14). International commitments towards women are partly related to traditional mindset and sometimes hang over of traditions. The socio-economic structure that is dominated by patriarchy is the real hurdle in this regard (Aminuzzaman, 2011:15). Bangladesh does not ratify certain articles of CEDAW since they conflict with *Sharia*[10] laws based on the *Quran*[11] and *Sunna*[12] (Brandt & Kaplan, 1995:126). As a result, the traditional patriarchal practices, like polygamy and verbal divorce and *hillah,*[13] are still practiced in Bangladesh. Apparently, Bangladesh does not want to invite tension by bringing changes in traditional laws, customs and practices, which are greatly favoured by the discriminatory ideologies of patriarchy. It is further noted that these two clauses are the most important ones as far as women's equality is concerned. And equality in every sphere of life—whether in private or public, is a pre-condition to minimise violence against women (Kamal, nd).

Specifically, reservations to Article 2 are particularly problematic as that article lays out the fundamental requirement to comply with all articles of the Convention in the state party's constitution, statutes, and policies. Reservations placed on it, therefore, appear to negate Bangladesh's commitment to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (Freeman, 2009:7). Regarding Article 16(1)(c), which guarantees equal rights in marriage and its dissolution, the reservations deprive at least half the Muslim population of Bangladesh of their rights. Moreover, Bangladesh is not governed by *Sharia* law and over ten percent of the people are non-Muslims, who are governed by laws other than the *Sharia* law. Therefore, maintaining reservations on account of the *Quran* and *Sunna* is not universally applicable (CiC-BD, 2010:17-18). Reservation on Article 16(1) indicates a reluctance to recognise women's full competence as adults within the family, and thus, wilfully allows men to dominate and suppress women in the family.

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[10] *Sharia* is the code of living in Islamic ways. It is the entire body of Islamic law.
[11] *Quran* is The Holy book of Islam.
[12] *Sunna* is the second source of Islamic jurisprudence which comes after the Holy *Quran*.
[13] *Hillah* is a practice of marriage imposed on a divorced woman to marry a second husband for an interim period to enable her to remarry her previous husband if they want to reunite. This is a requirement under Islamic *Sharia* law.

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Reservations placed on fundamental obligations of CEDAW confirm that Bangladesh as a state is biased toward patriarchy. It reflects that the commitment of the government to international obligations to eliminate discrimination against women is suppressed by the strong power-wheel of patriarchy. As long as the reservations are in place, Bangladeshi women will continuously be the subjects of various types of violence and ill-treatment. If government keeps reservation on Article 2 and 16(1)(c) CEDAW, then the efforts to end violence against women will be very insignificant. Nonetheless, it was mentioned earlier that like many Asian countries women/feminist movement in Bangladesh has not specially aimed to liberate women from the patriarchal structure. Reservations on important clauses of CEDAW confirm that both the UN and global feminist groups need to put pressure on the government of Bangladesh. Eliminating violence is a daunting task, but not an impossible one. Each country has to work in a tripartite network which comprises the UN activism, global feminist activism and local feminist activism to combat violence against women.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has explored how violence against women has become a feminist concern as well as a matter of UN concern. It is feminists who first brought the issue to public attention in the 1970s, gave explanations of the problem, suggested to reform the criminal justice system as a means to redressing the problem and also worked to draw UN attention on the issue. The central feminist understanding, which has been endorsed by the UN as well, is that the patriarchal structure of the society is the cause of men's violence against women. The context of Bangladesh proves that both public and private patriarchy and its structural, cultural, symbolic and functional aspects confirm the subordination of women in all spheres of life. Such discriminatory practices pave the way to the practices of violence.

Combating violence is a mammoth task. Of course, governmental and non-governmental agencies, civil society coupled with international agencies have adopted many positive measures in reducing violence against women. Despite various efforts, violence against women is still practiced in almost all parts of world. In many countries a boy is socialised in a completely different way than is a girl. From childhood he receives favour in every respect. As such, he grows up with a different ideological notion and learns to behave in the same manner as other men around him, especially in relation to women and girls. This negatively moulds his perception towards women and girls.

Recommendations

Given the circumstances discussed in this article, the following recommendations should be carried out at the state level across the globe.

1) The state should act to change the attitude of boys. Schools must become important places to socialise and resocialise boys appropriately. The state should incorporate the following in the curriculum: gender relations, the role of women in the development of society and history, the consequences of gender based violence and discrimination in society and community.

2) Each state should launch a mass social awareness programme, which should be started within the family and should involve the media, religious and community leaders, and local government representatives as well with a mandate to motivate and sensitise people from all walks of lives.

3) States should actively work to engage boys and men to empower and protect women and girls. Barker (2006) has particularly focused on this strategy and has shown how boys and men have been involved in many parts of the world and what sort of positive activities are being performed by them. Some of the international initiatives to engage men and boys, as mentioned by Barker (2006), such as critical dialogue on men's use of violence against women, promotion of different campaign slogans, mixed group educational and partnership activities and community campaigns, may be introduced in every state to help the appropriate agencies to work with men and boys against violence.

4) Law makers and the officials of law enforcement agencies must be equally sensitised. Since women have a negligible representation in policy and law making, these tasks are predominately carried out by male officials and law makers. Eventually, when they produce policies and laws for women it is most likely they do not or cannot address key areas of concern due to lack of sensitisation. They also cannot avoid their patriarchal mindset in carrying out their responsibilities. For example, in Bangladesh a women's complaint of rape has to be supported by corroborative evidence. Rape must be an act of penile penetration of the vagina; inserting any other object is not recognised as rape (Kamal, 2003:133 & 131).

5) Meaningful partnerships and sincere dialogue are superior means to fight against violence against women (Renzetti, 1997 in DeKeseredy, 2011:301). The coordination of the activities of the state, NGOs, women activists, the UN and network of global women's activists is a pre-condition to combat violence. They should work with all agencies concerned with a view to collecting information, creating a database, providing support and legal services to the victims and raising social awareness and activism. Most importantly, they should work on developing a mechanism on how to ensure equality between men and women in society and liberate women from patriarchal structure. Men, women, state, non-state agencies including UN and feminist organisations all need to work together from their respective positions to eliminate violence against women from the family, community and society.

Finally, I conclude with the following comments of the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon (UN, nd*c*), which all the states of the globe should consider as the guiding principles in their efforts towards violence against women:

"There is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable".

"We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any government".

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