

# Child marriage blocks human resource development

Dr. M. Azizur Rahman

ACCORDING to the UN definition, the offspring under the age of 18 is considered child. The marriage of any child under the age of 18 is called a child marriage. Women in almost in any society including Bangladesh are relatively less powerful compared to men. For the development of a country, it is important that we work for the human development by increasing their health, education and their working ability regardless of the gender consideration. Without the development of women the human development remains incomplete. So, for the human development, we have to develop women and to empower them which is briefly called women empowerment. A child marriage is considered a constraint to human development, which is widely a matter of discussion almost all over the world.

Wherever there is a noble and ever pleasing creation on earth, half of it is done by women and the remaining half by men. According to the natural role of creature, 50% of the world population or about 3.50 crore men and the other 50% are women. Men and women cannot ignore each other in their family life. Women are the integral part of family and social life and living. In menial jobs, men are assumed to do relatively

good compared to women. But in non-menial jobs (white-collar job), business and in professional occupation, men and women can perform equally good. Recently, along with the technological development, importance of human resource and skilled labor in particular has also been increasing. For example, some countries including China are doing very good in economic performance because of its educated and skilled human resource of all kinds. Higher productivity and efficiency in the women sector by improving women empowerment will contribute significantly to the growth of the economy. It is really regretting to learn that South Asian and the Middle Eastern countries are lagging behind in women development. There are many reasons behind it. For example, cultural and religious reasons are very important. Culturally women are considered 2nd class human being. From religious point of view, women are not focused significantly in the working environment and market place. They are preferred to stay at home to do the household affairs.

Women are culturally bound to take care of their children at home. These culture of taking care of children by women are also supported by the religious faith. Socially they are less preferred doing many high-paying job, business and leadership in the society. In view of socio-economic culture, women will serve the men. Men will work along and feed the women. Recently, we can see that women get in trap of child-marriage compared to men. Because some parents think that women are non-earning member in the family. Once they are married, parents can get rid of taking care of their daughter's life and living, as the married women will leave the parent's house and will go to the father-in-law's house, who will take care of them. Therefore, in many developing and relatively less developed countries (LDC) child marriage of women takes place. We will be discussing about the child marriage situation in some developing countries which stands against the women empowerment.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia and Iran are developing countries and

Bangladesh is still considered a less developed country (LDC). In these countries, a high figure on child marriage is not very encouraging.

cannot get married. But this law is not-respected fully in the above mentioned countries. The under aged women (below-18) and other child

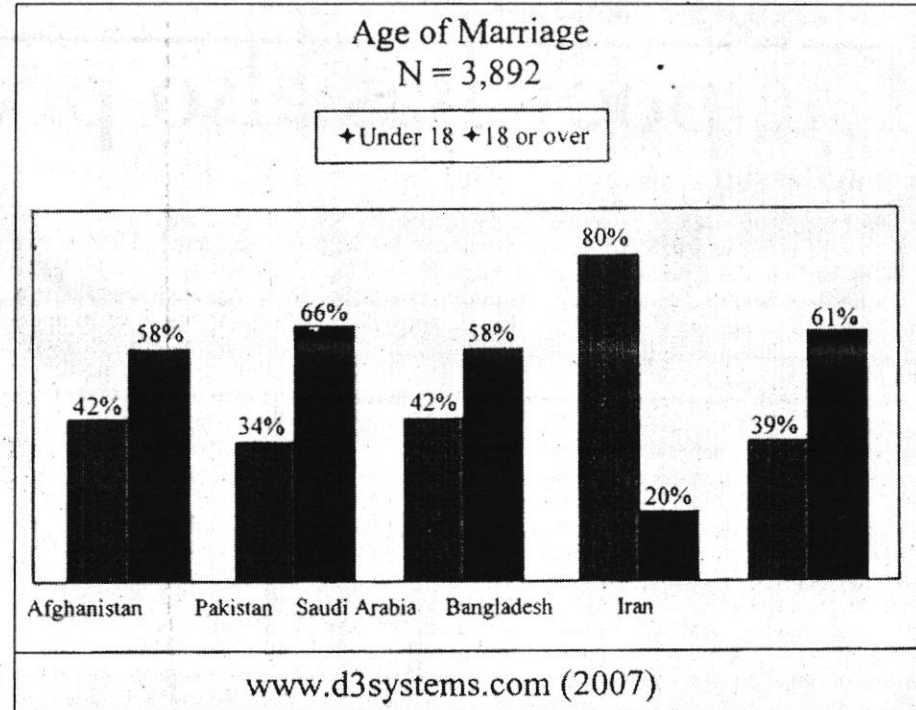
Bangladesh according to the past survey report 2007 (source - www.d3systems.com). Among the Middle Eastern

situation of Arabian culture in Afghanistan and Saudi-Arabia is the same as 42%. The percentage of child marriage in Iran is very close to that other Middle Eastern countries, which is 39%.

The majority of Bangladesh women of more or less 90% are Muslim. Most of married women are poorly educated housewife or homemaker etc. Among the above mentioned countries, Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriage. As mentioned before, below the age of 18 is childhood according to UN definition. Child marriage does not help the women grow and develop with maturity and culture, which is not conducive to their public voice and women empowerment. The customs and culture of the developing world including Bangladesh do not permit the women doing things and lead the life on their own. This not positive for the women empowerment. In Muslim culture, it is normally assumed that these are man-dominated society. Men do not prefer their women to take the leadership in family-and social life. Saria-law is always working as a significant constraint to

women development and empowerment. Many people think that financial inability of women is constraint for their empowerment. But the money or the economic ability does not come automatically in the hand of women. The best way to empower the women is to educate them in a job-oriented profession. Educated women will know what to do and how to do, to improve their lot and situation and to empower themselves in the society. Qualified and trained women can do the job, white-collar jobs, business and the job of commission agent, self-employment and can change their fate by themselves. For example, educated women will not be the victim of child marriage. Educated women will have a minimum number of children, one or two. They can do all kinds of job and take the advantage of baby-care center and educated women can earn money. That way they can earn the social leadership. Educated women can have voting rights, public voice, banking and insurance facilities and finally the opportunity of women empowerment, which all together will contribute to the good governance and economic development of the country.

(Dr. M. Azizur Rahman Vice-Chancellor Uttara University.)



Although there is law in these countries including Bangladesh that the under-aged women (age below-18)

marriage takes place in these countries. The percentage of child marriage varies from 34% in Pakistan to 80% in

countries also the child marriage situation of women is not very favourable. For example, the child marriage