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# Realising "Sultana's Dream"

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**A**fter the announcement of the Grand Alliance cabinet, one of my friends said to me that he was instantly reminded of Rokeya's "Sultana's Dream". Bangladesh, according to him, has become the Lady Land!

Just to remind ourselves, in the December 29 general election, out of 8 crore 46 thousand 406 voters women constituted the majority, numbering 4 crore 12 lakh 36 thousand and 149. The total number of women candidates in the MP election was 58 of which 16 returned victorious. Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia contested and won in three seats each. Forty-five more women will join the parliament, through nomination though. The cabinet has women as the Prime Minister and as the ministers of foreign affairs, home as well as agriculture. The Prime Minister has cabinet, defence, women's affairs and religion among her portfolios. Leadership of the opposition is also entrusted to a woman. Earlier, women did noticeably well in the Municipal elections. In the Upazila election, while only one woman returned as Chairman, 414 women became vice chairmen in the reserved seats.

Indeed the scenario has everything in it to evoke the above comment. It may have come from a sense of appreciation for women's role in politics and also from a feeling that women are taking over and women's empowerment has reached a high water mark. One of the most persistent questions we have had to face for long time is why we, the women activists, still have to demand rights for women when in

*Despite women dominating Parliament and the cabinet, women still cannot consider going out after dusk or travelling alone over long distances. No woman considers throwing acid on a man who refuses her, whereas men do it frequently to women, an outrageous phenomenon peculiar to Bangladesh.*

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Bangladesh both the prime minister and the leader of the opposition are women, a situation is also not likely to change in the near future.

An oft-raised question is what more

do the women of Bangladesh need in order to be equal? They already have advantages over their male counterparts. They enjoy the quota system in employment and in Parliament; they

have special laws against repression and violence against them; they have the family court to deal with their cases, free primary and secondary education facilities, and the list goes

on. In the opinion of many, the women of Bangladesh already have much more than they deserve.

To be objective, there is no doubt

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