

STATUS OF HINDU MINORITY IN BANGLADESH

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
For award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Date: 29.7.2008

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**STATUS OF HINDU MINORITY IN BANGLADESH**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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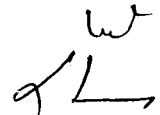
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHT: Chittagong Hill Tracks

OIC: Organization of Islamic Conference

PCJSS: Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati(The Chittagong Hill Tracks People's Solidarity Association)

ARLD:Association for Land Reformms and Development

EVPA: Enemy Vested Property Act

VPA: Vested Property Act

NGO: Non Government Organization.

ASK: Ain O Salish Kendra(An NGO)

BNP: Bangladesh National Party

AL: Awami League

GDP: Gross Domestic Production

ULFA:United Liberation Front of Assam

BMP: Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

CIA: Central Intellengence Agency

IDL: Islamic Democratic League

POT: Public Opinion Trends

SEHD: Society for Environment and Human Development

JMB: Jamaat-ul-Mujaheedin Bangladesh

HUJI:Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami

USA: United State of America

SIMI: Student Islamic Movement

JUM: Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen

EU: European Union

MLA: Members of Legislative Assembly

LTTE: Liberation Tigres of Timil Eelam

ISI: Inter Services Intelligence

Preface

No state can think about national development and nation building excluding minorities. Each section of the society is an important segment for building a nation. For a good and just society, principle of equality is an important thing. The principle of equality is necessary but not enough for just, healthy and homogeneous society. Other factors like, what kind of polity a state has, what kind of policies it follows, what are the perception of the majority people towards minorities etc have equally important. As much as the people from different religion, language, race, caste etc are integrated, that much the territorial integrity of a state is strong. Bangladesh is also plural society as far as its religion, language and cultural is concerned. Therefore it is important to know about the minorities in Bangladesh. The study is mainly aim at to bring the actual status of Hindu minority. For this purpose categorization is made as following.

The first chapter of this study namely, "Conceptual Framework of Minority" deals with the concept of 'minority' that what does it imply. This chapter also deals with brief introduction of minorities in South Asian countries as well as Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh. The second chapter, "State of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh", deals with the actual position of the Hindus in various sphere in Bangladesh. It also portrays the constitutional rights and actual enjoyment of these rights by Hindu minority which led to their marginalization.

The third chapter, "Government Policies and Civil Society Perspective", deals with different military regimes and democratic government with their policies. Through this chapter an efforts are made to bring in light an impact of various policies of various regimes on Hindus. This chapter also deals with relation between majoritarian and minority and approach towards each others. The chapter fourth, "Hindu Minority: Problems and Challenges", gives the picture of problems facing by Hindus in Bangladesh. The violation of human rights forced migration due to various fundamentalist organizations and militant organizations portrayed in detail.

The fifth chapter that is "Conclusion" is the brief theme of all the chapters that proved the hypothesis that both national parties have failed

Chapter-1

Conceptual framework of minority

The nation states are barely without minority and ethnic groups as well as free from religious and ethnic violence. The countries have one or more minority groups within their territory characterized by their own ethnic, linguistic, religious identities which differ that of from majority population. In South Asian region, because of its diverse population, conflict and violence became phenomena. The problem of minority in South Asian region can be attributed to the uneven economic development, colonial and post colonial policies of government. Almost all the South Asian countries have been ruled by British during 19th century and first half of 20th century. British had always used one religious community against another to rule. After the independence, this policy has not disappeared. Britishers in their rule, consciously exploited Hindu-Muslim antagonism in a divide and rule strategy. At first, Britishers favoured the Hindu and distrusted Muslims because of earlier Muslims were the rulers from whom Britishers seized power (Betsy Hartmann and James Boyce, 1983: 15). When Hindus became educated, literate, conscious about their socio-political rights, nationalism geared up among them then British tried to own the support of Muslims by offering more governmental jobs. This policy of Britishers was not aim at welfare of either community but just divide and rule as long as possible. This policy culminated in 1905 partition of Bengal creating new Muslim dominant province of East Bengal with Dhaka as capital. This also resulted into increase in Hindu-Muslim tension.

Initially, East Bengali Muslims supported the creation of Pakistan. Islam, the unifying force in this region was understood, interpreted and exercised in different ways in these separate wings. But declaration of Urdu as official language of Pakistan created discontent among the East Bengalis. East Bengalis took it as imposition of Urdu as state language to prevent Bengalis from full participation in the affairs of the state. But during that period economic

colonization and exploitation of natural resource of East Pakistan started which used for the development of Karachi and Punjab, the dominant province of West Pakistan. East Bengal, the world's largest producer and exporter of Jute were main foreign exchange earner of Pakistan. This economic disparity soon became the major cause of conflict between east and West Pakistan. Due to the economic exploitation, declaration of Urdu as state language, refusal of demand of Bengalis political participation in state and for economic self rule of east Bengal, Bengali nationalism grew. This crisis reached at highest point after 1970 general election when Awami League won the election by majority seats in the parliament. The marginalization of Bengali political leadership from acquiring power in the national politics led the military action in late 1950s, which culminated into full-fledged war in 1971.

Conceptual understanding of minority:

It is difficult to define the term minority in exact and scientific words. But there is some commonly agreed description of minority that can be summed up as non-dominant group of an individuals who shares certain national, ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristic which are different that of from majority population. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, minority is defined as “a culturally, ethnically or racially distinct group living within larger society which carried with a web of political and social implication”. International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences has defined a minority “as a group of people differentiated from others in same society by race, nationality, religion or language who both thinks of themselves as differentiated group with negative connotations. Further, that are relative leaving in power and hence are subject to certain exclusions, discriminations and other differential treatment (David L. Sills, 2000). The term minority is defined the Columbia Encyclopedia “as a population group with a characteristic culture and sense of identity occupying a subordinate political status” (Columbia University, 2000).

The formal attempt was made in 1977 when UN sub-commission appointed Francesco Capotorti to study and defined the concept of minority for implementation of the principles defined in Art.27 of the International Covenant

of Civil and Political Rights with the special emphasis on the concept of minority. In 1977 Francesco Capotorti study report put forward the following definition of minority as: "a group numerically inferior to rest of the population of a state in a non-dominant position, whose members being nationals of possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristic differing form those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicating, sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language" (Ansari A. Iqbal, 1996: vol.1).

Under the League of Nations, the following definition of minority given by permanent court of Justice in Advisory Opinion on Greco-Bulgarian Community case in July 1930 as: by tradition, the community is a group of person having a race, religion, language and traditions... preserving their traditions in accordance with the spirit and traditions of their race and rendering mutual assistance to each other (Ansari A Iqbal, 1996 :vol. II). Thus, in the other words, minority is a group of people, numerically small to rest of the population, culturally, linguistically, religiously, and way of life is differentiated that of from majority of the population. Further, it subject to discrimination from time to time by majority population. These groups are also subject to the violation of human rights. The world wide accepted and legally binding provisions on minorities mentioned in Art 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which states:

In those states where the ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exists, person belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right in the community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion or to use their own language (Langely E, 1999:16). The Art 27 refers that those states ratified the covenant are obliged to ensure that all individuals under their jurisdiction enjoy their rights. If it requires to take special action to correct inequalities: states are obliged to do so. The United Nations which addresses the special rights of minorities in separate United Nation document is the declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national

or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. The declaration grants following provisions to the person belonging to minorities. (Langly E. 1999:96).

1. Protection, by state, of their existence and their national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity, Art.1.
2. State should adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends, Art.2.
3. The right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion and to use their own language in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination, Art.2.1.
4. The right to participate in cultural, religious, social economic and public life, Art.2.2.
5. The right to participate in decisions which affect them on the national and regional levels, Art.2.3.
6. The right to establish and maintain their own association, Art.2.4.
7. the freedom to exercise their rights individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without discrimination Art.3

The Bangladesh, having population of 126,90 million (1999 census), 98 percent of which are Bengalis. Bangladesh, linguistically, is one of the homogenous nation in South Asia. According to the 1991 census, the distribution of population by religion wise composed of Muslims 88.3%, Hindus 10.5% and others Buddhists, Christians 1.2 percent (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics: 1999). But in the same period the percentage of distribution of tribal population by religion wise were Muslims 18% Hindus 21.2% and Buddhists 36.7 percent. At the time of 1981 census Bangladesh's tribal population was just 1 percent of the total population. But as per the 1991 population census, the tribal population was increased. The tribals live primarily in Chittagong Hills and the region of Mymensingh, Sylhet and Rajshahi. Majority of tribal population live in rural areas, were many of them

practices shifting cultivation. There are four largest tribes in to defined minority Bangladesh namely Chakma, Marmas, Tipperas and Mros. Most of them are Sino-Tibetan decent. There are other tribe groups like Khasis, Garos and Khajonas. Chakmas are Buddhists but some of them practice Hinduism. The Tipperas are merely all Hindus and account for entire Hindu population in Chittagong Hills. The Mros being considered the original inhabitants of Chittagong Hills. Their main occupation is agriculture. They do not have their written language but some of them read Burmese and Bangla scripts. The Garos have their traditional religion which is form of animism. But majority of them converted into Christianity (Khaleque Kibriual, 1996: 16).

Brief Survey of Minority in South Asia:

Apart from Bangladesh, the other South Asian Nations are also having large or small minority groups as in Sri Lanka, four minority communities viz, Sri Lankan Tamils, Muslims, Indian origin Tamils and Burgherus are exists. . During the colonial period, the religion namely - Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam was predominantly the basis of identity. Sinhalese identified themselves as Buddhists, Tamils as Hindus, Moors as Muslim and Burghers as Christian. At the same time Chrsitianty was the only religion which cut across all the communities, except moor (Sphencer Jonathan, 1990:19). Sri Lankan Tamils are not largest in number, but they are most controversial minority in Sri Lanka. Though, some scholars argue that they are the original inhabitant of Island. On the basis of geography, they are called Jaffna Tamils and Batticaloa Tamils. Economically, they are dependent mostly on non-agriculture professions for their livelihood. In the colonial period they were ahead of others in acquiring Anglican education and hence preferred for government jobs by the Britishers. But after the passage of Sinhala only Act in 1956, the representation of Sri Lankan Tamils started dwindling in the civil services. The 1956 Act requires Sinhala as basic eligibility for administrative job. Their population is 12.71%.

Sri Lankan Muslims refer to several distinct groups between whom the common link is their religion-Islam. They prefer to call themselves as 'Muslims' as Moors which does not include the whole community of muslims. (Mohan Vasundhara 1987: 8-10) In the British period, and the introduction of coffee plantation in 1920, their trade increased. For this reason, the Muslims supported Britishers against the Nayakkar Dynasty of Kandy (Barthdomenz J. Tessa and de Silva R. Chandra, 1998:113). This has become an irritant for the Sinhalese who began to see Muslims as traitors and anti-Sinhalese. The Sinhala revivalism under Dharmapala primarily targeted Muslims, which resulted in numerous anti-Muslims riots during the colonial period. Though the Muslims of Sri Lanka are considered as trading community, a significant part of their livelihood is agriculture and other activities like fishing and as artisan. However, their representation in the government jobs is less than the national average (Mishra Naveen and Singh Sudhir Kumar, 2002:16). Their population is 7.07 percent of the total population. As far as ethnic conflict between the LTTE and Sri Lankan state is concerned, the Sri Lankan Muslims are the most affected in the crisis (Islamail Qadri, 1987:202-20). Though not a party to the conflict, the community has been viewed as party to one side by other and hence caught in between both the state and the LTTE.

The Indian origin Tamils are the decedent of Indian labour migrants during the British period in the 19th century and 20th century to work in the implantation in the Island. They were considered officially "Indian Tamils" by the English to distinguish them from the Lankan Tamils. They are landless labours. Few are traders and merchants in Colombo and towns in plantation districts (Sahadeven P., 1993:91). Socio-economically, the indicators are too low, though Sri Lanka ranks on par with development countries. The level of literacy is dismal due to historical negligence, high value for child labour and lack of proper infracture. As a result their representation in public sector is insignificant when compare to other communities. Their living condition is poor. Most of them live in one room (Vije Mayan, 1987). The wrath on them was displayed in term of anti-Tamil riots in 1977, 1979 and 1983, though they had nothing to do with riots.

Many of Tamils lost their jobs and fled to north in search of security. The population of Indian origin Tamils is 5.52 percent.

The Burghers are an important ethnic group. They are the descendent of children of Portuguese and Dutch marrying with Ceylonese. They were termed as 'Burghers' by the Dutch to differentiate them from the official class. After the independence, the Burghers started losing their clout. They, along with other minorities, started losing their jobs due to the passage of Sinhala only Act. As a result, their economic downfall and social degeneration set in. However, their downfall can be traced to the advent of universal adult Franchise of 1931 when they started losing their representation in municipal and legislative councils because of their less numbers.

In Pakistan, in past, as well as in present, religious and ethnic minorities have been polarized. The doctrinal differences, political differences, material gains and territorial space can make religion quite explosive. Still in the Pakistan, the role of religion is not settled issue, which generally, impacts the statecraft, the status and rights of minorities, and the larger question of internal peace and security. In recent years, some of the Pakistani religious groups have become greatly involved in trans-national terror networks causing sectarian and communal violence within the country. The complex historical and social factors have shaped the interactions between religion and politics in Pakistan. Islam was at heart of the political struggle for the creation of Pakistan and has remained at the center of post-Independence political discourse. Therefore, religious minorities, particularly Hindus, always marginalised. Even after the fifty years of independence, the question of what type of polity Pakistan should have whether liberal democratic or Islamic, evokes different responses from the different social sectors and political interests. Military leaders, mainstream political parties and Islamist have all attempted to define the relationship according to their vision of democratic development and the role of religion in society and state affairs (Syed Anwar, 1989:74-100).

True representative democracy and constitutional politics are the best institutional tools to protect and advance the interest of religious minorities in any set of social

conditions. Pakistan has never applied any of these tools. The question of separate electorate was one of the focal point of debate and controversy in the constituent assembly. On the issue of separate electorate, the views of the leaders of East Pakistan were different from those of the leaders of West Pakistan. West Pakistan stressed on separate electorate, the East Pakistan insisted on joint electorates. The member of the minority communities were also of the views that separate electorate would cast them off mainstream national politics. They demanded political, civic, legal rights that could be guaranteed only under the joint electorate system (Rais Baksh Rasul, 2007:114). But the conservative religious leaders and some of the Muslim League leaders did not favour the idea of granting equal rights and status to non-Muslims in the Islamic polity that they wished to establish. Some of these leaders questioned the loyalty of Hindu minority to Pakistan and expressed their distrust of them openly. After the end of Ayub Khan's military rule, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto introduced additional safeguard into the 1973 constitution for the representation of the minorities in the national and provincial assemblies. Six seats at national level and five seats at provincial level reserved for minorities. But minorities were far from being treated with equality as discrimination continued in many forms.

The another minority community, Ahmadiyyas, which claim to be Muslim is relatively new religious minority. Shia and Sunni, both, do not accept Ahmadiyyas within the fold of Islam. The controversy over Ahmadiyya sect is about one hundred years old. At the turn of the twentieth century, Muslim cleric Mirza ghulam Ahmad from Qadian in the Panjab declared himself a new prophet of Islam. He made many controversial assertions, such as he was Jesus Christ etc. Maulana Shabir Ahmad Usmani a noted religious scholars took serious note of it and declared Mirza ghulam Ahmad a false prophet and said any person who accepted to him to be stoned to death (Ibid:118). After his statement, decree a numbers of Ahmadiyyas were stoned to death in North West Frontier province. With the death of Zia in 1988, there was restoration of democracy and fresh elections. After the election, the leaders from mainstream political parties did not bother to address the issues of marginalization of minorities in electoral politics.

Instead of doing good for minority, Blasphemy laws in acted, which have grave social and psychological implications for religious minorities. These laws cover the acts that may fall within the offence of Blasphemy, the violence which carries long prison sentences and death hanging. The human rights Commission of Pakistan monitored the Blasphemy cases registered from January to December were 2000. The Commissions newsletters listed fifteen cases against Ahmadiyyas, five against Christian and eighteen against Muslims (Human Rights commissions of Pakistan, 2000, 13-18). The common accusation against Ahmadiyyas included posing as Muslims, preaching, possessing Ahmadiyya literature etc. Christians were booked for making derogatory remarks about prophet Islam.

Thus the minorities in Pakistan are still marginalised, insecure, under representation. If one looks to the percentage of minorities - the Hindus 1.60%, Christian 1.58%, Ahmadiyyas 0.22%, Scheduled caste 0.25%, others 0.07%- one can logically draw conclusion that they are very much prone to victimize because of their strength. (Government of Pakistan, 2001).

In Nepal, King Prithvi Narayan Sha, the father of modern Nepal, did recognize the culture plurality. his Ditya Upadesh, in which described his policies of governance and likens Nepal to a garden bedecked with four Varanas and thirty six Jats (tribes). Linguistic estimates that there are 40 principle minority languages, most of them are of the Tibeto Burman tongues. The chief ethnic group is 'Nawars' and considered the original inhabitant of the Kathmandu valley. The other ethnic groups are Gurun, Magar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Takali, Sherpa, Tharu, Raji and Raute. The ethnic awareness of these groups is largely cultured rather than political. Nepal's minorities do not merely consist of the Tibeto-Burma linguistic groups; however, Hindus themselves are part of several regional and linguistic groups. First there are Nepali speaking Hindus of the hills who have controlled Nepali politics. The Tarai region Hindus, whose history in Nepal is more recent. They are further divisible into three groups according the language: Maithali, Bhojpuri and Awadhi. Although, the Tarai Hindus have been less involved that created the state of Nepal but they can hardly be excluded from the rights and privileges of being Nepali nationals. (Mishra Naveen and Singh Sudhir

Kumar, 2002:39). A distinct ethnic as well as regional fault lies between the Pahade and Madhesi, the Hillman and the plains man. Today the relationship between the two groups is marked by deep suspicion. The Pahades regard the Madhesi as Indian in their cultural orientation and political loyalties. The Madhesi regard the Pahades as colonizers and exploiter of the Tarai who treat them second class citizens. The Madhesies protest their under representation in political decision-making process, in the government employment and resent the resettlement policies which favour the hill migrants. The people of Tarai have been discriminated in foreign services and postal services. The representation of Tarai people in foreign services is zero percent. Similarly, in representation of Tarai people in the judiciary is 3.8%. Even after the restoration of democracy, the representation of Tarai people is not satisfactory (Dixit, Sunder Mani, 1991 :16)

The another problem is being faced by large section of Madhesi community is that of citizenship. Many of madhesi feel that there is a strategy to drive them away from Nepal by not recognizing them as citizens of Nepal even though they are legitimate citizens. They are labeled as Tarai people are Indians living in Nepal unauthorised (Parmanand, 1975:88).

Likewise Bhutan's people are mostly Bhotias who called themselves Drukpas. They are ethnically related to the Tibetans and practice a form of Buddhism close to Tibetan Lamaism. In the South, there is sizable minority of Nepalese, about 1/3 of population, who practice Hinduism and speaks various Nepali dialects. Bhutan did not witness ethnic problems until the 1950s. In the post war period, important change took place in Bhutan's neighbourhood. The freedom struggle in India forced the British to withdraw from India in 1947. In Nepal, the anti-Rana movement succeeded. In Southern Bhutan in 1952, the ethnic Nepalese started organizing themselves to protect against the discriminating policies of Royal Government of Bhutan and formed Bhutan State Congress at Patgaon in Assam (Dhakal, D.N.S., 1994). King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1972-73) realized the need to integrate the ethnic people into mainstream of Bhutanese national life. He granted representation in national assembly. The ethnic people from South also recruited in Butanese army and civil

services. But the continuous increase in population of Nepalese resulted in driving out to Nepalese since 1980s. The government had pressured Nepalese to adopt Bhutanese dress, Custom, religion and language. The ethnic Nepalese continued to keep up their separate identity and to maintain cultural ties with Nepal. As a result, Bhutanese ruling elite feared that the ethnic Nepalese would one day outnumber them in their own homeland and seize political power from them. Therefore, they tightened their citizenship laws and took steps to strengthen their Drukpa identity. The implementation of Bhutan Citizenship Act 1985 and imposition of the Driglam Namzha Tek Nath Rizal accused the Royal government of Bhutan of violating human rights in Bhutan (Gupta Sen, 1999).

Same is like with India. It is culturally diverse country. More than fifteen hundred languages are being spoken in India. The constitution recognizes 21 regional languages. Hindi is the national language spoken by majority of the people. Although, the outstanding feature of the Indian polity is secularism. The Indian state does not have any state religion. All people are free to profess and propagate their religion. The Constitutional provisions, Art 14, 15, 16, 28(1), 30(1) and 29(2) seek to prohibit discrimination on the ground of religion (J. Prabhas, 1998:324). The distribution of population, religious wise, Hindus constitute 83%, Muslims 12.2%, Christians 2.34%, Sikh 1.94%, Buddhists 0.76%. As far as India is concerned, it has not only recognized the existence of minorities but also given them an official status. Beside the general rights the Indian constitution guarantees special rights to the minorities under Art 29 and 30. To secure the interests of minority, the Central Government created National Commission for Minorities in 1978 (James Massey, 2003: 24). However, the so called secular society is not free from the problems which are being faced by minorities. The problems like Communalism, interference in the educational institution run by minorities for the minorities, encroachment on minority property either by rich landlords or government i.e. encroachment on the graveyards of Christian and problems relating Muslims Waqf board's properties. The restrictions imposed on Christian in Ludhiana and later the police firing on Christian youth, attacks by majority on Churches in Gujarat in 1996 and harassment of Christian workers in

district of Valsa directly go against Art 21 and 25 of the Constitution (ibid:65). Thus, the minorities in any South Asian country are not free from the discriminations and persecution. Due to this, their status in social life, even in 21st century, is not up to the expectation. Still there is a lot to do for Minorities on the part of government so that they can improve their living standard.

Minority in Bangladesh:

Hindus are the largest minority community in the Bangladesh and they are scattered all over the country. But mostly they are residing in Barisal, Khulna, Faridpur and Jessore cities. The highest proportion of Hindus to Muslim population in Bangladesh is in the city of Comilla, close to the border of Tripura of the Indian state. The decreasing of Hindu minority population can be seen from research work done by scholars and document published by government of Bangladesh itself. In 1941, Hindus constituted 28 percent of the total population. The census report published of Bangladesh government in 1991 shows that Hindus now constitutes only 10.5 percent. On the other hand Muslim population has been on increase. It was 70.3 percent in 1941 which is increased to 88.3 percent in 1991 census (Government of Bangladesh, 1991). Despite Jinnah's assurance that Pakistan would not be theocratic state and in the new state of Pakistan, Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslim would cease to be Muslims, under the rubric of Pakistan nationalism. But the new state was purely based on the ideology of Islam. This ideology cautiously weaved in state apparatus through various laws which made Hindus insecure. This policy continued by Bangladesh government after liberation. The real purpose behind vested property Act was to economically marginalization of Hindus. After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Islamic ideals were incorporated into the constitution. The shift from Bengali to Bangladeshi nationalism with its emphasis on Islam and the use of India factor in national politics created a sense of insecurity among the Hindus. The minorities of Bangladesh organized themselves under the banner of Hindu, Buddha and Christian Oikya Parishad.

This movement began protesting against discriminatory laws (Seth D.L. and Mahajan Gurpreet, 1999).

H M Ershad changed the secular character of the constitution to consolidate his regime which led to growth of communalism in Bangladesh. Hindus felt most insecure especially after the demolition of Babri Masjid in India. First time in Bangladesh, after the liberation, nation wide anti-Hindus riots took place. Temples of Hindus were attacked, houses burned down, properties looted, mass massacre done, gang rapes, physical assault and so on. To secure their life from the anti minority activities, they fled to India. At this period 90 percent of Hindu households were affected. The composition of refugee figure was 6.71 lakh out of them 5.41 lakh were Hindus (Imtiaz Ahmed, 1996).

Table - 1

Table showing percentage of Hindu population since 1901-2001

Census year	Hindu population (in %)
1901	33.0
1911	31.5
1921	30.6
1931	29.4
1941	28.0
1951	22.0
1961	18.5
1971	13.5
1981	12.13
1991	10.52
2001	9.2

Source: Government of Bangladesh Analytical Report of Population Census, 1991 (from 1951-1991) and for 2001- Wikipedia.

Almost all the people of **Chakma community** are inhabit of Chittagong Hill Tracts, which covers 10 percent area of total land area of Bangladesh. Other tribes like Marmas, Tripuris, Khyang, Chaks and Bawms are also found here. The main mean of livelihood is Jhum cultivation. This area is also rich in natural resources like bamboo, timber and gas and in recent year possibilities of oil exploration. The CHT traditionally had been dominated by tribal. When the first time in 1901 Hill Tracts Manual was introduced, the dominant position of Chakma chief was accepted by local people as well as British government. In the colonial period,

pressure was put by Bengali people over indigenous people of CHT, the British government promulgated the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900 which restricted the stay of non-local non-indigenous people in CHT and devolved only limited power of administration (Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation-Bangladesh 1900). In 1921, the area was declared as 'Backward Tract' and in 1935 it became an excluded area. But after the partition in 1947 and after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, there is steady increase of non-indigenous population in CHT. In 1951, the Bengali population was only 9.1 percent which increased 17.7 percent in 1961 and 33 percent in 1981. This led to grabbing of opportunities, wealth, control over natural resources, land and administration by non-indigenous people. In the CHT 90 percent population is dependent on agriculture where the land area available for cultivation is limited. About 87 percent of land area is reserved for forest, 2 percent for cultivation and remained 11 percent is for free crops, horticulture and other activities (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999: 28).

The crises were arising due to sudden increase in population in CHT area. Burden increased on cultivated land which was less available for cultivation. Situation became more worse when CHT came under Pakistan rule. The massive Kaptai Hydroelectric Project which was completed between 1957 and 1963 near Ragamati district by which at least 54,000 acres of settled cultivable land mostly formed by Chakma tribe were lost. Over 400 square miles of land were submerged with far reaching effects on economy and lifestyle of the tribal people. Around ten lack people lost their homes and prime agriculture land. There was not proper compensation and over 40,000 chakma's crossed the border into India where the majority of them have sought Indian citizenship (Human Rights Documentation Centre 2001).

In the period of Pakistan government it announced the opening up the CHT area for economic development and encouraged poor Bengali particularly Muslim families to settle there. In 1979, eight years after the creation of Bangladesh, President Ziaur Rahman, Deputy Prime Minister Jhamaluddin, Home minister Mustafizur Rahman, the Commissioner of Chittagong Division and the Deputy

Commissioner of Chittagong took secret meeting to settle Bengali families in the CHT. 60 million Takas were allocated for this mission. After the abolition of special status of CHT in 1964, all the powers of land distribution and revenue collection went in the hands of Bangladesh directly. Earlier it was in the hand of local leader called chief of the tribe. These policies dramatically changed demographic situation in CHT that disadvantaged tribals (Chaudhuri Buddahadev, 2003).

Table 2

Table showing population of Buddhists community 1951-2001

Census year	Population of Buddhists in percentage
1951	0.7
1961	0.7
1971	0.6
1981	0.6
1991	0.6
2001	0.7

Source: Government of Bangladesh Analytical Report of Population Census, 1991 (from 1951-1991) and for 2001- Wikipedia.

Under the name of improvement of living standard of poor Bengali and development of CHT region, Bangladesh government allowed poor Bengali families and entrepreneurs particularly Muslims to settle in CHT region. These poor families were not fully aware about reality behind this policy of the government. It was not socio-economic development act but rather it was political deed to nullify the question of tribal rights to self determination by increasing the hill tracts by majority Muslims. Bangladesh government has similarity used to poor Bengalis against the hill people. This policy of government polarized two communities. Bengali in collaboration with police and army started harassing hill men. Tribal families forced to leave their houses. Government official maintained close contact with Bengali social welfare organization which had the function of

organize new people to settle there who were relatives and friends and harass to tribes people so that they would leave the area (Anti Slavery Society, 1984).

Table 3

Table showing demographic change in CHT

1991 census	Total population	Tribal in %	Non tribal in %
Bandaraban	22,9612	47	53
Khargrachari	340,095	48	52
Ragamati	39,7713	57	43
Total	9,7,420	51.5	48.5

Source: Government of Bangladesh Analytical Report of Population Census, 1991.

In 1972 attempts were made by Chakma to sort out the issues. The tribal delegation met to the then Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for the acceptance of four basic demands. The demands were:

- a) Autonomy for the Chittagong Hill Tract, to get her with the provisions for a separate legislative body.
- b) Retention of the provision of the 1900 regulation the Bangladesh constitution which allowed a form of self government, the constitution of the offices of the traditional tribal chiefs.
- c) A constitutional provisions restricting amendment to 1900 regulation; and
- d) the imposition of a ban on the influx of non-tribals into the area.

But these demands were rejected. And this was the turning point of CHT violence and insurgency. On March, 7, 1972 Manobendra Narayan Larma with Badhi Priyo Lama formed the Parbttya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti. Its armed wins was Shanti Bahini (Peace Force) formed in 1972. After mid 1970s it became violent and active attacking military personals, policemen, abducting foreign nationals for money. Military operation also became active in 1980 that continued two decade till the peace agreement signed in 1997 (Chittagong Hill Tract Treaty, 1997).

Human Rights and CHT People:

During the struggle, on the part of CHT people and army operation, on the part of government of Bangladesh; there were mass violation of Human Rights. Massacres of tribal civilian, burning of their houses, arbitrary arrest, torture, extra judicial executions and disappearances reported with the convenience of law enforcement personnel during the year of armed conflict. The killing of people is continuing till now. The recent incident of killing minority people by army is in 1997 at Babu Chara Bazar in Dinghnia Thana area. The clash occurred after the incident in which army personnel allegedly molested a Jumma woman. Amnesty International believes that in an atmosphere of changed political distrust, it is imperative that every incident of alleged human rights, abuse, be it attributed to army, the police, the PCJSS or the dissident of our is to be investigated by an independent, impartial and competent body to establish facts to bring the justice (Joshi Ruchira, 2003).

The formal beginning of Christian in Bengal goes date back to 1577 when Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, allowed the Portuguese to settle and built permanent churches in Bengal. Jesuits were the first missionaries to settle in East Bengal in 1598 and built the first church in 1599. The oldest church in East Bengal is church of the Holy Rasary in Tejgaon built in 1677. There are many cases of conversion of people from Islam, Hindus and tribal people. The population of Christian in Bangladesh is only 3, 50,000.

Some of new churches came up in Bangladesh after independence specially to convert Muslims. Therefore on several occasion, individual missionaries were told without giving any reason to leave the country within 14 days even though constitution allows the free practice and propagation of any religion. When the foreign Christian apply for visas, the bishops of Bangladesh have to take care that the foreign Christian will do nothing harm to religion of majority. On times intelligence personnel also hold queries about the number of conversion taking place from year to year. During these kinds of practices Christians are harassed. When Bangladesh joined Organization of Islamic Conference in 1974, Christian became more prone to harass. One of the goals of

OIC is “to face, combat and defeat Christian missionary activities in the member countries” (Timm R.W., 2002). Christian religion in Indian sub-continent regarded as foreign religion. Despite the fact, the claim of St. Tomas that he founded Christian church in South India in first century and much later Islam came. The reasons behind this attitude are, first, the priests, preachers and chief religious leaders are not from the local Christians but mostly from the foreign origin. Second, the continuous process of conversion, particularly, of poor from majority. Third, close associations of Christian religion with colonial power further reinforce its foreign image. Due to this Christians in Bangladesh are in scrutiny. And the factor which contributes to negative image of Christianity is that it depends on foreign religion particularly for financial assistance. Christian religion in Bangladesh is not self-sufficient to maintain expenditure on building of churches, schools etc. Therefore, there is influence of foreign Christian religious leader than local. So the people in majority have negative attitudes. They have view that foreign Christian will spared their religion through conversion. So the local Christian people caught in between that they can't maintain without foreign assistance, and if they get it, they have to answer to both Bangladesh government as well as providers.

Demographic problem before Christian community is big one. Because of high level of education in Christians, family planning and unlike the majority, they prefer to keep family small. So the percentage of population will further go down from the present which is less than one percent. After the liberation of Bangladesh, initially, Christians cooperated with majority community because of feeling of insecurity and even fear. Insecurity and fear was from overall increasing population, lack of economic resources, high unemployment rate, the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and opportunistic political parties. The biggest danger to the Christian security is been from erosion of secularism in 1977. In place of secular character, priority gave to the Islam in the affairs of the state (Joshi Ruchira, 2002:114).

The vested Property Act 1974 which has been widely abused all minorities including Christians. On November 20, 1978 the foreign donation (voluntary

activities) ordinance passed, according to which no organization could receive foreign donation without registration and prior permission of the government. As churches are mostly depending on the foreign aid, it became difficult to run them. Therefore the ordinance challenged in High Court. The issue is still subjudice. A new Voluntary Activities Act 1993 initiated which aimed at controlling church and mission activities but it dropped in 1994 due to pressure upon the government. In 1982, 95 members committee was formed in each district to investigate into Christian activities in the country. As a result, for many years new church buildings had to be constructed only as community centers. Government further declared that churches would have to pay municipalities for the public services that provided by municipalities. But municipalities never provided any service. Religious education made compulsory upto class VII. On August 12, 1958 Islamic Education Commission submitted its report to the President with recommendation that since Bangladesh is Islamic country, its education must follow Islamic ideas and values (Timm R.W. 2002).

The biggest problem faced by Christian in Bangladesh was the war of Middle East 1990. There was strong support for Saddam Hussain and Iraq. Iraq was Islamic country and attack on Iraq by US means attack by Christian on Islam. So Christians in Bangladesh attacked by Muslims, their churches and houses also attacked. Christian had nothing to do but only bear it. Due to less in numbers they could not resist. Even they could not migrate as in the case of Hindus and Chakmas.

Table - 4

Table showing percentage of Christian population

Census year	Christian population (in %)
1931	0.2
1941	0.1
1951	0.3
1961	0.3
1971	0.3
1981	0.3
1991	0.3

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Analytical Report of Population Census 1991, vol.1.

When one sees the above data; it shows the stable population of the Christian. They are less than 1 percent. So to protect the minorities in Bangladesh is need to have ideals of secularism, democracy, respect to other religion, religious tolerance so that human rights of the minorities would be secured.

Chapter-2

State of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh

Minority in any state remained vulnerable component. Minority community never considered as one of the integral part of the state. In advanced countries, minorities are relatively better than developing countries. In the South Asian scenario, minorities are subject to majority population which always tried to impose their values, cultures, religion, language etc. Bangladesh is not different case. Instead of trying to improve their pathetic conditions, their issues are politicized only and nothing is being done. It is obvious fact when one sees the continuous decrease of Hindu population in the Bangladesh. It is necessary to go into the root causes of why the majority and minority people have antagonistic approach? Where went wrong that caused rift between minority and majority community. It goes date back to 1204 AD, when Muhammad Bakhtiyar and his 10,000 horsemen conquered major part of Bengal. They destroyed temples and Vihars and constructed mosques and minars like famous minar at Pandua, Southern Bengal (Dhar M.K. 2006:17). But power was captured through revolt by Raja Ganesh, a Hindu ruler. However, he realized the pressure of rising Islam in India. As a compromise he allowed his son to accept Islam and rule over the coalition of Turkies and Bengalis by assuming the name of Jalal-al-Din Muhammad. This period has seen as a kind of some synthesis between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal. Raja Ganesh, through his son Jalal-al-Din Muhammad promoted Hindu symbolism and inducted Bengali Hindus inside power structure of the state. He persuaded the policy of synthesisation that helped emergence of class of secular Muslim, who believed in political, economic and religious tolerance. But after the entry of Britishers into India, they found that Muslims were the rulers. So they tried to organise Hindus. The Less in numbers, the Hindus in the then East Bengal and post British land management system helped Hindus becoming land lords, the introduction of English education had also brought Hindus close to the powers. The Muslims, hitherto considered as the first

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nation of India, was pushed back to the third place and by virtue of their modern education Hindus pushed ahead at second place (ibid. P.18). At this time the status of Hindus was really good. They were having enough land to cultivate, doing economic activities like business and trade related to agriculture product. But the creation of Pakistan was based on the religion. As West Pakistan and East Pakistan having Muslim majority, Hindus became target as minority. And religion became force to persecution of Hindu minority. According to fundamentalist group in Pakistan, the position of non-Muslim in the Islamic state of Pakistan should be that of Dhimmis, and they would not be full citizen of Pakistan. They should not be given equal rights as Muslims. They would not have equal rights as Muslims. They would not have voice in making of laws and no right to hold public office. (Bhutto Z. A., 1972: 3-6). When Bangladesh became independent in 1971 with the help of India, the minds of the political leaders and fundamentalist were not so different that of from Pakistan. Few leaders like Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and in some extent Awami League political organisation had secularist view.

Provisions in the Constitution of Bangladesh

The 1972 constitution of Bangladesh gave certain rights to its citizens. These rights are called fundamental rights. There is another category of rights called human rights. Before looking to the fundamental rights, let us see what is difference between both? The term Human rights which does not mean any right used in special sense. Human rights are those legal and moral rights which can be claimed any person for the very reason that he is a human being. These rights came with birth and applicable to all persons irrespective sex, race, religion etc. Jacques Martin says, "The human person possesses rights because of the very fact that it is a persons, a whole, a master itself and its acts and which consequently is not merely a means to an end but an end which must be treated as such because of very fact that he is man" (Dr. Akter Kaji, 1994: 25). But in practice many human rights are being violated. There are some human rights which can be taken away by the state, e.g. right to nationality, right to property etc. So the truth is that the concept of human rights is not at all a legal concept. It is pure a matter

of international law. If particular human rights are recognized by a positive law of a state and is maintained through enforcement machinery only then it becomes legal and enforceable right. Therefore it is better to describe human rights as universal moral rights.

On the other hand fundamental rights are those which are written down in the constitution and are protected by the constitutional guarantees they are called fundamental rights. They are placed in the supreme law of the land which have supreme sanctity over all other law of the land. The object of incorporation of fundamental rights in constitution is not to make them unalterable in any way but they can not be taken away by ordinary process of law making. They are placed beyond the reach of executive and legislative. In *Jitendra Kishor vs. the province of East Pakistan*, the Supreme Court of Pakistan held that “the very concept of fundamental rights is that it being a right guaranteed by the constitution can not be taken away by the law, and it is not only technically inartistic but a fraud on citizen for the makers of the constitution to say that right is fundamental but that may be taken away by the law.” (Halim Abdul M.D., 1998:87).

Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of Bangladesh

Eighteen fundamental rights have been enumerated in the constitution commencing from article 27 to 44. All of these rights are civil and political rights. These 18 fundamental rights are divided into two groups. Group A- Rights granted to all persons- citizens, non-citizen alike. These are six rights enumerated in articles 32, 33, 34, 35, 41 and 44 of the constitution (ibid: 91). Group B – Rights granted to citizens of Bangladesh only. These are 12 rights enumerated in articles 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42 and 43.

Absolute Rights

Some rights have been kept in an unfettered form in the sense that parliament can not, except by the procedure laid down by the constitution, impose any restriction over them. They are following.

1. Equality before law (Art. 27)
2. No discrimination on ground of religion etc. (Art. 28)
3. Equality of opportunity in public employment (Art. 29)

4. Prohibition of foreign title etc. (Art. 30)
5. Safeguards as to arrest and detention (Art. 33)
6. Prohibition of forced labour (Art. 34)
7. Prohibition of trial and punishment (Art. 35)
8. Enforcement of fundamental rights (act. 44)

The enjoyment of rights can nowhere be seen in an absolute right position, for the enjoyment of ones right in the society is subject to the enjoyment of others right. Moreover, modern states are welfare states where collective interests are given priority over individuals' rights or interest. If individuals are allowed to have absolute freedom of speech and action; the result would be chaos ruin and anarchy. On the other hand, if state has absolute power to determine the extent of personal liberty, the result would be tyranny. So restriction may be imposed on the enjoyment of public welfare. Some of the rights are following on which reasonable restrictions are imposed.

- 1) Freedom of movement (Art. 36)
- 2) Freedom of assembly (Art. 37)
- 3) Freedom of association (Art. 38)
- 4) Freedom of thought and consciousness and of speech (Art. -39)
- 5) Freedom of religion (Art. 40)
- 6) Protection of home and correspondence (Art. 43)

The grounds for imposing restriction on these rights have been laid down by the respective sections.

- 1) In the Public Interest (Art 36)
- 2) In the interest of public order or public health (Art 37)
- 3) In the interest of public order public or morality (Art. 38)
- 4) In the interest of security of the state, friendly relations with foreign state, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement of an office. (Art 39).

In the case of above mentioned rights parliament can by law impose only reasonable restriction as mentioned in the respective articles. The reasonability of law can be examined by Supreme Court and can declare law illegal if it is so. But

in practice, instead of providing any kind of security to minorities and making any special provisions to the minority groups, government of Bangladesh kept just imposing the restrictions. The so-called politicking of nationalism and politics for the elite classes failed to provide sense of security, dignity, welfare for the stakeholder groups bracketed as minority in the Bangladesh. The political parties, despite electoral promises written in election manifesto, failed to stand shoulder to shoulder with minorities. Not a single political party has come forward for a cause of the minorities. With the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India, politician found it convenient to counter it with their own brand of religious politics which had made the Hindus very insecure. (Chowdhury & Asafan, 1998: 214).

Right to Impose Restrictions on Fundamental Rights by Parliament

Some of the rights on which parliament by law imposes restrictions. They are following:

- 1) Right to protection of law (Art. 31)
- 2) Protection of right to life and personal liberty (Art. 32)
- 3) Right to lawful profession, occupation or business (Art. 40)
- 4) Protection of property right (Art-42)

It has been detailed in the constitution that the enjoyment of these rights shall be in accordance with law except, subject to any restriction imposed by law etc. Therefore the parliament can impose any restriction over these four rights. And the court can not examine the reasonability of restriction. It will see only two things (a) if the law imposing restriction is valid one, (b) if the things have been infringed or abridges in accordance with the law. For example, it was the law that person could not possess more than 300 Bighas of land. Later it changed to 100 Bighas of the land and the present law provides that one can not possess more than 60 Bighas of the land. In the near future government may make law that one will not have more than 30 Bighas. Moreover court can not declare the law illegal however it is unreasonable. These powers with parliament with no checking by legal authority, that is court, made Hindus more victims of restrictions on the above rights. The parliament deliberately made such laws so that Hindu minority remains as marginalised. Life, Liberty and Property which are the natural rights of

the individual snatched by the Bangladesh government from the Hindu minority only. Through various discriminatory laws in various governments are the facts that they wanted to just persecute Hindu minority.

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the minority communities living there have been subject to unmitigated terror and torture in various forms especially in East Pakistan. Murders, rapes, abduction, forced conversion, extortion, burning down of houses demolition temples, grabbing of properties from minority community are the common features. Deliberate ignorance by the government to provide security to minorities particularly Hindus further degraded the social, psychological, economic position of the Hindus in Bangladesh. The programs of 1950 beginning from February were quite widespread and mass killing of Hindus became the order of the day. Widespread massacres swept all over the East Bengal. The post martial-law dictatorial torture of 1958, the killing of minorities in 1962 and 1964, the wartime terror on the minorities of 1965 marginalized minority communities in politics and society of East Pakistan (Pramanik Bimal, 2006)

The lack of proper representation in the politics, minority remained unrepresented. Their voice is marginalized. While majority is over represented. Having been no reservation given in the constitution, minority people can not prove their strength. The status of minority in political sphere is steadily coming down. The following data gives clear picture of minority representation in politics.

Table - 5

Table showing representation of minorities in politics

Year	Total seats	Minority representation
1954	301	72
1970	300	11
1973	315	12
1979	315	8
1986	315	7
1988	300	4
1991	315	11
1996	300	14
2001	300	4

Source: Amalendu de, Prasanga: Anuprabesh (Essay on Indo-Bangladesh Demographic scenario and influx from Bangladesh, Calcutta, 1993: 18.

The situation of Hindu minority in economic sphere is not different that of from the political spheres. The people of Bangladesh are dependent upon the agriculture. About 2/3 of the total population based on agriculture, 1/5 are in services and 17% are in industry. The garment sector account 3/4 of foreign exchange. Hindus in large extent are also depend on agriculture. But the discrimination by the state on religious ground and excess interference in the economic activities, particularly of the Hindus, lead to continuous increase in landlessness. It increased 1/3 percent of total population at the time of independence to 67% at present, unemployment stands at 35% and no doubt Hindus are also suffering (Seabrook, Jeremy: 47).

Enemy Vested Property Act and Hindus Minority

The plight of Hindu minority worsened more since they are identified as enemies. The Enemy/Vested Property (continuance of emergence provisions) Act 1974 has legacy of defence of Pakistan Rules Ordinance that promulgated in 1965. The law says the properties of Indian nationals residing in Pakistan or Pakistani citizens residing in India will be identified as enemies. The Bangladeshi

government continued the same Act by which Hindus suffered economically worst. A recent study entitled, "An inquiry into causes and consequences of Deprivation of Hindu minorities in the Bangladesh", through the vested property Act has violated Hindus right to property. The study has brought in light that approximately 1 million Hindu household have deprived over 1.64 million acres of landed property which is 3% of the land owned by Hindus. This includes 81.7% agriculture land, 10% homestead land, 1.74% agriculture garden land, 2.4% ponds, 0.68% fallow land and the rest is 3.4%. The property of Hindus grabbed by political parties like BNP 20%, Muslim League 44%, Awami League 17%, Jatiya Party 5%, Jamat-e-Islami 1%. So called secular character of Awami League could not prevented itself from grabbing the property(Singh S.N.,2003:154) The Hindu minority suffered under the government of both, the Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party. The Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a prominent Bangladeshi NGO, in its report Power Safety and Minorities: A brief Report states, in 1999, about 29 cases of forceful occupation of land and property of Hindus have been reported. In the Sunamgonji district out of 21,000 acres of vested property land, 16000 acres have been illegally occupied; likewise in the Mymensingh district out of 29,722 acres of vested property land, 28000 acres of land and 300 houses have been occupied by one influential person. It is no matter whether party is in power or opposition (Ain O Salish Kendra (NGO), 1999).

Mr. Abdul Barkat, a Professor of Economics in the University of Dhaka has stated in his research paper, the average amount of dispossession shown in the official record would be 20 percent which is less than the actual amount. This implies the total amount of Hindus land disposed of under Enemy/Vested Property Act would be 2.1 million acres. The estimated value of these 2.1 million acres of disposed land at current market price would be Taka 12,09,600 million which is equivalent to 70% GDP of Bangladesh of the year 2000. After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, General Ziaur Rahman took over the power. This assassination marked a qualitative change in Bangladesh approach towards Islam, Hindu and India. After the short period of Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman, the legacies of the past started growing with enormous vigor. In the post Mujib era, the successive regimes followed the policies of Maulana Bhasani. The policies of the regimes with India underwent a transformation. The pro-Pakistani forces which tried to escape from India and Bangladeshi armies during the war of independence now started to articulate their interest through communal elements. Communalism which became the solid support base of the new regime which could be sustained on anti-India and anti-Hindu line (Bhardwaj Sanjay, 2002: 304). After the independence from Pakistan, the repression of Hindus did not end completely but came down in some extent in its early days. The post Mujib era has dire consequences on Hindu minority. The status of Hindus, as far as wealth is concerned coming down. The Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), a Dhaka based NGO, estimates that total of 10,48,390 households have been affected by vested property Act. About 30 percent of Hindus households (including those are in missing) or 10 out of every 34 Hindus households are the victims of VPA. These estimates are based on possible assumptions which to be considered sufficiently indicative of the seriousness of the situation.

Because of such repression, Hindu have been fleeing from Bangladesh and taking shelter in neighboring states of India. According to ALRD, the implementation of Enemy Property Act/Vested property Act (EPA/VPA) has accelerated the process of mass out-migration of Hindu population from mid 1960 onwards. The estimated size of such out-migration during 1964-1991 was 3.5 million or 538 each day since 1964. So it could not be wrong if we conclude that E/VPA acted as an effective tool for extermination of Hindu minority. The influx of the Hindu minorities is due to the repression by Muslim majority in Bangladesh. The migration of Muslims in search for jobs have been equally devastating for the indigenous people in the North East India. As result of exodus of Hindus in 1947 to escape from communal riots in the then East Pakistan and subsequent illegal migration, the indigenous Tripurians in the India state of Tripura have been decreasing continuously. So the problem of illegal migration of Hindus and Muslims not only limited to Bangladesh government but also it put huge

burden on India in form of security, economic, political and social. The insurgence movement in the Indian state of Tripura directly related to uncontrolled illegal migration. The marginalization of indigenous Tripurians and unwillingness of New Delhi and Agartala led to seriousness of the problem. The insurgency led by ULFA also rooted in the anti foreigner agitation in Assam. Although, because of religious affinity the focus has been on the Muslims, but it cannot be denied that most of Hindus migrate to India permanently due to insecurity and repression they face in Bangladesh. New Delhi's silence and the approval of Hindu fundamentalist organization in India have encouraged migrating to India and seeking the permanent resolution of the status of millions of Hindus of the Bangladesh. The reaction of both New Delhi and Hindu fundamentalist organization to the atrocities on other minorities in Bangladesh has been contemptible. When thousand of Chakma and other minorities from Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh sought shelter in India in the mid 1980s, New Delhi made to return their homeland. Whenever tribal refugees facing massacres sought refuge in India, they were repatriated. (Human Rights Features, 2001). Now the problem of these illegal minorities migrated to India is that they are neither the citizen of India nor they can go back to their homeland because of the fear of life.

Extinction of Hindu Minority

The treaty of friendship, co-operation and peace with Bangladesh was to be signed over the military defeat of Pakistan and exodus of about 10 million people from Bangladesh to India out of them 9.3 million were Hindus. Few of them have gone back to get their property but by the time it had put under the Vested Property Act. It shows that Bangladesh fought against Pakistani exploitation and cultural domination but it could hardly keep up its friendly face either to the government or to the people of India. The religious oriented leaders are trying to organize and consolidate Muslim masses on the basis of religion and Madrassas teachings. The moderate views of the society are gradually being replaced by Talibani concept. As a result, differences with other religious and cultural sects have become more widened, particularly with Hindu religion.

Bangladesh has become main epicenter of the North Eastern region for propagating and promoting the ultra Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism to which Hindu minority in Bangladesh is the victim. The liberation of Bangladesh from the yoke of Pakistan could not educate enough nor it have any stable imprint upon the people of Bangladesh to evolve friendly attitude towards Hindus in Bangladesh and towards India as well. The anti- Indian attitude of various political leaderships, whether it is Muslim League, Awami league or Bangladeshi National Party, remained same. All the parties try to shape and influence the complementary relation between the process of minority exodus and demographic expansion of majority. The demographic change of Bangladesh society, the Far Eastern Economic Review warns, 'a revolution is taking place in Bangladesh that threatens trouble for the region and beyond, if left unchanged. Islamic fundamentalism, religious intolerance, militant Muslim groups with links to international terrorist groups, powerful military ties with militants, the mushrooming of Islamic school during out radical student, middle class apathy, poverty and lawlessness all are combining to transfer the nation' (Linner Bertil, 2002: 14).

Since last three decades in the rural area as well as among middle section of urban area, a belief that the Bengali Muslims have to strengthen the Islamic identity in order to maintain a sovereign entity of Bangladesh. These should be admixture of Islamic culture and social values with existing Bengali culture for which Bengali fought with West Pakistan. The Islamisation of Bengali culture is more pronounced among the rich, middle and lower middle class people than it was in Pakistan rule. The use of the Hejab, cap and Burkha is continuous on rise. During Pakistani time, not only the AL Leaders but also a section of Muslim League leaders were never seen to use caps and keeping beard or reciting namaj on political ground. Madrassa education was totally neglected and non-acceptable compare to general education. But now political leaders are seen to accept vigorously Islamisation on political ground. The average of total student passing through madrassa education, and their role in the society can not be ignored. As a result, political leaders are trying to win the support of these masses in the manner

they want. It is quite impossible that such large section of student can not be recruited as teachers in Madrassah or Imam in mosques. They can not participate in planning in the modern age. Because of the education in Madrassah is more religious oriented than planning and issue based. So these students suffer from frustration after completing their study. This is basic cause that they are attracted towards terrorist activities. The modern society can not accommodate them and they can neither make themselves suitable for society. As a result they hinder the progress of society and try to reorient society according to their needs. This has great negative impact on religious tolerance by which Hindu community worst affected. One of the primary roles of the state to provide peace and security of its citizen within national territorial boundaries as well as to ensure their protection against threat from outside. Security is an absolute priority for states. In fact under the 1951 convention, and states are prohibited from expelling a refugee from their territory (Milner James, 2004: 209).

The Anglo-Indian population in Bangladesh has literally vanished in the last 25 years. Most of them come to work in state run establishment and British trading companies during the colonial era. However, among the minorities, the tendencie of leaving country is among the Hindus. Apart from the persecution of Hindus, the Christian community came under the attack several times. In 1991-1992 during the Gulf war, supporters of Saddam Hussein, Muslim fanatics attacked the foreigners and Christian community in Bangladesh.

Economic Condition of Hindu Minority

After the passing of Enemy Vested Property Act, the state of Hindu minority in the economic sphere is continuously degrading. Their main source of income is taken away. Hindus in Bangladesh used to be Zamindar, landlords, moneylenders. But the scenario has been changed since last few decades. Today the socio-economic differences between the Muslim and Hindu communities are much less marked than previously. The lack of socio-economic opportunities, hostile attitude of majoritarian towards minority in services, discrimination of the minorities in the services led to more socio-economic degradation of the minority Hindu. The economic opportunities available across the border are responsible for

pull and push factors which have led to more than 500 Hindus crossing over the border every day. Not only this but also Hindu community in Bangladesh has faced the persecution in the field of business. In mid-1993, the popularly elected government of BNP issued orders, which were interpreted as government policy of persecution of Hindu community. The Home Minister asked the commercial banks to control withdrawal of substantial cash money by the Hindu account holders. The commercial banks also asked to stop disbursement of business loan to Hindu community in the district adjoining to India-Bangladesh border (Joshi Ruchira, 2003:137).

In the government services minorities are less in number. This is also one of the reasons of degrading the economic state. In the army their percentage is only 1.74 at various levels. In the police services they are 6.9 percent. And in Banks, 4.82 percent at various level. It is evident from practices and custom evoked by state machinery and government which has turned into unwritten law, that the religious minorities should not be given sensitive positions like head of state, chief of armed forces, governor of the Bangladesh Banks, Ambassadors in a Bangladesh missions, secretary in the ministry of defence, home, foreign affairs and finance. Minorities are deliberately discriminated in recruitment in civil and military jobs, business and trade, banks, loans and credit. The mainstream political parties equally failed to demonstrate their leader from minority community (Roy Anjan, 2006:10).

Table-6

The Following Data Show the Actual Position of Minorities in Army Services.

Posts	Total Nos.	Minority Nos.
2 nd Lt/Lt	900	3
Captain	1300	8
Major	1000	40
Lt. Colonel	450	8
Colonel	70	9
Brigadier	65	0
Maj. Gen.	22	0

Source: Amalendu De, Prasanga: Anupprabesh (Essay on Indo-Bangladesh Demographic Scenario and influence from Bangladesh, 1993: 19).

Table-7**Table showing minority numbers in police service.**

Posts	Total Nos.	Minority Nos.
Assts. Com	635	40
DCP/ACP	87	2
Sp Asst. Inspector General	123	10
DIG	18	9
AD IG	6	0
IG	1	-
Total	870	53

Source: Amalendu De, Prasanga: Anupprabesh (Essay on Indo-Bangladesh Demographic Scenario and influence from Bangladesh, 1993: 18).

Table-8**Table showing minority numbers in Banks**

Posts	Total Nos.	Minority Nos.
GMs	39	1
Director	7	0
Governors	37	3

Source: Amalendu De, Prasanga: Anupprabesh (Essay on Indo-Bangladesh Demographic Scenario and influence from Bangladesh, 1993).

The above data clearly shows the numerically marginalization of minority in the government services. As result of this, their economic situation is going from well-off to worst off. Therefore, these minority people, for the economic activities crossing the borders into India. Those who were landlords at the time of formation of Bangladesh had gradually sold their properties and left the country.

Hindu Minority and Freedom of Religion in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh liberation movement was an intensely nationalist one. This nationalist zeal continued even after the country's attainment of independence. At the political level the cause of Bengalese in the form of their language, culture or religion has been promoted by the state. The rule of majority reflects in the constitution as tempered by reactive elites who politicized Islam for their own gain. The 1972 constitution of Bangladesh adopts secular polity and abolishes all kind of communalism, political recognition by state, exploitation of religion for political purpose and discrimination on religious ground, Art. 2. The preamble of the constitution emphasized secularism as one of the fundamental principle of state policy. Religious belief kept as personal matter but its use and abuse for political matter barred (Hussain, Dr. Syed Anwar, 1997:82).

But in practice, in social and political sphere religion is being played important role. Political leaders preach from the political platforms as well. The government is secular only by the name; religion exerts powerful influence on politics. The government is sensitive towards the Muslim consciousness of the majority of its citizens. But it failed to protect minority groups. There is discrimination against members of religious minority at both governmental and social level. Violence; including killings and injuries, after and before the 2001 election become day-to-day routine against the religious minority. The growth of religious tension in India had a spill over effect and Bangladesh witnessed a major outbreak of communal violence in November 1990 after the wake of the Ayodhya controversy. The attacks on Hindus increased after the 1992 Babri Masjid destruction incident. Temples and idols of worship destroyed. Forcible marriage of Hindus to Muslims and even the imposition of Jaziya tax, especially in the district of Jhenidah, Jessore and Satkhiza (Mitra Sumit, 2001: 55).

Some incidents:

- On October 2000 in Narsingdi, two extortionists demanded approximately \$ 175 from Hindus during religious festival and when it was refused, the two damaged the deity and its platform and assaulted the caretaker.

- On 8 October, 2000 in Dinapur, four Muslims set fire to a Hindu temple over land dispute with the manager of the Hindu temple (Annual Report, 2001: 7)
- More than 100 Hindu women were believed to have been raped, some of them in front of their husband or fathers (Daily Star, 6 Dec, 2001 and Annual Report, 2001).
- Human Rights activists Shariar Kabir came to Kolkata on Nov. 11, 2001 and spoke to the BBC about the Hindus crossing over to India because of recent attacks on the minorities. Upon his return to Dhaka on 22 Nov. Kabir was arrested at air-port (Daily Star, 23 Nov. 2001).

Sandeep Roy, in the article, Attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh raise fear of Talibanisation wrote, the festival of the Goddess Durga in October 2001 was normally the high point of Bengali Hindu cultural calendar. But this year (2001), for thousands of Hindu families in Bangladesh, there was no festival and no rejoicing. The gangs of Islamic extremists tortured Hindus, destroyed homes, raped women, poisoned ponds and attacked temples.

Even though, the persecution of minority, on the ground of religion, the fact to be noted that the ministry of religious affairs administered three funds for religious and cultural activities namely; The Islamic Foundation, the Hindu Welfare Trust and Buddhist Welfare Trust. According to the government, the Christian community did not want government involvement in its religious affairs and requested that there would not be any similar organization for their community. However, the government told Christian leaders that it would soon establish a welfare trust for Christians. At the end of the period, covered by this report, the Hindu welfare trust had a fund of approximate \$1.7 million in saving. Over the year, it received approximately \$ 30 thousand from the government. The trust, founded in the 1980s, used its money to repair temples, modify cremation pyres, and help destitute Hindu families afforded medical treatment (US Department of State 2007).

The state of religious freedom in Bangladesh remained only on the paper as far as religious minorities are concerned. The people of religious minorities are not able to celebrate their religious ceremonies with happy and peaceful manner.

Many times they prefer not celebrate. Only the constitutional guarantees are not enough to give freedom but practical security to get it done is most important. And here, the Bangladesh government is failed to give it. Whether it is military government or democratic government, the religious freedom of the minority remained in same state. The root cause of this is that the religion has been used as a tool by the political parties and politician in Bangladesh to consolidate their power base. It is time that elected representative to take the seriousness of the fact that Bangladesh is not homogeneous state but rather it is multi-national state. And this reality ought to be incorporated in the constitution. The contribution and sacrifice of minority community in the war time can not be forgotten. The another reasons can be sighted that the process of democracy in Bangladesh yet to take the roots. The deep-rooted anti-democratic, social and cultural traits ingrained in minds of political participants have led to vicious cycle of discrimination. The criminalization of politics is undermining the social fabric and leading to growth and fear complex among the minorities

The Plight of Hindu Women in Bangladesh:

The women in any society remained the most vulnerable factor. In Bangladesh it is worst affected at the hands of majority. Women in Bangladesh, particularly Hindus are the first target of the religiously fanatic groups. From 1st October 2001 or before it, torture unleashed at different places of Bangladesh on the religious minority especially on the women and children. The General Secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Ayesha Khanam, writes that the women and children between age group of 7 to 70 have experienced physical torture and molestation of all kinds. A newly made history has experienced rape, looting and misbehave with woman in social life. The atrocities and violence committed during this time is gruesome horrific record of oppression to humanity. The oppression and torture that have committed due to political differences requires trial with separate attitude. The atrocities of barbarism, rape, horrified torture committed to the women of Barisal, Pirojpur, Bhela, Khulna, Goplaganj, Natore, Nazail and other areas of Bangladesh have definitely deep sense of cruelty that generates pain both physically and mentally to them, which they

have to bear for long time. (Ayesha Khanam, 2002). Now the question comes in mind that can these people will pass their future life safely? Taking into account the past experience one can certainly answer, no. Most of the victims can not even express about the happening in the society because of fear and shame. It did become crucial task to set these women in their happy and health life track again for BMP.

The government and administration was not taking steps promptly as requires. Political parties also were not coming forward. So how it is possible to love a country where they are living but their life is not secure. In every particle of the soil of Bangladesh, every breath of air, the right of Hindus and other community are equally ensured with the majority Muslims. The Muslims of the Bangladesh has to recognize this women heritage as long as Bengali language and Bangladesh live. In the field observation, Report on Repression on Minority Hindu Women, Rakhi Das Purakyastha, the Secretary, Training, Research and Library of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, observed that women and girls of different ages who fell victim of physical toucher, sexual repression and rapes were between the age of 13 to 45 years. Most of these women were married. Six of women out of ten whom they talked were kidnapped and confined for three to seven days and gang rapped. Shefali Rani (40), was the member of Rajahasi Union Parishad under Barisal district also rapped. (Purakystha Rakhi Das, 2002: 20).

Political terrorist attacked Hindu's houses on election day and after that day also. The terrorist looked for the male members of the family and as they were not found, they attacked women and raped. In some case male member kept confined and female members were raped. Before this heinous act, the terrorist demanded tolls from Hindu minority families and in some cases they accused the Hindu community member for casting their votes in favour of opponents. When these incidences were happening, houses were set on fire, temples were being targeted and media was highlighting the facts, the then Bangladesh Home Minister Altaf Hossian Chowdhary reacted that, "news of attacks on members of Hindu minority in Bangladesh were baseless, exaggerated and politically motivated." He said during a visit to Barisal that he had not found any evidence.

However, on 26 October, 2001, he admitted that atrocities had taken place against Hindu minority but information about the scale of problem (Amnesty International 2001:3). Amnesty International also issued an urgent action expressing concern over Hindus and other religious minorities those were victims since the general election, and the supporters were BNP led coalition. The members of the Amnesty International throughout to the authorities in the Bangladesh urging them to take immediate action to stop any attack on religious minorities and to provide to the victims with adequate and direct protection. They wrote to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia asking her to set up an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the alleged attacks. As the result in connection with attacks on Hindus, on 15 October, the daily star reported the arrest of Adbur the President of BNP unit at Purba Delua village. He had some 16 BNP activists who attacked Anil Shill, beating him as well as his wife and their two daughters Purnima and Gita in attempt to secure land belonging to their family. Initially police refused to register case against attackers.

The political and administrative negligence towards taking any action immediately is the root cause of widespread of attacks and atrocities. It is very shameful to the Prime Minister like Khalida Zia who herself is a women as well as highest executive authority of the state, but women of religious minority were not secure! Only for the political purpose and to secure vote bank of majority Muslims, she became so liberal towards fundamentalists groups. Rikta Rani, mother of three daughters narrating the suffering stories of Hindu families in Lalmohan Thana before BMP. She said, atrocities and attack on Hindu minority communities were continuing while large number of women belonging to Hindu families were raped and assaulted by the miscreants. Rikta Rani and other requested BMP to send medical team to Lalmohan Thana to provide treatment and advice to the girl who had suffered injuries and faced other health problems. A three member delegation of Mahila Parishad, comprising Dr. Farida Begum, Dr Malek Banu and Rakhi Das Purkaystha, left for Bhola on Nov. 17, 2001 and reached the Hindu dominant villages. (Dr. Maleka Banu, 2002: 37).

The question comes in the mind that why all the minority families thought the best was to approach BMP and not the government? The answer is simple that they had lost faith in government. It was prime duty of the government to look after the casualties happened after October 2001 general election. It is like when custodian becomes custody then what left? Shefali (35) of Fatimabad, a physically disabled woman who could not flee on that day from the area, also became victim of rape. She complained to the local police station but did not register the case. The team sent to Bhola, also visited office in charge of Lalmohan Thana and described their experiences to him. They demanded registration of Shefali's case with police station under repression on women and children ordinance 2000. But instead of this, the chairman of that area and some BNP activists surrounded them and threatened and claimed that nothing had happened in the area.

Recommendation of Field Observation Team

- 1) The oppressed women should be loquet and the government should be asked and compelled to take legal steps for the trial of those responsible for rapes.
- 2) The government should be compelled to provide compensation to all the affected families.
- 3) Adequate measure should be taken to rehabilitate the oppressed women.
- 4) Steps should be taken to resists violation of the provision of equal rights for all citizens as provided in the constitution.
- 5) Informative reports should be prepared on the incidents which have violated human rights to enable the United Nations and other Human Rights organizations to take effective steps in this regard.
- 6) Networking should be strengthening further.

Bangladesh, since its early days has followed the policy that has not been very conducive for protection of minority rights as visible in the case of Chakmas and Hindus. The state of minorities in the Bangladesh is worse then it has ever been. It is because of culmination of number of factors. Moreover the gradual Islamisation of Bangladesh polity has adversely affected the minorities. The

discriminatory laws like Vested Property Act, marginalization in the government services, less representation in politics in proportion to their population have led to further marginalization of minority. No affirmative action taken by the government to improve the status of minority in the sphere of social, economic, politics and education. Instead of this, the approach of government is negative towards the minority. As result of this there is continuous process of migration of the minority into India. When we see the data of census population published since colonial period, there is continuous fall down of minority population in Bangladesh.

Today, democracy is praised all over the world. But democracy in Bangladesh for minority is the government of the repression and persecution. Their basic rights and human rights are not safe in the democratic government. The violence against the Hindus which drew the wide-spread attention of both inside and outside Bangladesh. Violence which broke out soon after the October 2001 election was attributed to the support of BNP and its coalition partners. The one more factor which made Hindus victim was that their support to Awami League. The belated official response is a clear signal to potential problems for the minorities in Bangladesh. Not only this but also, it adopted a hostile posture to any criticism over its handling of situation. Instead of acting against the perpetrators of such attacks, the government was quick to incarcerate critics such as Sharior Kabir for their anti national activists. Such governing concerns and insecurity of minorities, especially the Hindus are bound to have an adverse effect upon the larger bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh.

The guarantee provided by the constitution such as equality before law, non-discrimination on the ground of religion, equality of opportunity in public employment, safeguard to arrest and detention etc. are remained just as myth to the minority. They are not able to enjoy their natural rights like life, liberty and property. It seems that it is second time betrayed of Bengali people after the colonial rule. First, by the West Pakistan rule and second after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. If government is not servicing the purpose fore what it has been liberated, then it is breach of the trust of the people. Therefore it is need to

regain the trust of the people particularly minority. Government has to take affirmative action in sphere of politics and in public employment so that minority people will have easy access in it. Government has to practice properly the provisions made in the constitution. The majoritarian have to change their approach towards minority and society should be inclusive. Society should not be dividing on the line of religion which is pitfall in the making of nation. A nation can not go ahead with leaving some section of society back. The development of all section of the society is important in the long term of national development.

There is needed to take special steps regarding minority women. They are the most victims in Bangladesh. Government should have special and independent authority to investigate the cases relating to women. Justice must be delivered within short period regarding the women's cases.

Chapter-3

Government Policies and Civil Societies Perspective

The aim, objectives, policies as well as civil society perspective are important aspects for the harmonious society. There is no country in the world, where everyone speaks the same language, belongs to the same race, religion, culture and follows the same beliefs and traditions. To preserve and protect the diversity of the race, religion, culture, language, beliefs etc. one needs to look into the policies of the government and perspectives of the civil society. Peaceful coexistence of different national linguistic and religious groups is the asset of any country. But Samuel P. Huntington in his book 'Clash of Civilizations' draws the fault lines between civilization and the battle lines of the future in South Asia. He illustrates historic classes between Muslims and Hindus, where Hindus and Muslims groups are intensifying religious strife. Most of the Muslim Status which were earlier democratic countries became Islamic States and Minority communities constantly face discrimination and violation of their human rights by the state and majority community (Sign S.N.2003:151).

More than thirty five year of political history of the independent Bangladesh to be divided into three parts to understand the policies of the government. One being the Mujib regime, second being the military regime and third being the democratic regime. After a civil war, within undivided Pakistan and with the active support of India, Bangladesh became independent on 16 December 1971, and Sheikh Mujibur became its first Prime Minister. In spite of overwhelming majority of Muslim population, with seizable Hindu and Buddhist Minority, Mujib declared Bangladesh to be secular state. He favoured equal opportunities to Christians, Buddhists and Hindus. It was largely secular state, although there were acts of violence against Hindus during religious festivals. On his active support, the idea of secularism was incorporated in the constitution of

Bangladesh. The Muslim Community in Bangladesh seems to be joint product of early Muslim immigrants from the Arab world and local converts who accepted Islam without completely giving up their previous culture, i.e. the 'Bengali' identity. This dichotomy of Bengali identity vs. Muslim identity is perhaps responsible for not giving form and substance to an integrated Islamic Ummah in Bangladesh. This is been the major source of conflict in the Muslim society of Bangladesh. In the fight between two forces, religion and indigenous culture has led to the transformation of the society into an Islamic State. This further made more insecure minority in general and Hindus in particular (Krishna Gopal, 2003:4)

The process of Islamisation began with the gradual process of conversion and intermarriage. A large number of indigenous Bengalese was converted to Islam. Buddhists were suppressed and persecuted by Hindu rulers before the arrival of Muslim rulers. When the Sufis came to Bengal, they had propagated the revolutionary ideas of egalitarianism in the caste ridden Hindu Society. The principles of economic equality, justice and status of respectability, all these revolutionary ideas attracted the Buddhists and local tribes who adopted Islam as their religion. In order to attract more Hindus and Buddhists, and demonstrate their liberal attitudes to the newly converted Muslims, the Sufis, in some cases, did not insist upon completely giving up their past rituals and ceremonies. The two groups became integrated through intermarriage and, therefore, having common cultural-cum-ethnical legal pattern. The new state of Bangladesh emerged as secular polity.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Regime:

Initially, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had decided to support the idea of Pakistan. He had started advocating for an ideal Pakistan based on two nation theory. He wanted to see Pakistan an ideal state, where the democracy would reign supreme and the rule of law would be prevailed. He wanted Pakistan free from the within exploitation – economic, political, social. But after the creation of Pakistan, East Pakistan became subject to the West Pakistan. Therefore, Mujib thought for a homeland for them, where they would be in majority and there would not be

exploitation of anybody's by anybody. He used to say that there was no point in the harassing the minorities once they had adopted Pakistan as their country and were living as law-abiding citizens. As loyal citizens they were entitled to all the protections and safeguards under the law. Mujibur Rahman had also realized and strengthened his faith in secularism and democracy, equal rights and freedom for all (Chitkara M.G., 1997:70). Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sincerely believed that in his new state of Pakistan, poor people would find ample scope of the development, irrespective of their caste and creed. He fought for them and he suffered for them. He had all traits of mass leaders. He had all qualities of a leader to bring hope and bring out the masses from the difficulties and to arisen them to the respectability. Mujib did all that in his own way and attained an amount of popularity as enjoyed by King or President. Bangladesh won freedom on December 16, 1971 and Sheikh Mujib Rahman became the first Prime Minister. During the regime of Sheikh Mujib, the ideal of secularism was enshrined in the constitution of Bangladesh. A deçlaracion was also made accepting secularism as one of the state policies.

Under the leadership of Mujib, a democratic system had been established and nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism had been declared as the basic principles of the state. Under which all people of the society irrespective of religion, language enjoyed equal rights. In the field of culture, the secular culture was given the way at place communal culture. In sphere of economy, Mujib had adopted the non-capitalist path. His vision was to development of all sections of Society rather than few people. The people from the different classes and from different religion such as Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, peasants, workers, intellectuals, were took part in the democratic revolution led by Mujib. It was pan Bengali movement (Chakravarty S.R. 1995:53).

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman wanted to evolve a political system in which the forces of secularism, nationalism with democratic content, and socialism might get full opportunities to develop themselves. He banned communal activities. The forces of narrow nationalism and ultraleftism were kept under strict watch so that

they might not extend their bases. He was totally against the principle of applying force to suppress these forces. He wanted to fight these forces politically and not through repression. He stood for democracy based on social and economic justice. But towards the end of his regime, due to economic compulsions, Mujib did adopt a policy based on religion. He declared, "I need help from all the nations including the Muslim World" (Talukdar, Maniruzzaman, 1976:119-120). To win the support of the majority section of the civil society who believed in that the secularism should not be foundation of the state policy, the Awami League tried to prove that they were not against the Islam. Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman, the leader of Bengali nationalist elites, declared that Bangladesh would not be secular democratic state, but in order to appease the Islamists in society, he stated that, "he was proud to be Muslim and that his state was second biggest Muslim state in the world. He re-established the Islamic Academy by ordinance on 18 March, 1975, and promoted an academy as Islamic foundation. Even though in the beginning the Awami League government adopted a relatively secular curricula on the basis of the Interim Report of Education Commission, (May 1973), Islamic themes were included in the School Curricula as part of endeavor to prove that they were not averse to Islam. The government introduced religion into school curricula because a state-sponsored survey released that 75 percent of the people rejected the government's initiative to secularize Bangladesh's education system (Sayeed Ifikhar Ahamad, 2006,:151).

The Awami League government also announced general clemency for war criminals, most of them belonged to the Islamic parties, and the various Islamic parties took this opportunity to organize themselves in the underground. The Awami League's reconciliation policy helped to Islamists to forward their politics despite a relatively hostile environment. In January 1975, in a move they thought that it would be helpful in mentioning their dominance in the newly independence state of Bangladesh. The Awami League government banned all political parties and established one party rule in the country. The AL's endeavor to implement a one party system did nothing but further isolated them from the mass. This also encouraged Islamists to organize propaganda through religious assemblies, where

they claimed that government is anti-Islamic because of its endeavor to establish a Soviet model of socialism which according to them was not consistent with the ideals of Islam. To get the support of these Islamist groups, Mujib Started attending Islamic gatherings. Bangladesh became the member of Organization of Islamic countries in 1974 during his regime. He took sudden decision to attend the conference of OIC held in Pakistan in 1974, just after its membership. The diplomatic ties with Pakistan, unconditional pardon of the Pakistanis forces involved in war crimes on the innocent people, especially women and their subsequent safe repatriation, securing the founder membership of Islamic Development Bank (1975), were interpreted by political critics that Mujib stood at confused cross roads. He had significantly shifted from secular attitude towards sentiment of the majority (Dr. Talkder Maniruzzamna, 1990:73-74). Towards the end of his rule Mujib made frequent references to Islam in his speeches and public utterances by using terms and idioms which were peculiar mainly to the Islam-oriented Bangladeshi like Allah, Insha Allah (God willing), Bismillah (in the name of God), Tawab (penitence) and Imam (religious leader). As the days passed on, Sheikh Mujib even dropped the words which he used to say Joy Bengal (Glory to Bengal) and ended his speeches with Khuda Hafez (May God protect you). In his later days speeches, he also highlighted his efforts to establish cordial relations with the Muslim countries in the Middle East.

Thus the Bangladesh polity during 1972-1975 was a peculiar dichotomy. It was secular according to the constitution of Bangladesh at the same time; it was turning towards a pseudo-religious during the Mujib regime itself, who was the great exponent of secularism, democracy and socialism. This was the turning point in the Bangladesh politics from secular to Islamic polity. The seeds of Islamization of Bangladesh politics sowed during the Mujib period. And the successive regime constitutionally acknowledged it. As the result of which, the minority community in Bangladesh became victim. The minority community suffered severely and still they are sufferings. The policies of the Bangladesh government are not conducive to all section of the community. Majority people are enjoying the prosperous life at coast of minority people.

Military Regimes:

General Ziaur Rahman's Regime: (1975-1981)

Sheikh Mujib, the chief architect of the Bangladesh movement, his family members and good number of Awami League leaders and sympathizers were killed in 1975 coup. The right wing junior military officers who organized the coup were alleged to have received help from the CIA. They did receive support from right-wing political leaders of Awami League. The two coup leaders, Major Abdul Rushid and Major Farukh Rahman, who had declared that the Bangladesh would be an Islamic republic. Khondokar Mustaq Ahmed, who was in Mujib's cabinet as full Minister was declared the president of the state by coup leaders. A good number of ministers from the Mujib cabinet took oaths as ministers under the new government. Knondokar Mustaq withdrew the ban on the Islamic activists. This was the first attempt by army in independent Bangladesh to transform the entrenched secular meaning of nation and nationalism and to reshape the political system.

To Islamize the political system, Zia significantly altered the secular nature of the Bangladesh constitution. One of the first amendments in this regard was the insertion of 'Bismilah-er-Rahman-a-Rahim' (in the name of Allah, the beneficent and merciful) at the beginning of the constitution. The leaders and workers of his party also started using this as a preface to their speeches. This invocation is still practiced by BNP leaders and workers. Zia omitted the Art.12 of the constitution, which had ensured the implementation of the ideal of secularism. His military government amended Art 8(1) of the constitution, which declared secularism as the fundamental principle of the state policy (Ministry of Law, 1979). After the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in August 1975, the pro-Islamic groups and parties were given unhindered opportunity to indulge in open political activities. Zia, did legally removed ban on activities of these parties by deleting the Art.38 of the constitution. The Zia regime also added the Art.25 to the constitution which states "Stabilizing, preserving and strengthens fraternal ties

with the Muslim States on the basis of Islamic Solidarity” (Kabir Monoar B.M., 1990:125).

Taking the advantage of this shift in government policy, the Jamaat and other anti-secular forces began suited their role in national politics. The Zia regime promulgated the political Parties Regulation in 1976 seeking to control the political parties by regulating their activities. This had benefited to religious parties. As the result, the religious minority community did become more insecure. It did become more difficult to enjoy religious freedom to minority community which was enjoyed by majority people. As the religion did start playing big role in the politics, the representation of minority in politics reduced. The lack of representation in proportion to their population, the minority community suffered too much. Their voice marginalized in the legislative assembly. Their socio-economic and religious issues did not addressed properly by the majority representatives.

During the Zia regime, the influence of the Middle Eastern countries on Bangladesh, especially that of Saudi Arabia, increased enormously. During 1971-75, only 78.9 million US dollars were given to the Bangladesh as aid but this amount rose to 474.7 million during 1976-81 from the same source. Because of the Islamic image of these aid giving countries, the religious parties and groups in Bangladesh received tremendous boost in their morale. Thus, the political interest of Zia regime combined with internal social pressures and external influences from the new found Arab friends encouraged the rapid growth of religious politics in the country. The foreign policy of Bangladesh, the state was called upon to end endeavor to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among the Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity (Dil. Shaheen F.1980:227). The fund coming from the Arab countries is still being used to encourage faith in religion, construction of Mosques in the villages and sending children to Madrasas for religious education. There are about 64,000 Madrasas in Bangladesh and they produced militant motivated idea Jihad for the protection of Islam. Huge amounts were given to Islamic organization to propagate Islam. The Zeal of Islamic fundamentalist was mean to achieve political objectives. These extremely

narrow minded and bigoted fundamentalist groups have granted ethnic and cultural violence (Singh S.N., 2003:155).

Instead of using the fund for the propagation of all religion, only Islam was propagated. The other religion in Bangladesh purposefully ignored. The Bangladesh Nationalist part, floated by Major General Ziaur Rahman defined nationalism as (i) One race-Bengali, (ii) one religion – Islam, (iii) War of independence 1971, (iv) Bengali language, (v) territory, (vi) Culture and (vii) economy. This nationalism defined by BNP seems that imposing the Muslim majoritarian identity in place of secular, pluralistic identity of the Bangladesh. A debate has been going on with the country should adopt Bangladeshi nationalism or Bengali nationalism. Unfortunately this has been made a fundamental issue creating controversy. Bangladeshi nationalism relates to all the people living in Bangladesh. It is description of filling of political cohesion which inspires Bangladeshi to be proud of their separateness. Since Muslim constitutes more than 85% of the total population, therefore the Bangladeshi nationalism in fact means the Nationalism of majority of its population. This nationalism reflects the aspirations of majority community i.e. Muslims.

Whereas, the Bengali nationalism encompasses all the Bengali speaking people irrespective of where they live. Going by this definition, all Bengali speaking people form one nation. However, the concept of forming nations on the basis of language has become irrelevant. If language was the only factor for making the nation, all Arabic speaking people of the Middle East should have formed one state instead of twenty-two. In India, people are also speaking different kind of languages. So, language cannot be criteria for making one nation. This Bengali nationalism also does not take into account the sentiments of CHT people those speak their own language (Global Political, 2008). This kind of policies encouraged Islamic fundamentalist to attack religiously minority community, particularly Hindu. As a result of which, Hindus kept on migrating to India. The Bangladesh Hindu Christian Buddha Oikya Parishad many times demanded on immediate end to attacks on the minority communities across the country. But its voice did not take into account seriously by any government. The

Parishad's leaders urged to the minorities to be united for movement in the country to protect themselves from communal attacks.

In the 1979 parliamentary election, many candidates of Muslim League fought the election under the banner of BNP with slogan 'defeat Awami League' and keep Islam Safe in the hands of Zia. Restoration of Islam had been popular with army. Thus the religious sentiment became a useful instrument for getting majority support for the new regime. Therefore, the rule of Bangladesh began to coin these sentiments for their political gains to legitimize their military rule in Bangladesh (Bhardwaj Sanjay, 2003:51).

As the constitutional changes made by Zia were conducive to the Islam based parties. To gain the support from Islam based parties, Zia's government gave voting rights to the Islamic activists, who had lost it after 1971 due to their active collaboration with the Pakistani army. At the time of Zia's regime, the former president of Jamaat, Golam Azam, came back to the country without Bangladeshi citizenship. Just before the Bangladesh gained independence, Azam fled to the country, due to fear of facing trial for his role against the Bangladesh movement. He did not recognize Bangladesh as an Independent State during the time of Awami League government and so, he did not have Bangladeshi citizenship. Upon Azami's return, he secretly took the control of Jamaat, encouraging party workers to rebuild the party organization. Meanwhile, Zia tried to develop a good relationship with Pakistan, which is perhaps the reason he incorporated some of the Islamic political leaders, especially those who collaborated with the Pakistani regime in 1971, in his newly formed political party, BNP. This patronization to the Pakistan oriented people nurtured Islamic politics in Bangladesh. Like West Pakistani elites, Bangladeshi Islamists also had unfavorable opinion about Bengali culture, due to its tradition the intermingling of Hindu and Muslim culture and practice, and the embracing of indigenous religious and cultural traditions (Sayeed Iftekhar Ahmad, 2006:154).

Zia's policy of employing Islam for political gain created favorable environment for Islam based parties, especially the Jamaat, which were able to restructure their organizational branches. After the war of independence, most of

the people in Bangladesh believed that secularism would play pivotal role in the state and civil society. But Zia's overtly pro-Islamic stance led to the resurgence of Islam based politics. As the percentage of the Hindus in Bangladesh was not more than ten percent, so their voice in politics remained marginalized. Rather than floating any political party, they supported AL which was in some extent moderate or secular. Five Islam-based political parties the Muslim League, Islamic Democratic League, Khilafat-I-Rabbani, Nizam-Islam and Jamaat were banned during the time of Mujib government because of their role against independence of Bangladesh. These parties were nevertheless legally endorsed by the Political Parties Regulations of 1976, and as a result they came out from the underground. As part of this strategy, Zia granted permission to these parties to function openly to counter Bengali nationalists and leftists parties. When Zia, official lifted ban on these parties, the leaders of these parties agreed to form a greater united party of Islamic groups in changed situation of Bangladesh. However, Jamaat continued to its independent organization, in violation of the agreement. The Jamaat even intended to implement its own political programme through IDL. The Jamaat tried to bring the IDL apparatus under its political control by illegally introducing large number of its own party cadres as councilors and calling for a council session of the united party. Moreover, the leadership contest between Rahim and Ghulam Azam finally led to a split in the party itself (Azam Ghulam, 1983:18).

Meanwhile, the leaders of Jamaat were justifying themselves and their members saying that whatever they had done in 1971, they did it for the cause of Islam. Abbas Ali Khan, the acting president of Jamaat said that they did not do anything wrong during the War of liberation in 1971 and they did it for the save of Islam and it was correct and conformed to ideals of Islam. Beside political platform, Islamic parties, especially the Jamaat, started using various non political organizations such as mosques, madrassas, club, NGOs to elevate their political activities. Political strategic that used Islam as a political discourse and favored Islam based parties thus allowed the Islamists to advance their agenda in the civil society. They took advantage of the state's patronization of Islam to rebuild their

party structure, which had been severely constrained during the Mujib regime, due to his strict policy against pro-Islamic parties. Not only this but also the leaders of Jamaat started saying that the concept of Bangladesh was not correct. Such assertions only served to agitate former freedom fighter and the nationalist and secularist forces in the country. An agitation against the anti liberation forces launched by Freedom Fighter Association and Zia had to make response publically (Nuruzzaman, 1981). Additional factors like grinding poverty, pervasive illiteracy, foreign aid dependency and inability of the civil-military bureaucracy to improve the socio-economic conditions might have helped the Islamic parties to promote their political objective during the Zia regime.

General Ershad: More Reliance on Islam

The 30th May, 1981 was the other black day for Bangladesh when President Ziaur Raham was killed by army officers. Zia entered upon the political stage of Bangladesh at a very difficult time when the new nation saw the horror of assassination of Banglabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. After the assassination of Zia, Abdus Sattar became the acting president. He appointed Mirza Nurul Huda, a non-party but noted economist of international standing as vice-president. The army Chief, General Ershad kept pressure upon the composition of the cabinet. As Mirza Nurul Huda, non party man did not like the interference of army in administration whereas Ershad wanted to play top role in the administration of the country. Ershad held view that army should be given legitimate accommodation in the constitution of Bangladesh. As matter of fact, since October 1981, Ershad was putting pressure upon President Sattar to introduce amendment in the constitution to accommodate the Army's involvement in the administration of the country. To accommodate Gen. Ershad's pressure, Sattar brought in National Security Council consisting of the president, Vice-President and minister for Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Industry, but it was not acceptable to Ershad who wanted that it should be confined to the President and Service Chief. On 23 March, 1982 President Sattar nominated

seminaries in many Mosques and announced a programme of establishing Islamic mission in all the 460 upzillas (sub districts). In contrast with any of the previous military rulers since the formation of Pakistan, Ershad started using mosque as a political platform. Muslim religious rites were performed at all state functions. To obtain support from civil society, Ershad and a good number of his ministers and high civil and military officials became disciples of the saint of Atroshi of Faridpur. The frequent visit of General Ershad and his associates to Atroshi were a clear testimony of the exploitation of Islam solely for political gain (Sayeed Iftkhar Ahmed, 2006:156). During General Ershad's regime the Islamic parties were able to communicate openly with secular political activists and party leaders. For the first time since the independence of the country, Islamic parties gained limited recognition from the secular parties, which helped them to gain acceptance in civil society.

At least sixty four Islamic parties were active in Bangladesh politics during his regime, although most of them were small parties. Jamaat, for the first time in Bangladesh history received 10 seats in the 1986, controversial parliamentary election. The election was boycotted by BNP and leftist parties, but the Awami League, pro-Soviet leftist and Islamic parties participated. However, Ershad's growing desire to give his government a certain legitimacy in public eye, and the ought right hostility of the two major political alliance in the country under the leadership of the left oriented Awami League and the centrist Bangladesh Nationalist party respectively forced him to take a tolerant view about religious parties, in turn, helping the latter to recognize themselves. This resulted in increasing polarization in Bangladesh politics between pro-secular and anti-secular forces. In its efforts to win support from the larger masses, the Ershad government also decided on a policy patronizing religious institutions and programme. In the budgetary allocation of 1984-85, government set aside a huge amount totaling Taka 170 Crore and Ten Lakh for religious purpose. For this goal, the regime had been championing the cause of Madrassas education, trying to create a religious based support for itself (Kabir Monoar B.M., 1990:126).

General Ershad's decisions may appear as primarily aimed at flattering the fundamentalist but it essentially has negative objectives. An Islamic state is meant ipso facto to pander to most conservative and reactionary elements, like the Jamaat-I-Islami, the pro Pakistani Muslim League wanted to have theocratic states like Saudi Arabia. As neighbor, India expects that minorities in Bangladesh will continue to enjoy full citizenship rights along with and security of life and property in which Bangladesh has not an excellent record. Though Islam is the religion of love and brotherhood, it has very much a part of the Indian scene. Some foreign inspired fanaticism in the Sub-continent acted as un-Islamic and against the basic interest of everyone. This sub-continent has been enough of bloodshed and turmoil in the name of religion. The leaders of Pakistan tried to squeeze out the Hindus from the West. They had been successful to great extent in the East Wing, all further attempts to drive out the minorities after 1952 failed in East Bengal. But history repeated again in different way and the new secular state called Bangladesh emerged. But it could not last long and discrimination, persecution, driving out of Hindus started in very short span of time. But the illegitimate rule of Ershad, corruption, rigging of 1986 election and many other such issues resulted into mass movement launched by Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia ended the rule of Ershad.

Return of Civilian Rule: Bangladesh National Party

After the removal of Ershad, Khaleda Zia, the Widow of General Zia, was elected as Prime Minister, however, the policies of Bangladesh during Khaleda Zia seemed to resemble the policies of the previous military regimes. She did not bring any change in the trend of policies what the military regime followed. Khaleda Zia's government strengthened its power base in collusion and cooperation with religious political elements who had a clear anti people role in 1971 and who up to 1977 had been banned from politics. She did not alter any policy of Islamization adopted by Zia and Ershad. The Prime Minister sought support of Jamaat to form a government. To win the support of the people in 1991

parliamentary election, various political parties, including BNP, used religious symbol and slogans. Like the previous military regimes, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia also relied on Islam and maintained close relationship with Islamic parties which were banned (Samander R. and Barun De, 1997:82-83). Therefore, the vision based on the ideals of secularism and democracy too faded away. After the assassination of Mujibur Rahman, politician of Bangladesh have used Islam as well as anti-Indian and anti-Hindu stand as major election plan. This was also true with Bangladesh National party and it was quiet reflected in 1991 election. Following Babri Mosque demolition in India in 1992, the policies of BNP government in Bangladesh became severe anti-India and anti-Hindu. It resulted anti Hindu riots in Bangladesh. The then Prime Minister of Bangladesh Khaleda Zia proclaimed, "The situation arising out of the demolition of the Babri mosque and it would have adverse impact of an Indo-Bangladesh relation. Mujib Rahman Nizami, the secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami, called upon the Muslim world to boycott India economically unless the Babri mosque was built (POT, December, 1992).

The enemy property (continuance of Emergency provisions) Repeal Act 1974 misused during BNP rule. After the 8th constitutional amendment, the security problem of the religious minorities was increased. Large Scale attacks made on minorities in 1989, 1990, 1991 1992 and lands were confiscated as enemy property. On November 4, 1993 the BNP government made declaration for scrutiny of the census of the enemy properties. This declaration was to use the Act to harass and oppress the religious minorities in Bangladesh. In changed political situation, the present government issued two circulars from the ministry of land on November 14, 1996 which states that (a) not to enlist any more property as enemy property. (b) Without prior permission of the land ministry, no member of Hindu, Buddhist Christian, communities shall be evicted out (Bhowmik N.C., 1998). The BNP government had also issued two orders which were interpreted as government policy of persecution of religious minorities. The Home Ministry asked the commercial banks to control withdrawal of substantial cash money against account holders of Hindu community. The commercial banks were asked

to stop disbursement of the business loans to Hindu Community in the district adjoining the India Bangladesh border. In 1996 it lost power to Awami League.

Awami League: Pseudo Secular rule:

In the 1996 parliamentary election, the Awami League won most of the seats. It regained state power after 21 years. Sheikh Hasina, the daughter Mujib, became Prime Minister of the country. The Awami League government also compromised with the Islamists. They did not change anything related to Islam that was adopted in the constitution by the previous rulers. Various religious practices at the state level continued. The Awami League frequently used religious symbol and slogans for gaining popular support. At the time of the Hasina regime, Islamic parties published many well read magazines journals and newspapers. It was Sheikh Hasina's government which forced to flee Taslima Nasreen who came to meet her dying mother. It is because of her writing which brought out the true face of the government in the book "Lajja". The Awami League, despite electoral promises written in election manifestos, failed to stand shoulder to shoulder with the minorities. Instead of providing safety and security to minorities, Awami League leaders also appropriated property of minorities under the name of Enemy/Vested property Act. Muslim League appropriated 44% BNP 20%, Awami league 17%, Jatiyo Party 5% and Jamaat-e-Islami 1% (Bimal Pramanik, 2006).

In August 9, 2000 a special report was published to return vested property. And on the basis of that in 2001, the Vested Property Return Act was passed by Awami League government. But according to the non-governmental sources, the bill provides that properties legally vested under the ownership of the Government and those declared to be enemy or vested property after 16 February 1969 will not be considered as vested property after the said period. Most Hindu property was declared vested property after that date. The bill also states that the proprietorship states of the vested property will not be challenged if property was transferred to government, a government institution, or to a private individual who has been sold or had been handed over permanently by the government at the

directives of a court. It will not even possible to challenge such cases in the court..... The bill also provides that in the event of death of the original owner, rights of the inheritance shall apply in accordance with the Hindu religious personal laws. Hindu women would therefore be automatically excluded from inheritance, since Hindu religious personal laws do not give any rights of inheritance to women (Human Rights Features, 2002). The Awami League's initiative to pass the bill of the return vested property was not really aim at to return the property but rather it had political agenda behind it. The coming October 2001 election was the main focus of the party but it lost the election.

October 2001 Election and BNP's Rule:

The BNP formed an alliance with the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jatiya Party and Islami Oikkyo Jote. It won the 2001 general election and formed the coalition government. Now they started organizing campaigns against the mix culture of the country. For example, in one of his recent public meetings, Jamaat parliamentarian Delawar Hussain Sayidi said that the various festivals related to Bengali culture and traditions were anti-Islamic and originated from Hindu religious practices. The activities and the goals of the Islamic parties and groups were similar, whether they work openly or underground; these were to establish a theocratic state to eradicate mixed traditions of Bengali Culture and practices.

After the October 2001 general election, the minority Hindu community in Bangladesh, especially the women and minor girls of that community, became the victim of violence and atrocities. The barbaric incidence of repression and torture were reported by the national dailies. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad also received reports of such incidence from district committees of the organization. The women of Barisal, Pirojpur, Bhola, Khulna, Gopalganj, Natore, Narail and other areas of Bangladesh were the most affected (Khanam Ayesha, 2002). The looting of properties of Hindus, targeting Hindu temples, burning of houses, rapes and killing of minority people were only tasks of the BNP activities. The aftermath of 2001 general election, was one of the worst events in the history of Bangladesh.

Furthermore, the BNP with its allied parties did not recognize the Ahamadiyya Jamaat as Muslims, and they sought to establish their own interpretation of theocratic state. To accomplish these goals, Islamic parties especially the Jamaat-e-Islami started organizing massive campaigns to create social atmosphere for establishing a theocratic state. They are using various institutions, such as colleges and universities, seminaries, mosques, religious assemblies and NGOs as their platforms to propagate their political and religious ideals in civil society (Ahmed Iftekar Sayeed, 2006:158).

Civil Society Perspective:

It is very much essential to study that what the civil society or majority community have approach towards minority. This kind of study provides significant insight to understand majority-minority relations. The study also takes into account the prejudicial attitudes of the majority minority towards each others. The prejudicial attitudes of majority represent the minority in different ways by using different epithets. Using epithets, the majority represents the minority by constructing some negative images that originate from stereotype. The epithets and negative images used by majority became discourses whenever they exercised power.

Throughout the world, we observe usage of wide variety of epithets by powerful groups towards powerless groups. After the end of colonial period, representation of minority took a new turn when India and Pakistan emerged as two separate independent nations. Pakistan was considered as home land of Muslims and India for Hindus. The Pakistan was born on the basis of religion, hence the large number of Hindus migrated to India before and after the partition. Though there was considerable number of Hindus left in Pakistan. These Hindu minority people became the target of prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives. When Hindu leaders tried to voice the grievances of the minority, they were often attacked by ruling party made allegation of disloyal to Pakistan (Kabir Mohammad Golam, 1980).

During Pakistan's rule, international politics was associated with minority representation. Minority Hindus were related to India as Hindus constituted a majority in India. The label, 'agent of India' was attached to Hindus and still continue in one or other form (Badruddin Umar 1973). The epithets are being used in various ways. Laughing, aggression, teasing, joking etc. are only few in this regard. The particular way of using epithet depends on the nature of personal relations between the majority and minority. The data collected by Field Survey 2000 suggests that minority from middle and an upper stratum generally receives epithets from the majority in laughing and joking ways. The majority also applies these epithets to classmates, friends or co-workers from the minority. 'A school boy says, in his high school, when they gossiped together, some of their classmates from majority used abusive epithets towards them in joking ways. The representation style was such that they were using just for making fun, but they never considered whether minority students taking it that way or whether were hurt by it or not'.

Epithets are used aggressively if the minority belongs to the lower socio economic status. The aggressive manner of using epithet is observed in teasing minority in public places. When somebody from minority passes through a place, the nearby people from majority sometimes start talking among themselves and utter abusive epithets nearby minority people (Goswami Haridhan and Nasreen Zobaida, 2003:.89).

Stereotype Mentality of Majority:

Stereotype is an aspect of mental process. It is a fixed understanding of a group about other group. Stallbrass defines it as, "an over simplified mental image of some category of person, institution or event which is shared by large number of people....stereotypes are commonly, but necessarily accompanied by prejudice, ie. by a favorable predisposition towards any member of the category in question (Stallbrass Oilver, 1977: 601).

The majority in Bangladesh has various fixed images about minority. These images reflect how the majority represents the minority in their cognition. These stereotypes mentality of majority regarding minority becomes discourses when they exercise power on minority. The following table shows the attitudes of majority towards minority.

Table – 9

Attitudes of the Majority towards the Minority

Stereotypical Discourses on the Minority	Attitudes of			Total
	Disagree	The Attitudes of Agree	Majority Uncertain	
Hindus are founder of India than Bangladesh	8	85	7	100
Hindus are most selfish	15	80	5	100
Hindus break promise easily	32	52	16	100
Hindus are Hypocrites	4	85	11	100
Hindus consider India as their motherland	4	93	3	100
Hindus dispatch Money and valuable goods from Bangladesh to India	10	83	7	100
Hindus have no religion	22	75	3	100

Source: Field Survey 2002

The attitudes of majority towards minority are easily understood from the above table. The above stereotypical mentality of majority that the Hindus consider India as their motherland, found most popular discourse in the study. Almost 93% respondents from majority support this discourse. The other most popular discourses are-Hindus are founder of India than Bangladesh and Hindus are Hypocrites. Almost 85% respondents are agreeing with these two discourses. The discourses of Hindus dispatch money and valuable goods from Bangladesh to India and Hindus are the most selfish can be regarded as popular discourses. The popular discourse found in the study is Hindus have no religion in real sense. The least popular discourse in the study is Hindus break promises easily. There are almost no disagreement among the participants from the majority for other

discourse. The tendency majority to relate India with Hindus is clearly evident in the discourse. These discourses express prejudice of the majority and help to maintain a distance between minority and majority.

The stereotypical discourse about Hindu minority also represents the personality characteristics of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh. The negative representation of personality characteristics of the minority by the majority can also be observed in many other studies. Katz and Barly listed the traits that as superstitious, lazy, ignorant, musical (Braly K. W. and Katz D., 1933:280-90). The image of the majority regarding the negative personality characteristics of minority is also reflected in interaction between majority and minority in their everyday lives. An experience of a minority in bank was that he wanted to take loan of 9, 45,000 Taka. He had to prepare a mortgage deed with the bank through the District Sub-Registrar Office of Land. Along with his advocate, he went to Sub-Registrar to make an agreement. But seeing his name on the paper, Sub-Registrar said, "How does bank approve such a huge amount of loan to a minority? (Bell W. and Meier D.L., 1959:189-202).

The question of the Sub-Registrar in above quotation reflects how the member from the majority distrusts the minority. This distrust maybe connected with other representations like Bangladesh is not the homeland for Hindus, they may go to India anytime, they are not trustworthy etc. The Sub-Registrar did not know the minority member personally. Even he did not see him earlier. Without knowing him, he raised his doubt which reflects the majority image about the minority. Various factors in history, e.g. partition of the Indian sub-continent on the basis of religion and mass out-migration of Hindus from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to India etc. that might influence the cognition of the majority. The mentality of majority in Bangladesh is that the Hindus are founder of India than Bangladesh. Hindus consider India as their mother motherland and Hindus dispatch money and valuable goods from Bangladesh to India, can be seen in an experience of a lady in a shop as she wanted some cosmetic items. She was dressed in Sari, conch and vermillion. These were enough to identify her as minority member. She searched for some items in the shop and wanted to buy

some of them. But she decided not to buy one item. When she returned the item to its place, one seller person said her, Didi, this item is from your country and very good. She was so surprised to hear the words 'our country' She asked him what he wanted to mean by these words. He simply replied, your country, India. She told him she was born in this country, her father also born here so how she did become citizen of India? Then he replied, Didi, it's our country. As you are Hindu, your country is India (Goswami Haridhan and Nasreen Zobaida, 2003:93).

Having stereotype in mind, the sales person from the majority tried to motivate the minority person to buy an Indian product hoping that the customer from minority might like India as well as the product of India. There were products various countries in the shop without showing these items; the sales person indicated only the Indian product. Treating the minority as scapegoat is also observed in the study. The stereotypical belief that Hindus dispatch money and valuable goods from Bangladesh to India reflects how the majority treats the minority as scapegoat. The majority blames the minority for the poor economic condition of the country by arguing that they transfer money and other valuable goods to India. It is also heard from majority Muslims that if Hindus have two taka, they try to deposit one taka in India.

Most of the respondent from the minority (82%) acknowledge that they have found their fellow members from the majority to criticize the religion, rituals and practices of the minority. The general places of discussion found in the study are bus, train, roads etc. In private places such as working place, or friend circle, the minority becomes the victim of this type of discussion. Organizing religious discourses by majority under the leadership of a priest is a common picture of rural Bangladesh in the Winter Season. The respondent reported that in some cases, the main speakers sometimes discusses about the religion, rituals and practices of the majority in an objectionable way in order to attract the audience.

Ways of Dealing the Situation:

According to Feagin, middle-class strategies for coping with discrimination range from careful assessment to withdrawal, resigned acceptance,

verbal confrontation or physical confrontation. Later action might include a court Suit (Feagin R. Joe, 1991:101-116). Gardener reported 'blocking' as a coping strategy for women dealing with the street remarks. In this strategy women just ignore the discrimination and continue with the interaction. Feaging and Sikes in *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-class Experience* argues that the personal coping strategies which blacks use to counter discrimination are: (1) defensiveness (2) over achieving (3) developing a healthy self concept (4) prayer and (5) humor or laughter (Sikes P. Melvin and Feagin R. Joe, 1994). One of the strategies is hiding stigma symbol, changing of names as an example. Scott identified dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, and sabotage and so on as ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups. Silence, blocking in, avoiding, pretending and laughing are the frequently adopted coping strategies by minority in the present situation (Scott C. James, 1985).

The adoption of particular strategy by the minority to face discourses reflects the position of minority in the power structure. In some cases the minority takes the discourses as for granted. They think that, as minority, they have to hear and consider the discourse as normal issue. In this way the minority also legalizes the power of the majority. Therefore there is tendency in minority to hide their identity to avoid unexpected situation. This strategy is mostly applied in public places. In some cases, the male respondents hide the traditional ornaments to avoid the comment from majority. In extreme cases, minority member avoid wearing traditional dresses. Some respondent have been found who prefer not to tell their real names in public places because these names are taken from Hindu religion and by these name they can be identified as minority members. In Bangladesh, one can observe the application of power on the minority by the majority through language that acts as discourse. The dominant intension of the majority in the cases of representing the minority by using epithets is repression. The way of addressing the minority by the majority by using epithets shows the power of majority. This power relationship is the symbol of repression. The repression may be either psychological or social or economical or political or combination of three. Foucault describes power as not an institution, and not

structure, neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with, it is the name that one attributes to complete strategic situation in particular society (Foucault Michel, 1981).

Thus, the continual use of Islam as a political discourse by ruling as well as non-ruling elites has mostly benefited the Islamists, in the sense that it has helped to create an atmosphere wherein the ideals of the political aspects of Islam can thrive. Islamic parties, groups, organizations, NGOs, and institutions have been opportunistic beneficiaries of the favorable atmosphere. All have played a complementary role in disseminating the ideals of the Islamic politics into civil society. The relatively powerful position of the Islamists in the state and civil society is the outcome of the failure of the Bengali nationalist elites to establish hegemony over civil society based on secular identity and politics.

The relations between majority and minority are not healthy. The relations between both are based on religion; therefore they have prejudices towards each other. There are some stereotypical images of the majority regarding the characteristics of minority people. In the most of the cases, the stereotypical images connect Hindu religious minority in Bangladesh with India. Therefore, the relations between both are not developed in the healthy manner and up to the exceptions.

Chapter-4

Hindu Minority: Problems and Challenges

The problems of minorities in general and Hindus in particular are still persistence in Bangladesh. The contributing factors for it are religious extremism, religious intolerance, and presence of terrorist organizations, prejudiced opinion of civil society and discriminatory policies of the government. The rising fundamentalism and religious intolerance in Bangladesh is threat to secularism and moderate Islam. Islamic fundamentalism, religious intolerance, militant Muslim groups with links to international terrorist groups, a powerful military with ties to the militants, the mushrooming of Islamic Madarassas, poverty, lawlessness all are combining to transform the nation. All these factors have very negative impact on minority and posed big problems before them such as jobs, business, citizenship, security and safety, religious freedom etc. The situation has become worse in the regime of Begum Khaleda Zia who openly encouraged the fundamentalists to seek and sustain her power bases. The rise of religious fundamentalism or religious intolerance is not started after independence of Bangladesh in 1971, but its roots are back in the history when the Arab immigrant's Muslims and local converted who accepted Islam without wholly giving up their previous culture. There is dichotomy of 'Bengali' identity vs. 'Muslim' identity. Thus, the process of Islamisation began with the conversion, intermarriages and further immigration. This has been major source of conflict in Bangladesh society. In the fight between two forces, religion and indigenous culture has impeded the transformation of the society into Islamic state (Gopal Krishna, 2003: 4)

Religious Fundamentalism and Minority in Bangladesh:

The rise of religious fundamentalism in Bangladesh is the legacy of ideology of Pakistan. Bangladesh is carved out of from the West Pakistan, but many bad practices came with it. From Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's policies to Nawaz Sharifs regimes' followed narrow agenda. Adoption of Sharia in 1991 and the consequent Islamisation of educational, economic and judicial systems continued in all the regimes. The rise and growth of such religious forces led to what has been appropriately termed by Pervez Musharaff as 'a state within a state' (Bahadur Kalim, 1998). The then Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, in her address to the parliament accused the opposition Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina for bringing out true story in the Far Eastern Economic Review that the rising forces of religious fundamentalism in Bangladesh which portrayed the country was in poor light and was largely responsible for spoiling Bangladesh's image as moderate Muslim country (The Statesman, 2002).

People in general can simply understand that the father of Bangladesh, the secular leader, could not save his life, so what would be state of security of minority in Bangladesh. Between mid 1975 and 1990 the policy of, de-secularization of the constitution was undertaken and sustained by all most all the regimes in more or less degree. The Bangladesh's recent political history has virtually been defined by the tussel-for power between two women, Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina. The two women have used religion and Islamic fundamentalist parties like the Jammata-e-Islami. The radical Muslims in Bangladesh first came to international attention in 1993, when author Taslima Nasreen was forced to flee the country after receiving death threats from Islamic fundamentalists. Taslima Nasreen's book 'Lajja' (Shame) dealing with the hostility towards Hindu minority in Bangladesh after the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh in 1992. Her writings and statements provoked death threats from some Islamic groups who claimed that Nasreen had blasphemed the Quran. On September 15, 1998 she returned to the country to

look after her ailing mother and immediately went into hiding. Following her return, a fresh warrant was issued on charges of blasphemy, and Islamic groups reiterated their demand calling for her arrest and punishment by death. The government provided protection and on November 22, 1998 she requested and received anticipatory bail from the High Court. The Bangladesh government also banned her new novel "Amar Meyebela" (My childhood Days) published in Kolkata on the grounds that its contents might hurt existing social system and religious sentiments of the people. The Militants offered \$2000 to anyone to kill her. (Ahmad Kamal, 1998).

While Nasreen's, outspoken feminist writing caused controversy even among moderate Bangladesh Muslims, the entire state was shocked when in early 1999, the three men attempted to kill Shamsur Rahman, a well known poet and a symbol of Bangladesh's secular nationhood (Lawson Alastair, 1999). Later on police arrested five Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami members suspected of plotting the assassination attempt on the celebrated poet. During their arrest police said, they seized a list of several intellectuals and writers (including Nasreen), whom local fundamentalist groups had branded enemies of Islam. The sole purpose of these fundamentalist to eliminate the secular forces and not to dispose facts of persecution of minorities there. The fundamentalist wanted to Bangladesh to be religious state that is Muslim and other religion should subject to the religion of majority. Minority people in Bangladesh are still not enjoying religious freedom due to the presence of fundamentalists groups. Hindus, who are less than ten percent of total population of Bangladesh, have come under attacks. Hindu's places of worship have been ransacked, villages destroyed and more than hundreds of women are reported to have been raped. Hindus in Bangladesh are the victims of violence. The religious extremism is not sudden development in Bangladesh. For several years, Islamists have congregated in hidden training camps, mosques, madrassas and even orphanages, learning the use of weapons and the manufacture of bombs. They have strong patrons in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and certain Gulf states. The cantonment regimes in Dhaka supported them

because they needed such forces to contain the secular forces. Endemic poverty, failure of the major political parties to deliver and long spell of military rule that left political institution at the grass root weakened, have to be seen as cause behind the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in the Bangladesh after the 1990 (Baidya Samaresh, 2006:13).

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism as is being propagated by the political parties in Bangladesh, also extended to the youth of the country. Violence is trickling down from the political parties to their student wings. The campus violence is an extension of violent politics at the national level has seriously affected the academic functioning. The student wings of the political parties frequently turn educational campuses into battlegrounds. Students from minority community in the campus again became the targets of violence. For example in 2000 elections of three dean, 33 teacher's representative to senate own by extremist party (The Independent, 2000). Over recent years, Islamic schools have proliferated and extremist groups have become more vocal in Bangladesh. In the general election in October 2001, the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami emerged as Bangladesh's third largest party. And the violence has become widespread and much of it appears to be religiously and politically motivated. The society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) a well respected Bangladeshi NGO, quotes a local report that says non-Muslim minorities have suffered. The intimidation of minorities which had begun before the election became worse afterwards (SEHD, 2002: 161).

Politics in Bangladesh took a turn for the worse in February 2001 when fundamentalist forces took the streets, encourages by frustrated opposition. In the violence that was unleashed in the name of religion, a policeman was killed inside a mosque, another was shot at in the police headquarters, public and private properties were destroyed. In this violence, minorities were becoming target time and again. The immediate provocation for fundamentalist was a high court judgment that made the issue of Fatwas a punishable offence. The landmark ruling from the highest court which has been stayed on an appeal would have

gone a long way in protecting women who have been targets of Fatwas issued by mullahs, suppressing their legal and social rights (Haroon Habib, 2001). Fundamentalist forces organized a rally in Dhaka on February 2, 2001, under the banner of the Islami Ain Bastabayan Committee (committee for the implementation of Islamic Laws), avowedly to wage a jihad against the court ruling and to wipe out non-governmental organization that opposed the regime of Fatwas. They issued death threats against the two judges who delivered the judgment. In November 2001 Bangladeshi police arrested journalist and campaigner Shaahriar Kabir for alleged anti-state activities on the returned from neighboring India. Kabir had been filming and writing about alleged attacks on Hindu minority in the regime of the then prime minister Khaleda Zia. As part of his investigation he visited India to speak to Hindus who fled Bangladesh because of alleged attacks. He was charged under sedition (Baldwin Ruth, 2002). This raises serious questions about freedom of media and conditions ensured by Bangladesh to Hindu minority since the election in October 2001 of a new coalition government.

The Jamaat-e-Islami as was part of government of 2001 general election, the radical groups within it felt that they enjoy protection from authorities and acted with impunity. The most militant group, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami or Movement of Islamic Holy War was reported to have 15,000 members. The Bangladeshi Hindus and moderate Muslims for many of the attacks against religious minorities, secular intellectuals and journalist in the country have held them responsible. The Hong Kong based news magazine Far Eastern Economic Review has been banned because of the offending article entitled "Beware of Bangladesh" after it described it as land of rising fundamentalism and religious intolerance. The leader of radical Islamic group in Bangladesh has brought liable action of \$2 billion against it. The magazine had published the photograph of the leader of the Khelafat Majlish group, Amir Ali Howaldar on its cover with story on the rise of Islamic extremism and religious intolerance in Bangladesh (Joshi Ruchira, 2003:101).

Many people are of the opinion that attacks against secular Bengali functions including the Bengali New Year's celebrations and killing of Bengali intellectuals and secular politicians have been designed to substitute the rich, secular Bengali culture with fundamentalist ideology. The fundamentalist have also destroyed and attacked religious institutions belonging to faiths. In addition, the home grown Taliban's have begun to impose their values on women. Women are disallowed from participating in outdoor works, games etc. the Jamaat is spreading the Wahabi doctrine with reported blessing from the Saudi Arabia. It had sided with the Pakistan occupation army during the country's independence war. Today, it is first ensured financial power for Jamaat. Despite being a key partner in Khaleda Zia led government, the party has links with various militant networks. The issue of madrasa reforms has been in the center state because of the widely held view that there are close nexus between madrassas and Islamist militancy. Statistic also shows that the number of madrasa teachers has risen in the last couple of years. Teachers in general schools and colleges marked a 12.27 percent increase as against a 16.52 percent in the madrasa between 2001 and 2005. As for the number of students, the figures state that student in general educational institution rose by 8.64 percent while 10.12 percent increase was registered in the madrassas. There is additional rise of 1,618 new madrassas since last couple of years. The total number of madrassas across the country is 8,897 (Baidya Samaresh, 2006:15).

Only in the Awami League government, the secular face of the country was seen. The Awami League Chief, Sheikh Hasina, in a statement, while condemning the demolition of the mosque by fanatic communal forces in India, urged the people of her country to maintain peace and communal harmony and resist the communal forces in Bangladesh at any cost. Criticizing the attacks on the lives and properties of the non-Muslims by fundamentalist forces in the Bangladesh, she gave a passionate call to all, irrespective of caste, creed and religion to maintain communal harmony and brotherhood despite all provocations.

She said that Islam stood for peace and brotherhood. The Awami League Chief directed her party men to stand beside the non-Muslims in the hour of their trial and tribulation. She also instructed the party units spread over the country to prepare a list of temples and other religious places as well as properties of the non-Muslims. Awami League further urged the government to compensate for the losses suffered by the non-Muslim on account of riots. It is also true that even in the Awami League government the compensation was not done properly but social and mental security provided by it to minority was appreciable.

Human Rights and Hindu Minority:

Protection of human rights of the people in general and minorities in particular are essential part of integrated and homogenous society. Human rights in the shape of defending minority rights have remained a first casualty and permanent political anatomy in the life of Bangladesh. The constitution of Bangladesh framed in 1972 conferred all human rights upon its citizen irrespective of race, religion, majority minority. But, gradual changes in the constitution were clear violation of human rights on the part of government. The changes in the constitution were not aim at to reduce the rights and curtail the freedom of all, but rather it was aim at to religious minority people.

The General Assembly, on the occasion of the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights put some obligations on the state that are following:

- (a) To create favorable conditions to enable them to their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, tradition and customs (Art 4.2).
- (b) To allow minorities adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue (Art. 4.3)

- (c) To encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of minorities existing within their territory and ensure that members of such minorities have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of the society as whole (Art 4.4_
- (d) To allow their participation in economic progress and development (Art 4.5)
- (e) To consider legitimate interest of the minorities in developing national policies and programmes, as well as planning and implementing programmes of cooperation and assistance (Art 5)
- (f) To cooperate with other states on questions relating to minorities, including the exchange of information and experiences, in order to promote mutual understanding and confidence (Art 7)
- (g) To fulfill the obligation and commitments, states have assumed under international treaties and agreement to which they are parties.

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution in 1970 authorized the sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to establish a Working Group to receive communications pertaining to the situation that constitute a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights. Such investigation can be undertaken by Working Group with expressed consent of the state concerned and is conducted in constant cooperation with that state (Capotorti F., 1991: 96 to 100).

If we see the above obligation made on state and performance of Bangladesh regarding its implementation, it is far away from it. The atrocities that have perpetrated on the minorities, especially Hindus, had taken the shape of festival in some of the areas. The torture was in every form, namely, grabbing of land, house property, shops, establishments, killing, rapes, passing comments etc. After the general election in 2001, the human rights for the minorities remained only by the names. Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of UN in a letter to president of US, prime minister of India, prime minister of Bangladesh, Ms. Mary Robinson – United Nation Human Rights Commission, wrote that after the October 2001 election in Bangladesh, Barishal, Bagherhat and Firujpur are severely affected. In

Barishal numerous women were gang raped and tortured inhumanely. According to Daily Star and other newspapers, BNP and Jamaat allies went on barbaric rampage in Chandshi, Bahadurpur, Barhi, Pingolkati, Ashukati and numerous other places on minorities for their support to Awami League. They gang raped women publically, gouged eyes, slaughtered any one in their way. An eyewitness says, "you name any sorts of barbaric misdeeds, these Islamic fundamentalist have committed them all." They have even poisoned the ponds so that minorities cannot even drink the water (Annan Kofi, 2001).

On 15 October 2001, Amnesty International issued an "Urgent Action" expressing concern at reports that Hindus and other religious minorities have been attacked since the general election allegedly by supports of BNP-led coalition. Members of the Amnesty International throughout the world wrote to the authorities in Bangladesh urging them to take immediate action to stop any attacks on religious minorities and to provide the victims of these attacks with adequate and durable protection. They wrote to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia asking her to step up an impartial and independent commission of enquiry to investigate the alleged attacks, identify the attackers and bring them to justice (Amnesty International, 2001). This is, of course, nothing new in Bangladesh. During the 1971 freedom struggle, hand in hand with Pakistan army, the local Bengali Razakars, Al Badrs and members of the so called 'peace committee' created by Pakistani army, mercilessly killed and raped thousands of innocent people in Bangladesh belonging to the minority communities and they were never brought to book even after Bangladesh became free. The Bangladesh bar Council Human Rights Cell reports that there have been a total of 45,396 of human rights violations in 2004 including 5,113 murders, 814 rapes and 348 extra judicial deaths in security/police custody. The government has failed to act in almost every case.

Another form of human rights violation is through Vested/Enemy Property Act. This act is gross denial of all types of freedom to the Hindu community, specially the denial of most basic choice, the freedom to make choice to deal with one's own life, property, ownership and assets. A study entitled "An Inquiry into

Causes and Consequences of Deprivation of Hindu Minorities in Bangladesh through the Vested Property Act has estimated the violation of Hindu's right to property. Approximately a million Hindu household have been deprived over 1.64 million acres of landed property, which is 53 percent of the land owned by Hindu household. This includes 81.7 percent agriculture land, 10 percent homestead land, 1.74 percent garden land, 2.4 percent ponds, 0.68 percent follow land and rest is 3.4 percent. Almost all the major political parties grabbed this property of minority (Barkat Abul, 2000).

From the outcome of Enemy/Vested Property Act implementation in Bangladesh and in the Pakistan period, one can say, there are no differences in the cases of grabbing the Hindu property among the political parties. It is a political and social culture of the power-mongers of Bangladesh society that has developed during the last 37 years since liberation. There are also reports of social abuses and discrimination on religious belief or practice. Clashes between religious groups occasionally occurred. Violence directed against religious minority communities still continue to result in loss of lives and property, but the motives, religious animosity, criminal intent or property disputes are often unclear. Religious minorities are vulnerable due to their relatively limited influence with political elites. Like many citizens, they are often reluctant to seek resource from a corrupt and ineffective criminal justice system. Police are often ineffective in upholding law and order and are slow to assist religious minorities. This promotes an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence against them. According to human rights organizations, the military continued to attempts to evict 120 families, 85 percent of them Hindus, from land in Mirpur area of Dhaka abutting the military cantonment. A temple is also located on the property. The eviction was being carried out on the basis of 1961 land purchase agreement by military. The land owners challenged the land acquisition and eviction in court, and the case is still pending.

On June 26, 2007, according to press report, a group of Muslim villagers attacked recent converts to Christianity in the village of Durbachari. On June 12 several dozen Hindus and Muslims converted to Christianity. On the June 26

incident, a group of Muslims in the village allegedly attacked some of the converts and gave them 24 hours to leave the village. Police was sent a special protective team in the village Durbachari to prevent violence and ensure the converts are able to remain in their homes and work their fields. (US Department of State, 2007). Thus, the violation of human rights in Bangladesh is still continuing. The rights guaranteed by the constitution of Bangladesh are not being enjoyed by minority people properly. So, other rights are far from the reality. It is always difficult to make development of any group of people in such state of condition. Human right is the first condition of good and just society.

Islamic Militancy and Hindu Minority in Bangladesh

The religious extremism is on the rise in Bangladesh and the groups identified with or exposing the cause of radical Islamic trends have brought to the country. The militant groups in Bangladesh have grown in strength and reached to the extent where they are able to conduct organized terror campaigns all over the country. The nationwide bomb blast that rocked the Bangladesh on 17 August, 2005 highlighted the organizational capacity of these groups. While the bomb blasts and the suicide bombings point towards a supportive role being played by external extremist groups, terrorism in Bangladesh is essentially a home grown war-militant are waging against their own people in general and minority in particular (The Daily Star, 2005).

The convention wisdom has been to place the growing level of the violence and intolerance at doorstep of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist party and its four party coalition government. The massive victory of Khaleda Zia in October 2001 election was often seen as beginning current wave of militancy (Habib Haroon, 2003). While the militant acts have increased since them, it is argued here that the problem has deep roots and all political forces in the country, including Awami League, have been responsible for the present situation. The politics of Islamisation, growth of madrassas, rise of religious parties, official patronage, and Taliban/al-Quaida presence are contributing factors for the growth of Islamic

militancy in Bangladesh. The Jamaat-ul-Mujaheedin Bangladesh (JMB) founded in 1998, believes in capturing state power through armed revolution and introducing Islamic rule. It has developed a strong network in collaboration with Jagrat Muslim Janata Bangladesh, its partner in terror. The main objective of Jagrat Muslim Janta Bangladesh is Islamic Revolution. During the bombings of August 17, 2005, thousands of leaflets captioned, "Sacrifice and Jihad for Allah", which declared the perpetrators commitment to jihad in Bangladesh and against Kafirs as also to retain the glory of Muslims, were distributed. Due to this spread of religious idea though the power of gun and bombs, the religious minority people have become complete insecure within their homeland.

The first Islamic outfits were formed in Bangladesh soil by Pakistani army in 1971. With the help of Jamaat-e-Islami, they formed Razakar and Al Badar, two armed outfits tailored to exterminated Bengali freedom fighters, which were branded as 'anti-Islamic' and 'pro-Indian'. Mujibur Rahman had banned Jamaat, but after his assassination, General Ziaur Rahman rehabilitated them. While Zia facilitated the return of Jamaat's Amir Gulam Azam, from exile in Pakistan. Zia's wife Khaleda installed two key leaders of Jamaat as senior ministers in her cabinet in 2001. General Zia and his successor's sought to placate conservative religious leaders. The ban was slowly released, political participation allowed and the clergy was gradually recognized as players in national politics (Datta Sreeradha, 2007, *Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat from Within*, p. 152). After getting official legitimacy and political auspices, these extremists' leaders helped to grow religious terrorist organisation to fulfill their religious, political, social interest at coast of minority community. As result of this minority community further marginalized there.

The madrassas education is the biggest contributor in rising of various religious terrorist organisations. Gradual declining role of the state in education is being filled by madrassas, the inability of the state to provide basic primary and secondary education in rural areas works in favour of madrassas which have better network in these areas. Just over 2 percent of GDP being spent on education, the state education system has become insufficient to meet the growing

demand made upon it. But in contrast to the state run schools, madrassas offer very narrow religious curriculum that focuses on Quaranic teaching. But the education provided by madrassas does not generate the employment. The students passed out from these institutions easily fall in the net of religious terrorists organisation. The Unemployment rate among madrassas educated graduates is higher than that of products of the ordinary educational stream (Hashmi I Taj 2001).

In 2002 Bertil Linter warned that Bangladesh was becoming a hotbed of religious extremism and a potential troubled spot in South Asia. Almost there are thirty-three such Islamic groups. Some of prominent are following.

- 1) **Jamaat-e-Islami:** A religious political party originally floated by Maulana Maudoodi. It supported Pakistan against Bengali freedom struggle and most of its leaders fled to Pakistan after Bangladesh's independence. The organisation collaborated with Pakistan army and was responsible for large scale killing of pro-liberation Bengali Muslims and Hindus.
- 2) **Islamic Chhatra Shibir:** Jamaat's youth organisation set-up in 1941. It became the member of Islamic Federation of Student Organisation in 1979. This youth wing has also link with Muslim youth group in Pakistan, Middle East, Malaysia and Indonesia. It has also link with Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMS).
- 3) **Islami Oikyo Jote:** the party was floated by certain pro-Pakistani maulanās after General Ershad seized power through a military coup. Ershad promoted jihadi groups to consolidate his political base. The organisation joined BNP government headed by Begum Zia after 2001 election. This party had given the slogan: Amar Sobai Taliban, Bangla have Afghanistan (we all are Taliban, Bangla will be Afghanistan).
- 4) **Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami:** It is Bangladesh's main militant outfit. The HUJI has active units in India and Pakistan. It set up in 1992 at the instance of Osama Bin Laden, it has estimated strength of 25,000. Its members are recruited mainly from madrassas and unemployed youth.

They describe themselves as Bangladeshi Taliban. HUJI has also considerable arms holding.

- 5) Jihad Movement of Bangladesh: Osama Bin Laden's February 23, 1998 fatwa urging jihad against the USA and Israel was co-signed by two Egyptian clerics, one Pakistani and Fazlu Rahman, leader of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh. The Jihad Movement of Bangladesh is not a separate organisation. It represents a common name from several Islamic groups in Bangladesh, of which HUJI is the biggest and most important. Later the Jamait-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh branched out of this body.
- 6) Jagrato Muslim Janata: It is a recently formed front of the Jammat-e-Islami that indulges in killing and assassination of secular forces and suspected Marxist-Leninist activists. It is active in northern district of Bangladesh and bordering India. The movement is also known as 'Bangla Bhai'-Bengali Brotherhood. The another face of this organisation is Jamait-Ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh. This outfit is supported by Pakistani Islamists tanzeens like Jais-e-Mohammad and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. They try to cruelly enforce Sharia rules and social customs like their Taliban counterparts. The Jagrat Muslim Janta enjoys the support of BNP led coalition government and Jamaat-e-Islami and spreading its activities boarding areas inside India.
- 7) Shahadat-i-Alam-al-Higma: This organisation was floated by Syed Kawsar on December 29, 1996 after the returned from a prolonged training visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Initially he ran his outfit as Freedom Party. He claims that Higma party is affiliated to World Islamic front. Al Higma is active in the Western district of Bangladesh and its operation often spills over to West Bengal. Bangladesh government had banned this organisation in 2000.
- 8) Tablighi Jamaat: This organisation is the main proselytizing arm of the Islamic movement. Bangladesh has a tradition of holding annual Vishwa Ijtema (World Congression) of the Tablighi Jamaat at Tungi near Dhaka. Over three to five million Muslims attend the Ijtenma from South East

Asia, Pakistan, Middle East, Central Asian Muslim republic and the countries of Africa, Europe and Americas. It is suspected that Tablighi Jamaat has link with Saudi intelligence and ISI.

- 9) Ahl-e-Hadis Bangladesh: The Bangladesh unit of this organisation is headed by Prof. Mohammad Rejul Karim. He rose through Islamic Chhatra Shibir. His group has sixteen branches in Bangladesh. It is known to have link with HUJI. The another unit of this organisation in Bangladesh is head by Dr. Abdullah Ghalib. These two units keep on killing each other's cader. Ahl-e-Hadis is known to have organized violent action against the minority Hindu and Buddhist communities. Ahl-e-Hadis manages 200 madrassas in the country, which receives huge donation from Arab countries.

These are the prominent and active organisation in Bangladesh. There are other organisations as well with similar character. The major political parties in Bangladesh have direct or indirect link with these terrorists organisation. Political parties use these organizations for their political benefit. According to media report, violation of Hindu property rights and violence on women seems to have received on large scale under the regime of Begum Khaleda Zia. Even a kind of Jizyia Kar (tax imposed by Muslims on non-Muslims) is reportedly being collected by some of these groups (Chakravarty Tapti, 2003:139). So, as long as the relations between these terrorist organizations and political parties continue, till the date there will be no sign of improvement on the part of minority, as far as their security and safety aspect is concerned. It is responsibility of world community to enforce the human rights in Bangladesh. In some extent under the pressure from US and EU and other donor countries, the BNP tried to curb the activities of these organizations. It also banned Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen and expressed intent to isolate over 150000 volunteers of JUM spread over 40 districts. The BNP's vote bank is mainly derived from pro-Pakistani segment of the society and masses controlled by the jihadists and Islamists organizations (Dhar M.K, 2006).

Forced Migration of Hindus:

There are three main minority groups in Bangladesh comprising about 15 million in total. One, the Hindu religious minority which forms largest chunk of the minorities and are mostly located in the district bordering India. Two the tribals, of Dhorme Chakmas are the most dominant group is religious as well as ethnic minority. They are mainly concentrated in the hills and valleys of Chittagoan Hill Tracts. With very small presence, the Christian constitute the third religious minority in Bangladesh.

In 1947, the Hindus constituted 23 percent of the population of the East Pakistan. At the time of first census in Bangladesh in 1974, Hindu population was reduced to 13.5 percent it declined further to 12.1 percent in 1981. According to 1991 census report out of 126 million, 10 million are Hindu (Bangladesh Census Report, 1991). The Hindus, the largest minority are dispersed throughout country and inhabit rural and urban areas with sizeable concentration in Khulna, Jessore, Dinajpur, Faridpur and Barisal districts. According to an Ain-O-Salish Kendra, an NGO reports, the 1991 census estimated that Hindu population has declined by 0.3 percent since 1974. It is because of sense of insecurity, fear of loss of property, fear of communal violence has caused the migration of Hindus from the Bangladesh (Alternative Thought, Power, Safety and Minorities: A Brief Report, 2001).

At the time of partition of sub continent, Bengal witnessed some of the bloodiest communal riots of the region leading to substantial exodus of Hindus to India. However, despite this background, after the liberation of Bangladesh, the process of migration of Hindus yet not stopped. Unlike the 18th and 19th century, the Hindus remaining in Bangladesh ceased to be the land owning class and have gradually been reduced to petty jobs. The dwindling attachment to land contributed to migratory tendencies among the Hindus and in absence of any immovable land property, they are more easily prone to leave their homes in the time of crisis.

The growth of religious tension in India had spill over effect and Bangladesh witnessed a major outbreak of communal violence in November 1992 following the tension in India in the wake of Ayodhya controversy. The attacks on Hindus increased dramatically after 1992 Babri Masjid destruction incident (Ahmed Ishtiaq, 1999:245). The prevailing anti-India feeling resulted in large scale violence perpetrated on the Hindus with substantial property losses. There were some incidents around 1996 as well. The recurring inter communal violence caused minorities, primarily Hindus, to leave Bangladesh, especially if they had relatives across the border. A gradual build of pressure on Hindus appears to manifest itself in the form of destruction of temples, forcible marriage of Hindus to Muslims and even the imposition of jaziya tax, especially in the district of Jhendidah, Jessore and Satkhira were new development and uncreated to India (Mitra Sumit, 2001:55).

The Sudden spurt of communal violence in 2001 led to a substantial influence of Bangladeshi refugees into India. The Bangladesh Refugee Welfare Council, a Kolkata-based group representing Bangladeshi Hindu immigrants in India, claimed that nearly 10,00,000 people entered in India during the first six-weeks following the 2001 elections (Hossain Moazzem, 2001). Another estimate suggests that in three Bangladeshi districts over 15,000 families became refugee following the post election violence. In the same year, less than three weeks after the elections, one daily mentioned more than two lakh Hindus and few Christian had been forced to vacate their native villages.

On 4 December, 2001, Union Home Minister L. k. Adwani informed the Lok Sabha, about 1,000 persons of minority community have crossed over into India, because of persecution. The gap between the figures is quite substantial. On the Indian side, the question of recent influence of refugee has been closely intertwined with the larger issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. A number of states in the region, thus, are determined not only to identify the new comers but also to evacuate them as illegal immigrants. While the Hindus who

have been living in India since last four decades insist that they were refugee and hence should be treated accordingly, the state of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal has embarked on the task of overlooking these claims (Roy Guha Shanthanu, 2001:22-23). Opposing their expulsion, West Bengal Trinmool Congress leaders Mamta Banerji called for the need to treat the new ones differently from other economic migrants from Bangladesh and to ensure their safe return and resettlement in Bangladesh. Following the influse, Kolkata had witnessed the number of rallies in support of this position. Reflecting these sentiments, on 5 December, 2001 Home Minister, L.K. Adwani assured the Lok Sabha that those who have already crossed to India would be dealt with 'compassion and understanding' due to circumstances leading their migration.

Thus, the religious fundamentalism, human rights violations, Islamic militancy and forced migration of Hindus posed great challenge before Hindus to survive there. These factors even snatched the basic rights of life, liberty and property. Due to the force migration of Hindus, the Bangladesh government not only created to problem to Hindus but also it created problem before India. The migrants coming from Bangladesh put political, social, economic and social burden on India. As migrants settling in North-East, Assam and bordering states in India, the conflict between locals and migrants have started. The local people's concern is that these migrants are grabbing opportunities. In the Assam, the conflict between locals and migrants is over the issue of identity. The migrants population continues to grow will reduce the identity of natives in all sphere including politics, economic, cultural etc. At present, out of 126 MLA elected in Assam, 34 are outsiders and among them 23 are originally from Bangladesh who are presently dominating minority politics in Assam (Assam Tribune, 2001).

Conclusion

Overall study of the status of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh shows that their position in social, economic, religious and political perspective is not good. Government's efforts to meet the problems and needs of the minority community are not adequate. Not only the Hindu minority in Bangladesh, but also other minorities in South Asian region are not satisfied with the policies and programmes of the government.

The worst affected minorities are in the one of the South Asian countries, is the Bangladesh. Linguistically, Bangladesh is one of the homogeneous states in South Asia but religiously it is one of the intolerant societies where the communal violence became the day-to-day routine of the people by which minorities worst affected, particularly Hindus. Not only the Hindus in Bangladesh but also the Chakmas and Christian suffered a lot at the hands of majority people and government time to time. Minorities in Bangladesh are not enjoying their basic rights of life, liberty and property due to government policies and religious intolerance. The reduction of Hindu minority population from 33% in 1901 to 10.5% in 1991 clearly shows that they are not safe and secure there the security of minorities in their motherland endangered. To have safety and security, they are leaving their loved land and migrating to other countries, particularly to India. During the British period, the CHT area was exclusively reserved for tribal people. Non-indigenous people were restricted from settling there. The region was given a kind of autonomy in running the affairs of the area. But during the Pakistan period this area was opened for economic activities and encouraged poor Bengali Muslim families to settle there. This policy also followed after the creation of Bangladesh. As a result, the dramatic change took place in demographic situation which disadvantaged to tribals. It further deteriorated the situation of tribal's, therefore the followed the path of insurgency which jeopardized the integrity of the Bangladesh. So, Bangladesh government has to understand the root of the problems. Before situation goes to worse, Bangladesh

government has to address the grievances of the indigenous people. They have to be given status of Colonia period.

Today, in the manner of handling the situation, the Bangladesh government is not going to solve the problem but it is creating more problems and resentment in the minds of indigenous people. In the manner of crushing the constitutional demands of the CHT people is fair. The voice of the people no more be suppressed. Today or tomorrow, they have to be given it. So, sooner is always better than later. Likewise Hindu minority also became the victim of discriminatory policies of the government. The fundamental rights and secular character of the 1972 constitution remained only on paper. Later on that also changed. Without the fundamental rights, how one can think of development of an individual? It is not new for the Bangladesh government. Since its early days, Bangladesh has followed a policy that has not been conducive for the protection of minority rights. The state of minorities in Bangladesh is worse than it has ever been so far. It is evident that true spirit and essence of democracy remains an illusion for the minorities in Bangladesh. In the name of majoritarian rule or democracy, they have been marginalized politically, economically as well as culturally. The state constitution extends guarantee for majority but not minority. The Bangladesh constitution does not reflect the existence of the cultural and ethnic minorities. Overall situation of the minorities in Bangladesh will not improve unless total fundamental rights laid down in the state constitution as well as by United Nations Human Rights Declaration are not implemented. And this cannot be achieved without the political will of the government, it would be difficult to see a harmonious society without equal rights to all.

The findings of the study in the political sphere, the decreasing trends of representation of minorities in politics is obvious. In the year 1954, the minorities representatives were 72 which came down to 4 in 2001 general elections. If we see the total population of Hindu, Buddhist and Christians that constitute 12% of the total population while only 4 representatives are not adequate to address their problems and grievances. Their voice can easily be suppressed by the majority representation. No efforts have been made to take affirmative action to give

proper representation to the minorities in politics or any other governmental sectors. Moreover, any government of the world will never have the worst kind of act like Vested Property Act that Bangladesh government has it. Through this act, Bangladesh government legally persecuted Hindu minority. Almost all the political parties took the benefit of this act and grabbed the property of minorities. One can surely surprise if he looks to the figures of grabbed properties given by different non-governmental organizations and research of the different scholars. Ain O Salish Kendra, a prominent NGO, in its reports states that in 1999, about 29 cases of forceful occupation of land property of Hindus have been reported. Out of 21,000 acres of Vested Property land, 16,000 acres have been illegally occupied in Sunamgonji district. Likewise; in Mymensingh district out of 29,722 acres of Vested Land Property, 28,000 acres of land and 300 houses have been occupied by one influential person. Mr. Abdul Barkat, a Professor of Economics in the University of Dhaka has stated in his research paper, an average amount of dispossession shown in official record would be 20% which is less than the actual amount. This implies the total amount of Hindu's would be 2.1 million acres. The estimated value of these 2.1 million acres of disposed land at current market price would be Taka 12,09,600 million which is equivalent to 70% GDP of Bangladesh of the year 2000. These are officially disposed figures. Unofficial figures can go more right than what is mentioned above. Hindus in Bangladesh, at one point of time, used to be landlords, zamindars and moneylenders. But the scenario has been changed since main source of income is taken away from them.

This policy of Bangladesh seems making equally poor all Hindus in comparison to Muslims. Instead of helping up to poor's, they are making well-off people poor. Discriminations in the services also contributed to degrading the socio-economic status of minority in Bangladesh.

In government services minorities are less in number. In army their percentage is only 1.74 at various levels. In police they are 6.9 percent and in banks 4.82 percent at various level. It is evident from the practice and custom that state machinery and government which has turned into unwritten law, that, religious minorities should not be given sensitive position like Head of State,

Chief of Armed Forces, Governor of Bangladesh Banks, Ambassadors in Bangladesh mission, Secretary in the Ministry of Defense, Home & Foreign Affairs etc. the minority community which fought with shoulder to shoulder in the liberation war of Bangladesh and bore the atrocities of Pakistan army, is still suffering from the same. Only the rulers are changed, policies and laws are same to persecuted minority only on the religious ground.

As far as minority women are concerned they are the most victims in Bangladesh. The women from the Barisal, Pirojpur, Bhela, Khulna, Goplaganj, Natore, Nazial are the most victims at the hands of the religiously fanatic groups. But on the part of government no efforts have been made to rehabilitate them. No action has been taken by government on the recommendations made by field observation team of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad. When, its own government is not looking after them, then to who they have to look at to take action against accused. There is needed to take special steps regarding minority women. Government should have special and independent authority to investigate the cases relating to women. Justice must be delivered within short period regarding the women's cases. But instead of this, guarantee provided by the constitution such as equality before law and equal protection of law, non discrimination on ground of religion, equality of opportunity in public employment, safeguard to arrest and détentés etc. are remained just myth to the minority. They are not able to enjoy their natural rights like life, liberty and property. It seems that is second time betrayed of Bengali people after the colonial rule. First, by the West Pakistan rule and second after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. It government is not serving the purpose for what it has been liberated, and then it is breach of trust of the people. Therefore, it is need to regard the trust of the people particularly minority. Government has to take affirmative action's in sphere of politics and in public employment so that minority people will have easy access in it. Government has to practice properly the provision made in the constitution. The majoritarian have to change their approach towards minority and society should be inclusive. Society should not be divided on the line of religion which is pitfall in the making of nation. A nation cannot go ahead with leaving some section of the society back.

The development of all sections of the society is important in the long term of national development.

For healthy and harmonious society, government policies and civil society perspective matters a lot. There is no country in the world, where everyone speaks the same language, belongs to the same race religion, culture and follows the same beliefs and traditions to preserve and protect the diversity of race, religion, culture, language beliefs etc., the policies of government must impartial and attitudes of civil society, particularly majoritarian towards minority must be rational. In the South Asian region, the history of Hindus and Muslims is of clashes. But this history should be changed somewhere. It should not be permanent and should not be passed over from one generation to another generation. The coming generation should come out from the past prejudices and mistakes committed by their ancestral rulers.

In 21st century, where world is looking for new scientific, technology, exploring new ideas for the development of the society, whereas, Bangladesh wants to remain in old ideas, traditions and religious belief. The gradual Islamisation of Bangladesh polity has only adversely affected locus standi of minorities of Bangladesh. The intolerance shown towards minorities or any dissenting opinion since late 2001 is an indication, the future of the minorities looks rather bleak. The political parties and politicians in Bangladesh in order to consolidate their power base have used religion as a tool. It is time that the elected representatives take cognizance of the fact that Bangladesh is not homogenous state but a multi-national state. This reality ought to be incorporated into the constitution. A culture of tolerance and respect towards each other needs to be practiced. Bangladesh is not land of the Bangla speaking people alone. The Hindus, Chakmas, the Garos, the Malos, the Santhals and all other communities have contributed and participated in their own ways towards building up this society. Their contribution and sacrifices during the war of liberation and in independent Bangladesh also need to be recorded and acknowledged in the national history of Bangladesh.

Even though the father of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, wanted to evolve political system in which the forces of secularism, nationalism with democratic content and socialism might get full opportunities to develop themselves. He banned communal activities, the forces of narrow nationalism and ultra leftism were kept under strict watch so that they might not extend their bases. But towards the end of his regime, he adopted policy based on religion. He declared, "I need help from all the nations including Muslim world." The seeds of politics of religion sown in his regime which geared up in military regime. Zia Ur Rahman, a military ruler significantly altered the secular nature of the Bangladesh constitution. He omitted Art 12 of the constitution, which had ensured the implementation of the ideal of secularism. Now the pro-Islamic groups and parties started indulging in open political activities which were banned during Mujib rule. Zia Ur Rahman changed the sole of the constitution that is secularism. This has great impact on Bangladesh polity. Taking the advantage of this shift in government policy, the Jamaat and other anti-secular forces began to play great role in national politics whatever restrictions lifted by Zia. Therefore, it was obvious to have adverse impact on religious minorities. During his regime, the influence of Middle Eastern countries on Bangladesh, especially that of Saudi Arabia increased enormously. And this is certain, that no state interfere in the affairs of other state. Not only the internal policies of the Bangladesh government went changed, but also its relations with India also changed. It went closer to the Pakistan to which it was subject for long time. But it happened only because of religious factor. It is again that, due to the people in general are not very much educated about their political system. They are not able to judge the decisions and policies of the government on the merit basis. So, they blindly have faith in religion and follow the leaders whatever they preach.

The nationalism defined by BNP is like to impose the values, culture, traditions, identity of Muslims majoritarian on minorities. According to BNP nationalism means one religion that is Islam, one language that is Bangla, one culture etc.

This implies that there is no space for the language, culture and religion of minority. This kind of policies encouraged Islamic fundamentalist to attack religiously minority community. These policies are still sustained there as a result the majority people lost the trust of minorities. Moreover, it jeopardized the integrity of Bangladesh. People in CHT helplessly took arms in their hand to deal with situation created by Bangladesh government. The successor of Zia was Erashad who was more reliant on Islam. He made 8th constitutional amendment and made Islam as state religion. The clause 12th was removed and clause 25 (2) enshrined in the constitution which reads, the state shall endeavor to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relation's among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity. The large amount of money coming from Middle Eastern countries was not used for any constructive or welfare purpose. This money was used in constructing Madrassas, Mosques. The output from these madrassas and mosques were nothing. The sole aim of his rule was to keep society divided on religious line and enjoys power as long as possible. He made all efforts to polarize Bangladesh politics between pro-secular and anti-secular forces. The pseudo-democratic rule of BNP was culmination of the Islamic politics. No form of persecution left behind during its period. Even world community horrified by seeing the kind of persecution of minorities in Bangladesh. This was the major cause of migrating minorities from Bangladesh to India. This migration put extra political, social, economic and security burden on India. Even after the normalization of situation, Bangladesh was not ready to take back these migrants. Now the problem aroused of their citizenship. They were neither the citizen of India nor Bangladesh accepting them as their citizens.

The BNP's anti-Hindu and anti-India card played well in 2001 general election. The issue of Babri mosque demolition in 1992 was focal point of election. No opportunity was left to use religion for political purpose. The Awami League government also compromised with Islamists. The leaders of AI did not change anything related to Islam that adopted in the constitution by the previous rulers. Even secular forces like Taslima Nasreen could not return to Bangladesh. The Vested Property Return Bill of 2000 was just to appease the

minority and seek their vote in 2001 election. The overall rule of all military rulers and democratic governments was to consolidate their power base. The military rulers as they did not have legitimacy, so they tried to appease the majoritarian people by the means of religion. The tradition was kept on by democratic government as well.

As far as civil society is concerned, there is huge gap of trust between majority and minority people. Majority people do not consider the Hindus as the citizen of Bangladesh. Moreover Hindus have to bear comments passed on them by their classmate, co-workers, passerby etc. sometimes, comments passed on them are unbearable but helplessly they have to ignore them. The relation between both prejudices towards each other. There are some stereotypical images of the majority regarding the characteristics of minority people. In most of the cases, stereotypical images connect Hindu religious minority in Bangladesh with India. Therefore, the relations between both are not developed in the healthy manner and up to the expectations. Religious extremism, religious intolerance, presence of terrorist organisations, policies of government, mushrooming of Islamic schools, poverty, lawlessness all have posed big challenges before minority in sphere of jobs, business, citizenship, safety and security and religious freedom. One can simply understand that the father of Bangladesh and so called secular leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, could not save his life from these fundamentalist, so what would be the state of security of minority in Bangladesh. Many intellectuals, scholars, social activists, political leaders are made target by fundamentalists and terrorists group because of their secular character or secular writings. The objective of these organizations seems to make Bangladesh a theocratic state like Saudi Arabia. They also aim to substitute the rich, secular Bengali culture with fundamentalist ideology.

Government administrative machinery and law enforcing agencies remain mysterious silent in rural and district towns over the human rights violation of minorities. The incidents of loot, arson, demolition of temples by the majority community were not condemned by the government. Neither the opposition political parties agitated for justice and rational approach towards communal

harmony. The parliament also failed to adopt resolution condemning such acts. The criminals were not brought to justice. This has encouraged the Islamist forces to harbor racial tensions. The violation of human rights also noticed by international organization like Amnesty International and US Department of State. Very less efforts have been made to meet the obligations put by General Assembly in regard to the human rights. And no efforts made to destroy the terrorists' organizations which are involved in mass violation of human rights. At present, there are thirty terrorists organization which have links with the organizations outside of Bangladesh. Some of the organizations like Jamaat-e-Islami, Islamic Chhatra Shibir, Islami Oikyo Jote, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, Jihad movement of Bangladesh, Jagrato Muslim Janta, Shadat-i-Alam-al-Higma, Tablighi Jamat, Ahl-E-Hadis are very active in Bangladesh. Many times, even, political parties take help of these organizations to fulfill their political ends. But ultimately the coast of it, many times, paid by minorities in form of physical harassment, loot, killings, rapes, etc. only way out from these persecution is to migrate from Bangladesh. As some of the migrants settling in North-East, Assam and boarding State of India, the conflict between locals and migrants have started over the issues of opportunities and resources. Local people also concerned about their identity and culture as well. So, the condition of these migrants is that go anywhere, they have to face same problems.

Findings of Study

- 1) Status of Hindus reduced as compared to the period of 19th century.
- 2) The percentage of minority in government jobs is not in proportion to their population.
- 3) All major political parties have failed to address the issues of minority.
- 4) Minority women have been worst affected.
- 5) There is mass violation of human rights.
- 6) Minority people are not able to enjoy rights guaranteed by the constitution due to the prevailing situation there.
- 7) There is continues reduction of population of the minority.

- 8) Attitudes of majority are prejudiced towards minority.
- 9) Hindus in Bangladesh suffered worst from the terrorist organizations and Islamic fanatic groups.
- 10) Religion is still dominant factor in Bangladesh politics.

Suggestions

- 1) There is need to restore true democracy and principle of secularism.
- 2) Religion should be separated from politics.
- 3) All accused should be brought to justice.
- 4) Bangladesh government should take affirmative action with providing reservation to them so that it will help to raise the percentage of minority in proportion to their population.
- 5) Bangladesh government should keep strict vigilance on Human Rights Violation.
- 6) Relations between political parties, fundamentalist groups and terrorists groups must be broken.
- 7) Government should do proper rehabilitation of all the affected families of minority.

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