RISE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN BANGLADESH SINCE 2001: A STUDY OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation titled "**Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh since 2001: A study of Political, Social and Economic Implications**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any other University or Institution.

Karnika Jain

CERTIFICATE

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

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1. <u>Background:</u>

The problem of religious fundamentalism has been inherited by all South Asian post-colonial states due to the nature of their heterogeneous societies. A corrupted majority-minority syndrome was acquired by all South Asian countries at the time of independence which magnified communal and religious differences and became an obstacle for internal religious reform, characteristic which encourages exclusion, not inclusion (Bhargava, 2004). The existence of multiple identities on the basis of language, religion, culture, caste etc. has led to insecurities and politics of exclusion in these countries. These countries in endeavour to form a state or a homogeneous populace; have repeatedly undertaken state-promoted models of nationhood that includes supporting one particular language or religion over others as a tool of homogenization. Hence, the principle problem is how to fit many nations within a state and how to tie up various ethnic communities within the project of territorial nation building. In view of this challenge, existing identity conflicts are getting sharpened by the unsettled social equations and political hierarchies (Muni, 2013). At the same time, there have been efforts made to camouflage these dissimilarities and not give them due recognition. However, the interaction between religion and politics has taken a serious turn in the recent years. The problem of religious fundamentalism is not limited to the level of regional and international security but it clearly presents a challenge to domestic policymakers as well. This study aims to explain the rise of fundamentalism in the case of Bangladesh specifically.

Bangladesh today appears to be radically different from the eve of its independence. It came into existence in 1971. The foundation of the country was Bengali nationalism but soon Islam became a significant influential aspect in the country, politically, socially as well as economically. Bangladesh has remained at the position of the third-largest Muslim country in globe. Origin of Islam in East Bengal affirmed itself to the liberal and humanistic foundation but it was soon turned into Islamist extremism with the State's incapability for fulfilling elementary necessities of people, inequality in society, corruption in economy, communistic way of handling culture and education and disrupted politics. The mainstream political leadership was

not at all trusted by people. And a country facing unequal distribution of income, unemployed youth, increasing poverty, there the support for extremist groups in the long run may increase. The country since its independence in 1971 made progress towards being a moderate and democratic country but stagnated due to several factors like political violence, weak governance, and Islamic militancy. However, in the FY 2016-2017, the country has experienced a GDP growth rate of 7.1 per cent (ADB, 2017). But Bangladesh seeks to perform with 7.5-8 per cent rate of economic growth to become an upper-middle-income country by 2021 (ADB, 2016). The rising Islamic militancy and state-sponsored Islamization makes an in conducive environment in attainment of these goals.

The Constitution of 1972 under the regime of Awami League had four principles of nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism (Siddiqi, 2011). However, after coming up of military coup d'état in 1975, his government was overthrown and principles of secularism and socialism were replaced by Islam-oriented state ideology. State adopted some basic changes in the constitution in 1977. The nation emerged on "Bengali nationalism" was transformed on Islamic religious line that is "Bangladeshi nationalism" which had Islam its core. Later in 1988, under the second military regime, by General HM. Ershad, Islam was declared the state religion by amending the Constitution. In 1972, there was an acknowledgement of Bengali as the "national culture and the national language" in the Bangladesh's constitution but afterwards in 1977, there was a drift in politics in the direction of "Bangladeshi nationalism" and later "Islam" as state religion was adopted in 1988. (Jahan, 2015). All this has led to evasion of secularists and minorities.

As per 2011 census, Sunni Muslims embody 90 per cent of the total population of the country, and Hindu population is 9.5 per cent. And mainly, Christian (mostly Roman Catholic) and Theravada-Hinayana Buddhist comprises of rest of the population (United States Department of State , 2015). The dominating population of the country is Muslim religion. Buddhists, Christians, and the people of other religions constitute very less percentage of the total population. Every ethnic group has an identity which brings out distinctive features of that group. Language, religion, culture are the foundation factors that gives rise to the feeling of identity formation and when there is overspill of ethnicity, it leads to conflict and clashes in

the region. There has been ignorance of multiples identities which has led to provoking confrontational violence in the country.

At the time of military regime, the establishment of close links with Middle East also contributed in the rise of Islam. The Muslims of Bangladesh (Hanafi) got influenced and intolerant by the ideas of Middle Eastern Islam (Hanabli) (Bhardwaj, 2010). Bangladeshi workers for their employment opportunities moved to those countries, specifically to Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries and this transported Wahhabi ideology into Bangladesh which helped in creating a social ground for the increased fundamentalist activities like to strengthen Madrasa culture and patronise mosques. In combating religious extremism, state's actions seem to be helpless or at least weak. The role played by the religion in mainstream politics and society strengthened the rise of Islamic militant groups. All these factors have implications within society. Bangladesh has become more religious and the nation of being Islamic is rising and gaining more acceptances and legitimacy (Datta, 2005).

Since the elections of October 2001, there has been rise of communal violence and Islamist extremist activities. The alliance between the mainstream political parties with the Islamist parties, particularly the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and their declared Islamist parties like Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Islami Oikya Jote (OIJ) fuelled these concerns. Jamaat-e-Islami is one of the main Islamic political parties that use Madarsas to spread its Islamic ideology in the country. The process of Islamization has not only influenced the traditional forms of cultural practices but other institutions as well such as academics. The role of the religious institutions in imparting education is questionable because of the radical nature which they have. There has been drift of educational policies towards Islamization with the increase in number of Islamic educational institutions, namely madrassahs. Madrassas can be classified into two types- Aliya and Quami. Quami madrassas do not have control of government over them and inculcate only Islamic religious education. Aliya madrassas are under the government supervision. At present there are 14,000 Quami madarsas which have about 1.4 million students (Ahmed, 2015). Madrassahs are used as centres for training and recruitment and where religion is taught in a more orthodox fashion. Islami Chattra Shibbir (the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami) has also contributed to the politicization of academics and created an intimidating environment for many teachers and students on university campuses. These schools

indoctrinate young minds with an extremist ideology. Currently, government spending on education is around 2 percent of the GDP which is the second lowest in South Asia and it is also lower in comparison to other developing and underdeveloped countries which are at same level of development (World Bank, 2016c).

The rise of Hefazat-e-Islam, an organization that opposes the government's modernizing agenda and any move to reform quomi madrassa education is also to be noted here. It came up with its 13 points demand which included action plan of blasphemy law with death punishment for all people disrespecting Islam. It also attacked the increasing proliferation of politically and socially liberal ideas on the Internet and the media. In 2017, they demanded to remove a statue representing "Lady Justice" in front of the Supreme Court because it was seen as an un-Islamic religious object. It is seen as the fundamentalist and illiberal organization challenging secular fabric of the country.

The country has also witnessed the continuous violent attacks against freedom of expressions and safety. Militant groups like Harkat-ul Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJib), aims to establish Islamic rule by waging war, curtailing anti-Islamic activists and killing progressive intellectuals (South Asian Terrorism Portal, 2014). Cases have been filed against some journalists in charge of criminal defamation and "hurting religious sentiment". They are affiliated with country's highest circulation daily, Prothom Alo. Bloggers, editors, writers who have been in support of the view of secular ideas and freedom are being attacked in 2016 and many of them have been murdered for expressing their unpopular views (Human Rights Watch, 2017). All this leads to self-censorship of individuals and organisations.

Political instability also has adverse impacts on economic and business development of the country. Religious fundamentalism is one of the major causes of creating an unstable political environment. The political uncertainty directly hurts economic functioning of the nation by disturbing market activities and labour relations which in turn impacts productivity. It also affects the investment decisions of foreign as well as local firms. The present government has put into line various projects like more emphasising on the digital and software development for attaining the country to reach to upper-middle-income status by 2021. For this, the government has to look

upon extremist activities which jeopardises the commercial conditions in the country. The economy of a nation heavily depends on how many investments are made within that economy. Unpleasant environment do not attract investments and harm the profitability of businesses, working of the financial markets and commercial organisations. Islamic parties have a huge influence in country's economy because of their powerful economic strength. Thus, the country needs to take stringent actions against the growing Islamic fundamentalism so that it does not pollute its social, political and economic environment. We can say that the nation, who fought for the protection of their Bengali language and culture in 1971 against Urdu speaking Islamic dominance, came itself under an Islamic hegemonic rule.

The aim of the study is to assess the political, social and economic implications of rising Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh since 2001. The study also aims to survey the impact of Islamic values on political institutions, social structure and economic profile of the country.

2. <u>The concept of nation-building in post-colonial societies:</u>

The concept of modern nation state was established by the Treaty of Westphalia. A modern state is a political authority deriving its legitimacy from a well-defined territorial entity and is supposed to be socially and culturally coherent. The articulation of secular interest of its people which are usually divided by non-secular interests and different ethnic identities are claimed by Modern states through the nation (Sheth, 1989). This concept of nation-states historically emerged in Europe with the embodiment of certain ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious entities called nations. There was emergence of different states on the basis of different nations and jointly they developed the idea of nation-states. In international world, the modern states derive its legitimacy through the nation and categories like people or society are not identified.

The view of nation-state has been exported to the outside world by Europe through the process of colonization. This has been done with a blatant disregard for the peculiarities and complexities in the third world. The model was forced to the countries before their societies forming different national identities or could acquire the character of a nation. In common with many post-colonial countries, the central

problem is its failure of national integration. This has led to the eruptions of conflicts based on identities. And the problem of fitting many nations or national identities within a state has emerged.

The term nation building can be defined as comprising of a vast range of physical, political, economic and social phenomenon which covers a social integration in fields of education, language, literature, an identity integration, a physiological integration in a human body, an economic integration of the elite section and masses, a political integration of all sections into a national community, including the primordial groups and backward sectors of a society (Islam, 2015).

In the process of keeping the nation-state together, in order of preserving the state, the ruling elites of the post-colonial countries have started colonizing its own people. The continuation of gatekeeping strategy is used to hold coercive power within a country. There has been emergence of a basic characteristic of a "military-bureaucratic oligarchy" in post-colonial societies. The state to hold power and autonomy over its people mediates through the interests of three exploiting competing classes that are; the landed classes, indigenous bourgeoisie and metropolitan neo-colonialist bourgeoisie (Alavi, 1972). Colonialism has changed societies; it has altered institutional structures and led to the supremacy of political and administrative institutions. Through these institutions, the concept of private property and capitalist mode of production is preserved. The autonomous apparatus of state does not only include military and bureaucracy but politicians and political parties as well to mediate interest of states, to manipulate public relations to be acceptable at the community. The situation at the time of independence got worsened because post-colonial societies did not possess a powerful and strong indigenous bourgeoisie and easily got subordinated by relatively highly developed colonial state apparatus that is the bureaucratic-military apparatus of the state through which the Metropolitan has exercised their domination (Alavi, 1972).

The problem in post-colonial societies is that the state is not established by native bourgeoisie unlike what happened in Europe. The nations were constituted into states but in post-colonial societies states are transformed into nation (Alavi, 1989). The tension of political identity is such, that the rise of sub-national movements is seen as a threat to the nation and of suppressing national identity. In Europe, national

unification movements preceded formation of nation states so that people within a state could constitute the common identity and purpose.

The heterogeneities within each cultural and religious group are so vast in the third world societies that they are not adequately recognized. The individualism of distinct ethnic identity groups get blurred in one national identity. Either military or democratic rules, both have used the concept of Metropolis-Satellite relations where each national and local metropolis exploits a region (satellite) to promote their own enrichment and development. Colonial rule has altered relationship between state and social classes in postcolonial society. Bourgeoisie in their selfish interest have created state institutions with a powerful backing of bureaucratic-military apparatus and government institutions for subordinating native classes. The problem of integration, non-democratic practices and peaceful co-existence also increases when the executive organ of the state is more powerful and is in the hands of bourgeoisie.

Bangladesh is undergoing through the same post-colonial dilemma of nation-building and integrating different ethno-religion, ethno-lingual classes. Its repercussions are quite visible in its social, political and economic arena.

3. <u>Review of the Literature:</u>

This section is divided into four sub-themes and they are as follows:

3.1 <u>*Islamic fundamentalism and political violence*</u>

Siddiqi (2011) offers an overview of Bangladeshi politics since its independence. From the questions of national identity in explaining the place of religion in defining Bengali/Bangladeshi nationalism to analysing the course of political events has been explained. Changes like removing the ban on the use of religion in politics or to rehabilitate political parties like Jamaat-e-Islami and other religious parties and how General Ershad consolidated the non-secular face of the nation. Jamaat was one of the main parties that were in opposition for the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan. He further talks about the polarization of parties Awami League and BNP because of their Bangladeshi-Bengali divide and how Bangladeshis now lives in an environment in which politics has been criminalized due to the nature of party

structure which have promoted criminalization of political processes. Islamist politics has flourished with encouragement by the state.

Jahan (2015) highlights the trends of building up of nation state and national identity on the lines of dominant cultural perceptions. He mentions the fundamental amendments by which religion has been designated in politics. In 1977, various changes were done in the constitution like the fundamental principle was added stating "the principles of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah". The word "secularism" did not find any place in the Constitution. At the top of preamble, 'BISMILLAH-AR-RAHMAN-AR-RAHIM' (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, and the Merciful) was inscribed. Furthermore, "Bangladeshi Nationalism" got adopted by the Fifth Amendment of the constitution replacing "Bangalee Nationalism". And later, "Islam" was announced as state religion in 1988 by the eighth amendment. Hence, accordingly there was a drift towards Islamic religious state from secular principles.

Moniruzzaman (2009), discusses about the party politics and violence caused by islamist groups in Bangladesh. He takes up the study of political parties and concludes that political violence has become a constant feature in the political scenario of the country. It has become excessively aggressive since 1991. The ruling parties have failed to make the institution an independent body and manipulate issues in favour of its party politics. Bomb blasts are new political violence which has come into the limelight of the politics of the country. The radical Islamic religious parties and groups like Harkatul Jihad and Jamatul Mujahideen are assumed to use these bomb blasts to spread violence in the country. From 1999-2005, around 489 bomb blasts occurred and HuJI-B and JMB were behind it. Bangladeshi nationalism's unique characteristic in Muslim culture and geographical aspect, which implicit Bangladeshi first, and then the rest, has been explained further. Islamic parties such as JIB argue that the Islamic ideology should be the base for the formation of national identity and ask for complete elimination of secularism.

Kumar (2009), talks about issues and worries related to the increase of Islamic political parties in Bangladesh's society because of their ultimate objective of establishing an Islamic state. The focus has been given especially to Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh. In 1941, in British India, Jamaat-e-Islami ('Jamaat') was organized.

During the liberation of Bangladesh, there was a ban put on the party but later its workers restructured themselves in May 1972 and promoted Islam. Its goal is 'nothing but to achieve the pleasure of Allah and the success in the life hereafter through all-round struggle to build Islamic order revealed by Allah'. The party has taken their actions very strategically to establish their ideology all over the country and to spread the idea of an Islamic state. These parties namely Jamaat possess large amount of social, economic and political links. And they use these networks in helping people's aspirations and aims which are not fulfilled by the state like unemployment issue or poverty.

South Asian Terrorism Portal (2014) publishes report about the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) which has played a major role in spreading Islam in the country. It is a Pakistan-based terrorist group with an affiliate in Bangladesh. The party is afflicted with the idea of Deobandi School which inculcates radical Islamic values. It is influenced by Osama bin Laden and the Taliban and at one period of time, it came up with a slogan, Amra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan (We will all become Taliban and we will turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan). The group wants to construct Islamic hegemonic rule in the country by waging war. It describes itself as the "second line of defence for every Muslim".

Bhardwaj (2010), talks about the BNP association with an ideology of 'Bangladeshi nationalism' and AL's association to the 'Bengali Nationalism'. He discusses that after the after the BNP-led governing coalition with Islamist parties, Islamic groups such as the Islamic Chattra Shibir and HUJI-B have emerged in the forefront of the mainstream politics. This has caused a significant rise of Islamic extremism as at one time these were shunned as collaborators and now they have occupied the mainstream political space. Along with the dominance of Middle Eastern Islam, other factors such as continuing economic underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment have also been a contributing factor in the rise of Islamic extremism because these people are easily targeted and taken advantage of their religious sentiments.

Islam and Marzia (2013), analyses reasons for Islam playing the important role in the politics and how the adoption of a state religion is testimony to religion's political

role. Religion and religio-political forces have impacted the domestic politics as well. He further adds that in the economic crisis, uneven process of development, unavailability of proper social indicators and deprivation of fully developed state, Islamic extremists would continue to exist and pose a threat. And mentioning of slogans like "Allah is Great" by secular parties such as Awami League is also an alarming situation. He mentions different religion based political Parties like Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh Islami Front, Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh Islami Front, Islami Oikya Jote which promotes Islam in the country.

3.2 *Impact of Islamic fundamentalism on education system*

Kumar (2009) discusses about how madarsas are being utilised by Jamaat as a ground to achieve its goal of making country's society on Islamic religious lines. In last few years, there has been a rise of Quami madrassas which are not under the supervision of government and teaches only Islamic religious values. All this has contributed to the rise of Islamic extremism. There is a perception amongst people that their children will go to heaven if they get their teachings in madrassas. The madrassas are being used as a place for arms training and preparing for 'jihad'. Its ideas have gone into state universities and state machineries as well. The Jamaat has its own newspaper publications via which it is easily to spread radical Islamist ideas.

Griffiths and Hasan (2015) talks about the growth of Hefazat-e-Islam as a problem to secular education. Hefazat gets benefitted from the religious followers. The organisation was founded in 2011 and since then it stands into opposition against providing Muslim women equal rights or to bring changes in Quomi Madrasa education. Around 1.5 million students study in total 6,500 Quomi madrassahs in Bangladesh. He further talks on an institutional level, that to spread Islamic ideology, Muslim prayers were started getting transmitted on state-run TV and radio stations. Different institutions like Ministry of Religion, Islamic universities and madrassahs focussed on the cultivation of religion. The Islamic Foundation, which earlier was known as Islamic Academy is now transformed into an institute for stud on Islamic research.

Ahmad (2004), analyses the madrassa education in Bangladesh. These Quomi madrassas are predominantly of Deobandi persuasion. They are given assistance by religious endowments or by zakat, sadaqa, and donations from the faithful. This has made ulemas powerful to resist any modern reform of state authorities. They are the bearers of the legal and religio-political tradition and revolt against any changes made in the madrassa system. They oppose changes which can bring bridge the difference between the conservative way of Islamic education and contemporary secular teaching. And no formal admission procedures and academic timetable is followed in majority of them.

Kumar (2012) highlights the threat posed by Islamic radicalism to Bangladeshi politics and society. The country known for its Sufi Islam has witnessed a spurt of Islamic radicalism. Though madrassas make an easy pathway for Islamic groups to spread their radical ideology but they have started using other educational platforms as well. A large proportion of people are also recruited form the mainstream education system. Shibir cadres are appearing from universities. Many of them are from science background from Dhaka University. The Jamaat-e-Islami is the fountainhead of extremism and as part of the previous ruling coalition has infilterated into universities. Its party cadres have been recruited as professors and students who follow its ideology have been allocated seats in hostels. It owns 6 universities and a think-thank in Dhaka.

Riaz (2011) discusses about Islamist politics and education policies. In the 1970s and 1980s, the country experienced military regimes and there was overt attempt to islamize the education sector. Madrassah education received a boost in the following year and the government established a separate directorate and set up the "Madrassah Education Borad" to look upon its education. He adds that most notable victory of the Islamists in regard to education policy came in 2006 when they were able to secure the recognition of the Daurah Hadith-highest degree of qwami madrassah. Therefore the education policies of successive regimes have moved further away from secular principles and changes in the mainstream school curriculum were also added. There has also been growth of Islamist kindergartens and these schools do not follow the national curriculum designed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) but provides with own religious and

general education. With the recent move of establishing Islamic universities, the Islamists are expanding their reach and influence.

3.3 *Attack on Secular views and Freedom of Expression*

Human Rights Watch (2017) publishes report on various laws which were propounded in 2016 to put limitations on freedom of expression. Example In October 2016, the Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, passed to control nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to put barriers on freedoms of speech and expression. Proposed Press Council Act amendments include provisions for closing newspapers. The Broad and vague Information and Communication Technology Act is being used by the government against those who have a critical point of view against several activities of government officials. There is report that secular views expressed by bloggers or their writing in support of sexual minority rights have led them to face the attacks and even some of them have been hacked to death in public spaces. There has also been violence witnessed by bloggers, academics, gay rights activists, foreigners and religious minorities in 2016.

Human Rights Watch (2013) publishes events of arrests and intimidation of Media and bloggers. There has been narration of an incident where four bloggers previously described as "atheists" by Amar Desh were detained for posts condemning what they described as an increasingly fundamentalist Islam. Activists have also been targeted by Islamic extremists. Several blog sites were closed. Through their blogs, these four bloggers criticised the government for being "biased toward Islamist views and ideologies in a country that is constitutionally supposed to be secular". Later, there was an announcement made by Bangladesh's home minister in which they were charged along with a list of 84 bloggers who were recognised by Islamic groups as atheists and hurting religious sentiments.

Bangladesh 2015 International Religious Freedom report publishes six separate incidents of 2015 in period between February 26 to October 31 where five secularists or anti-Islamic writers were attacked and three other were injured. These attacks have been claimed by various groups purporting affiliation with al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). They further published lists of other bloggers and intellectuals as future targets. In October, a letter was circulated to media outlets for

cautioning to not publish "antijihadi" reports or to employ women. This was done by the government-banned group Ansarullah Bangla Team. There has been statement which came from Bloggers and activists that they imposed self-censorship or stopped openly having critical opinions on religious beliefs because of the attacks.

Freedom House (2011) provides us with an overview of media scenario of Bangladesh. Organised crime groups and Islamist groups continue to intimidate, mistreat and harass secular journalists. They are even threatened on phone calls and are warned of not publishing and covering anything which is anti-Islamic.

Kumar (2012) talks about the right-wing Media in Bangladesh, known also an 'alternative media' owned by the Islamists. The two well-known daily newspapers Sangram and Inqilab are part of it. They along with several Bengali weeklies and monthly magazines, promote the cause of Islam and the Muslim heritage in Bangladesh. Another daily, AlMujaddidi, has also joined this group now. A group of pro-Islamic writers regularly publish articles on the distinctive culture and history of the Muslims in Bengal and on the importance of Islam in Bangladesh politics and society.

3.4 *Islamic Fundamentalism and its Economic Implications*

Barkat (2013) offers an overview of the picture of political economy of extremism in Bangladesh. He highlights various factors which have led to the increase in religious fundamentalism which are seen as obstacles to the economic growth. Variants like criminalization of economy and politics, lack of people's trust on the mainstream political scenario, communalization of culture and education system etc. have created space for the religious fundamentalist forces to assimilate mythos of religion with indicators of reality. The youth, especially have been majorly targeted for the process of Islamization. They are successfully using their religion tactics in capturing the state power via the well-planned, well-structured economic power base. In Bangladesh, because of their immense economic strength to influence, they have strongly created "an economy within an economy" and "a state within the state". Particularly, the Jamaat's presence in Bangladesh's economic sector is nearly in each sector, ranging from big monetary organisations to household micro credit organisations, large trading enterprises to madrasah education. These conditions create an unstable position of the country in an international world which asks for

peace and consistency. As per him, political and civic movements have to be organised in the country to overcome the crisis of fundamentalism and to boost economic development.

Geopolitical Monitor (2015) publishes report about the presence of Islamic parties, notably Jamaat in the economic environment of the country. The crisis of radical Islam represented by the Jamaat and its diverse sister organisations are influencing the country's mainstream politics and economy. It highlights the economic strength of the Jamaat. And as the followers are supporting Jamaat, its business involvements are increasing respectively. It possess the strongest business lobbies which marks that the economy controlled by Jamaat is rising much quickly in comparison to national economy. The Islamic Bank of Bangladesh Ltd. (IBBL) is the Jamaat's principal monetary support. This bank is engaged in many corrupted activities and the beneficiary of such acts is no other than the Jamaat. Along with IBBL, Jamaat have a switch over other fourteen banks in the country.

Institute of Commonwealth Studies (2013) discusses about the strength of Islamic political parties and their violent activities like bomb blasts, street protests, hartals which result in huge destruction, political instability and economy loss. The economic impact of these aggressive occurring has both the long term as well as short term effects. They result in loss of monitory gains. The country's largest export industry, which is its readymade garment sector, also gets affected as shipment of these garments gets delayed. Other industries also face similar kind of problems like high transportation cost; break in communication and supply chains. The unstable economic environment discourages foreign and local investors to invest. It hampers the growth and development of the nation's economy.

The above relevant literature has identified the relation of Islamic fundamentalism and its impact on politics, society and economy of the country. That country's educational institution, freedom to express, politics of the country and economic indicators has been hampered by the religious fundamentalist activities. But the relation of how these institutions are being impacted by the confrontational politics has not been established. How people are divided on religious lines and influenced by different political tactics is not been explained.

4. <u>Definition, Rationale and Scope of Research:</u>

The term Religion refers to a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, concerning the cause, nature and purpose of the universe. These beliefs and practices unite them into one single moral community. To establish strong and influential ideology, religious symbols are been used through which these are incorporated. All those who adhere to it follow everything which is asked to them in the name of religion. It generally contains religious obedience and following its rules which inculcates morality. Religion has always been a strong part of social identity and is also used by people for their self-identification.

The term Fundamentalism has been described In Defenders of God, by Bruce Lawrence as "the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced" (Alam, 2008). It creates hurdles and problems to secular institutions and behaviours. They fight back, fights for and fight against anything to secure their religion. The term Islamic fundamentalism means going back to the golden period of Prophet Muhammad to stress on the roots of pure Islam through religious and political movement. Islamic fundamentalists endeavour to reconstruct the Muslim communities against the secular belief.

The phenomenal rise of Islamic fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh has created an exceptionally unfavourable situation in the country. The country has been generally shown as a stable, developing state that has advanced in economic and human development. From the time of independence in 1971, there have been two antagonistic forces battling on the base of different national identities that is Bengali identity and Bangladeshi identity. The latter unlike the former aligns itself to the particular Islamic religion and wants to establish an Islamic society. The genesis of Islamic fundamentalism in post-independence Bangladesh can be drawn and Islam as a religion is seen as the binding force and the common identity for the majority of the people. All these occurrences indicate the constant see-saw battle between the liberal, secular forces and the conservative, fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh. In 1990, it restored democracy and carried out elections but could not handle the stability. Since 2001, attacks by Islamist militants have been increasing. . Besides the

recent incidents of killing the bloggers, they have targeted scholars, journalists, and members of the judiciary, religious minorities, and educational institution. Thus, the study of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is important because there have been significant changes that have taken place within the society and politics of the country.

The religion issue is a sensitive issue amongst people. The purpose behind the study of religious fundamentalism in Bangladesh is that the Bangladesh government has inclined itself to the interest of Muslim majority population despite its promise to secularism. There has been announcement of several discriminatory and racist aspects of the law, development approaches and programs, and the education system. There are contradictions within the constitution of Bangladesh because on the one hand there was declaration of secular principles by Article 12 but on another, Islam is declared as a state religion. Since the elections of October 2001, with the coming of Islamic parties in the mainstream politics, communal tensions and Islamist extremist mobilisation have risen exceptionally high within the country. The alliance between the mainstream political parties with the Islamist parties, particularly the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and their declared Islamist parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Islami Oikya Jote (OIJ) fuelled these concerns. Therefore, the study mainly shows the impact of religious fundamentalism from period 2001 to present. It highlights the challenges faced by the institutions of society and thus it becomes important to look upon the consequences of Islamic fundamentalism in the country.

5. <u>Research Questions:</u>

This study aims to explore the following research questions:

1. Who are the radical Islamists and what are the means by which radical Islam is threatening the secular fabric of the country and leading to the eruption of an identity crisis?

2. How Islamic parties' alliance with mainstream political parties including their student wing has led to the rise of fundamentalism in the country?

3. Have military regimes brought any institutional changes that have contributed to the growth of Islamic values in the country? If yes, what are those changes?

4. What are the tools through which state-delivered quality education is being replaced with extremists' agenda-driven education?

5. How madrassas are enacting as 'incubators' of Islamic militancy and terrorism?

6. How much these religious fundamentalist activities have affected the secular views and freedom of expression of people of the country?

7. How the Islamic fundamentalists are affecting economic structure of the country?

8. How are the fundamentalists apprehending the state power through their economic supremacy and political networks?

9. What are the policy measures that are required in the country so that secularism can be retained, challenge of religious radicalism can be met and economic growth can be facilitated?

Against the above background, this study will make an attempt to examine the following hypotheses.

6. <u>Hypothesis:</u>

1. There has been a significant impact of Religious Fundamentalism on Bangladesh's society such that institutions originally envisaged as secular now reflect Islamic values.

2. Confrontational politics in Bangladesh is a measure contributing factor in polarisation of society along religious lines.

3. Due to Islamic fundamentalism, the process of economic growth has also suffered.

7. <u>Research Methods:</u>

The study is situated within a historical and descriptive research framework. The research has used an inductive method of research by employing a case study method. Rise of religious fundamentalism is a social and political phenomenon of which Bangladesh is an appropriate case study. In order to execute the research through this method, the study has used both primary and secondary sources. Primary Sources included data sets provided by the government of various countries and international organisations such as World Bank, Human Rights Watch, IMF and South Asian Terrorism Portal. Secondary sources included existing studies and literature on this subject available through books, journals and reports of various organisations. These sources are available and easily accessible to the researcher as located in New Delhi.

8. <u>Chapter Scheme:</u>

The present study is divided into five chapters including this introductory chapter:

Chapter-2 Socio-Economic and Political structure of Bangladesh

Second chapter has discussed the social, economic and political structure of Bangladesh. It has surveyed the society and political institutions in the country since its formation in 1971. It has traced political evolution in Bangladesh from 1971 to 2017 and how political violence is manifested in everyday life. It has further gone through the overview of the country's society and shown different economic developments and indicators. This chapter has assessed the country's basic structure and how it has evolved over the years.

Chapter-3 Tracing the trajectory of Political Islam in Bangladesh

Third chapter has identified the origin of Muslim identity in Bengal and how it became important and surfaced in the mainstream politics and social life of people. It has examined the problem of religion and ethnic issue in South Asia with special reference to Bangladesh. It has contextualized Political Islam and showed the evolution of coming up of Bengali Muslim identity. It has discussed about factors that have contributed to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the country especially and has highlighted the increasing role played by religion in the politics.

Chapter-4 Political, Social and Economic Implications of Rising Islamic Fundamentalism

Fourth chapter dealt with the contemporary situation of the country, especially from 2001 till 2017 that how and with what tools religious fundamentalism has impacted the society, educational institutions, freedom to express and constitutional developments. It discussed the role of Islamic political parties in spreading violence. It has further shown that how Islamic fundamentalists with their economic strength and power have influenced and captured economic arena, investment sector and politics of Bangladesh.

Chapter-5 Conclusion

Fifth chapter has summarized the research by giving a brief understanding of above mentioned chapters. It has offered some suggestions and has also analyzed the future prospects of the country's social, political and economic structure. This has assessed that how a country that started out on a secular foundation has changed over the years and has come on a path of Islamic fundamentalism. And with what measures a country can challenge religious fundamentalism and can retain its secular foundation.

CHAPTER-2

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF BANGLADESH

1. Introduction:

Bangladesh, the eighth most populous country in the world, brought about the changes in the geopolitical landscape of South Asia with its emergence in 1971. It came up as a small nation in South Asia, on the strength of Bengali nationalism and is also the youngest nation-state in South Asia. The Bangladesh Liberation war came to an end on 16 December 1971, which marked as a very important day in the history of Bangladesh as the Pakistan army surrendered before the Indian and East Pakistan army. Each year this day is celebrated as the Victory Day in Bangladesh. The nine-month long war was driven by the failure of Pakistan state to recognize Bangladeshi people's culture, language, their aspirations for democracy and identity. The country since its birth has gone through a variety of systems of governance and yet has not been able to achieve its aspiration of democracy. The breakdown of governing institutions, violence, and emergence of fundamentalist Islam has faded away the dreams of the country of becoming a secular state.

It came up as an independent secular state where Bengali Muslims in East Pakistan, with their nationalist feeling based on language, had tilt towards secularism in 1948. They realised that apart from religion, there were other factors needed in the formation of society, community, and nation. The independence of the country led to the shattering of an ideology of 'two nation theory' on which Pakistan was created in 1947 which had religion as a factor of uniting Muslims. The emergence of Bangladesh led to the termination of authoritarian rule of Pakistani rulers, challenged their economic exploitation and Pakistan's repressive role of creating a homogeneous identity by emphasizing on the Islamic principles.

The name of the country, Bangladesh comprises of two words: 'Bangla' (Bengali) and 'Desh' (country, land). Bangladesh can be understood as the land or the country, where the language of the people is Bengali (Ahmed, 2004). Bangladesh pre-occupies a key

strategic position in the eastern part of the South Asia, comprising India and Pakistan. Bangladesh is almost entirely surrounded by Indian territory; India on its west, North and North East, with Myanmar to the South East and the Bay of Bengal to the South. It is geographically detached from the rest of the Muslim world. Bangladesh shares land and maritime boundary with both India and Myanmar (196 km). Bangladesh is a small country with an area of 147.6 thousands square kilometres only. Bangladesh with over 164 million people in the year 2017 (World Bank, 2017) makes it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Historically, a large majority of the people of Bengal accepted Islam as the new faith and since then, they have been identified as the Bengali Muslims.

The new state of Bangladesh came through a war of Liberation from Pakistan and was the product of a 'Bengali nationalism' which was in favour of linguistic nationalism and a secular Bengali identity. The sense of Bengali identity came as an anti-thesis of Muslim nationalism created by Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) always inclined towards parliamentary democracy because of the discriminatory economic and political policies, their cultural subjugation and deprivation by West Pakistan towards them. The Language movement became the crucial issue of conflict between East and West Pakistan because before the state of Pakistan was created in August 1947, there was a promise made to make Bengali language one of the state-languages in Pakistan. People of East Pakistan successfully tried for democracy in 1954 but it could not be institutionalised due to Pakistan's central government rule. To consolidate their position in the power structure of politics, the midway was chosen by the Middle class of East Pakistan in supporting to six point programme[1] of Awami League, announced by Mujib in 1966 which focussed on the autonomy of East Pakistan (Sobhan, 1993). They stressed on the issue of

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[1] The programme included :
  (1) Re-introduction of a parliamentary form of government and universal adult franchise.
  (2) A federal form of government with only two departments, defence and foreign affairs, under central government control- all residual powers were to reside in the two states.
  (3) Separate currencies and government banks for the two states.
  (4) All taxation to be controlled by the states, with the central government dependent on a fixed levy from the states.
  (5) Each unit's Independence in foreign exchange earnings and in international trade and aid.
  (6) Development of a militia or parliamentary force in East Pakistan.

economic imbalance and asked for the direct control of economy. Henceforth, the country came up with the Bengali nationalism.

The current political history of Bangladesh starts from 26 March, 1971, while it was a part of Pakistan, called East Pakistan. It became sovereign after a prolonged civil war came to an end in December 1971. In the socio-economic and political structure, several changes have been held in the country since 1971. In immediate post-independence era, Bangladesh had to face formidable political and economic challenges both internally and externally. Bangladesh's adoption of secularism was taken with the regard of its early experience with Islamic reaction in the early seventies. The country emerged as an independent entity under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League. And within short period of time, the government had the authority over people and established control over economic and political institutions. And the march towards democratisation which was laid down in 1972 Constitution was shattered and secularism was no longer a part of Bangladesh's constitution.

Since the country's independence, the country is challenged with different kind of problems like high population rate, poverty, floods, political instability etc. which have acted as hurdles in the path of its development. The members of religious-political parties like Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League, Nizam-e-Islami in 1971 liberation war supported Pakistani army to perform genocide and violence on East Pakistan in the name of safeguarding unity of Islam (Kaushik, 2000). Jamaat-e-Islami has always been at the vanguard of the Islamic movement in the country. It is a religious, social, political and cultural movement in itself. HuJI-B is another organization which is been noticed in the region. It was established in 1992 and demanded Bangladesh to be transformed into an Islamic State.

The rising Islamic militancy and state-sponsored Islamization has led to the changes in the country like there has been the deterioration in the human rights, treatment of minorities, inequality in society, influencing traditional forms of cultural practices and institutions such as academics, media. Bangladesh's economic growth has performed well recently despite prolonged political instability, poor infrastructure, corruption and slow economic reforms. In the FY 2016-2017, the GDP growth rate has been 7.1% which surpassed the expectations and reasons behind it were strengthening of public

investment and rising income (ADB, 2017). But, fragile rule of law, religious extremism and poor governance continues to undermine economic development. Uncertain regulatory environment, limited bureaucratic transparency, criminalisation and poor infrastructure have hampered the acceleration of economy's pace. All this makes an in conducive environment in attainment of the development goals. In order to consolidate its national independence, the country has to rehabilitate and reconstruct its ravaged economy, poor society and unstable political scenario and to set up the pace of economic and social development, the country needs national cohesion, political stability and undisrupted flow of external aid.

2. __A Historical Background:__

The composite culture, intermingling of diverse races, creeds, its heterogeneous cultural history, and religious harmony has been a salient feature of pre-modern Bengal. Bengal had inhabitants known as indigenous social groups who had their own cultural-religious deities to worship. The area's north western part of the dialectic land came under the influence of Indo Aryans which introduced them with new and better techniques of agriculture as these people were unaware of reforms in agriculture and depended on shifting cultivation systems. They brought in social hierarchal society, the growth of Buddhist or Brahman-ordered communities in the region. And the eastern part of the region became excluded until it came under the influence of Mohammad Bakhtiyar in 1204 A.D. who spread Islamic cultural values and mosque patronage. Tiny rural mosques and shrines were constructed in the interior of eastern Bengal which helped in altering jungle into arable land. The thought of organising family and farming system was brought in by both the cultural influences namely Brahmanical socio-cultural and those of Perso-Islamic religious preachers under the mosque patronage. (Bhardwaj, 2010).

This led to an inclusion of different religion within Bengal and a co-existence of old indigenous people's culture with new Hindu and Islamic cultures. The complex relationship between economic base and ideological superstructure has been illustrated in the evolution of Islam in Bengal, a perennial issue amongst theorists of social change. The fusion of indigenous people of the eastern delta into an expanding

peasant society surfaced the process of Islamization. And it can be said that the resultant ideological superstructure, or Islam was shaped by changing economic base (Eaton, 1993).There was such an evolution of Islamic society and culture in Bengal that Islam got mixed with Bengali culture so finely that it led to the creation of Bengali Muslim identity. But British colonial tactics soon started showing its impact on people, Hindus and Muslims of Bengal started getting apart from each other, with "divide and rule" policy. Bengali Muslims thought of uniting with Muslims of other region because of the threat of Hindu suppression. But, the distinctions which got emerged between Bengali speaking Muslims and Urdu speaking Muslims were quite visible and latter were the supporters of Pakistan.

With the partition of India in 1947, the Muslim majority areas in the North-East and North-West of India formed the state Pakistan, which comprised of two geographically disconnected units, East Pakistan and West Pakistan (Pramanik, 2016). However, political instability, economic difficulties, discriminatory policies led to once again colonization of East Pakistan by West Pakistan. The highly centralised governments led by West Pakistan, resorted to a systematic exploitation of the eastern wing. People of East Pakistan had strong resistance against the attempts of imposing Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan. In 1948, the Chhatra League, students' organisation was formed in response of this. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the founder of the organisation. These differences led in 1949 to the creation of East Pakistan Awami Muslim League by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and some other Bengali leaders. The league was formed as a party mainly to promote Bengali interests. Mujibur Rahman became the president of Awami League. The word Muslim was dropped in 1955 and the party came to be known as Awami League. In 1954's provincial assembly elections, Muslim League lost in East Pakistan and a government was formed by H.S Suhrawardy, Fazul Haq and Bhashani but it was dismissed in a few months. All this led to frustrations among Bengali speaking people. And later, in 1970 elections, Awami League won all the seats.

However, clearly West Pakistan, then ruled by a General Yahya Khan, arrested Rahman and banned his party. Many departed to India and formed a provisional government. Mukti Bahini, a guerrilla resistance movement was formed by Bangladesh for liberating Bangladesh as an independent country. This was the significant step taken to end the unified Pakistan. After the bloody crackdown of the

Pakistan army on March 26, 1971, the Bengali nationalists announced an independent People's Republic of Bangladesh and a new country emerged on December 16, 1971, out of a civil war with Pakistan.

3. <u>Overview of Bangladesh's Society:</u>

According to the 2011 census, the latest available, a profile of Bangladesh as a country points out, that the religion-based division of the country is such that the majority of Bangladesh's population are Muslim. Though, the country is geographically detached from the rest of the Muslim world yet it is a predominantly a Muslim-populated state. Islam plays a crucial role in the region's history and culture as Muslim invaders established political control around 1200 A.D, and it encouraged people to convert to Islam. Sunni Muslims constitute 90 per cent of the total population of the country, and Hindu population is about 9.5 per cent (United States Department of State, 2016). The rest of the population comprises of predominantly Christian (mostly Roman Catholic) and Theravada-Hinayana Buddhist. Buddhists, Christians, and the people of other religions constitute very less percentage of the total population which comprises of Shia Muslims, Bahais, animists, Ahmadi Muslims and agnostics.

The ethnic group division is such that Bengalis comprise of 98 per cent, and other comprises of 2 per cent (including tribal groups and non-Bengali Muslims) (U.S. Department of State, 2012) . Bengali is both the official and the national language of Bangladesh (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2010). It serves as the nation's lingua franca as well. Various indigenous languages spoken by different indigenous groups also incorporated in the country.

The present population of Bangladesh was over 164 million people in the year 2017 (World Bank, 2017). Figure 2.1 shows that, over the years, population growth rate have been declining that means number of individuals in a population are decreasing in a given time period. It was 1.08 per cent in 2016. But Figure 2.2 shows that, Bangladesh still is one of the most densely populated countries on earth and the value in the graph of density population has increased year by year.

Figure 2.1: Population Growth Rate of Bangladesh over the years, 1990 to 2016
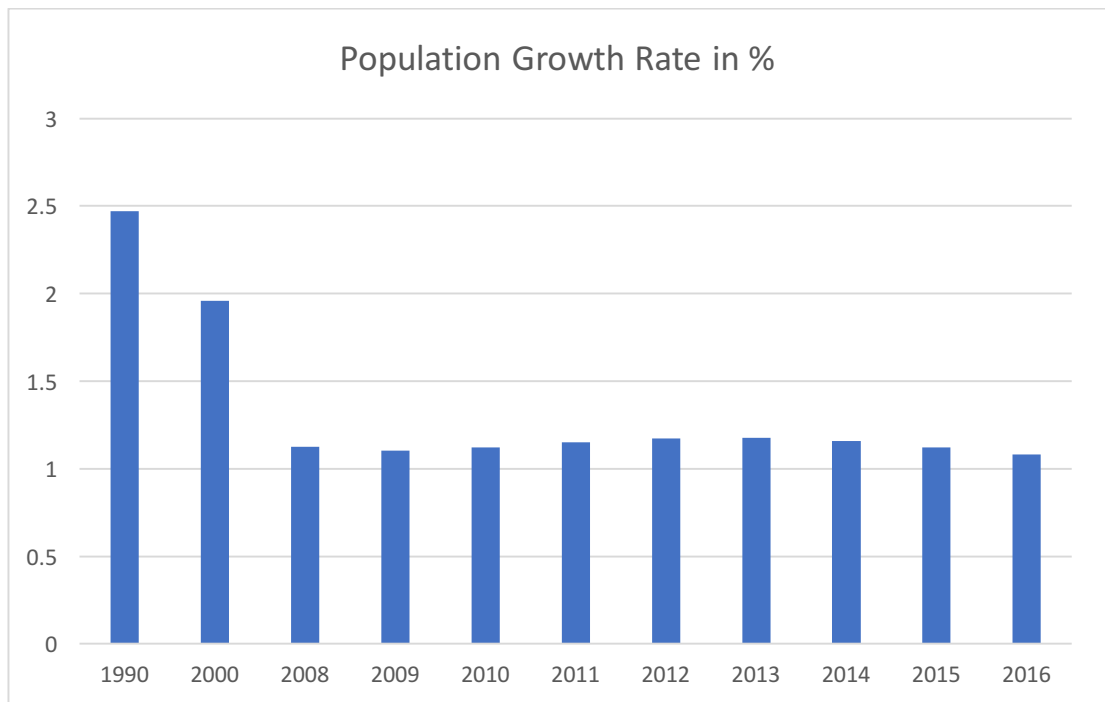
Source: Database: World Development Indicators, World Bank, (2017)

Figure 2.2: Population Density of Bangladesh over the years, 1990 to 2016
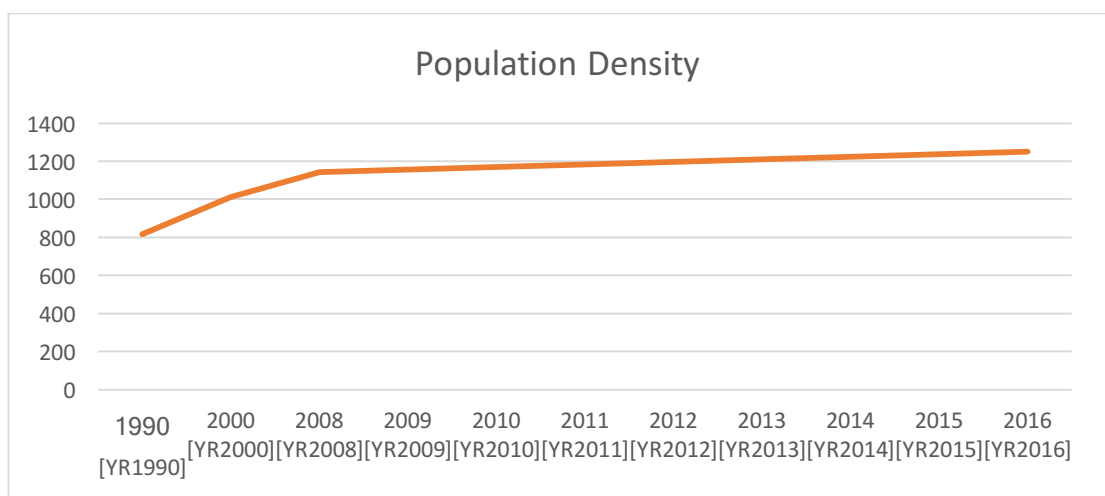
Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank, (2017)

Bangladesh lies in the Southern Asia, bordering the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and India. Because of its geographical location and geological composition, Bangladesh bears the disproportionate burden of coping with severest cyclones and floods. There are considerable social and economic changes with which country is going through. The growing population puts pressure on limited resources inclusive of basic necessities like food, health, shelter and security.

In the health sector, Government of Bangladesh has been taking serious steps in improving health conditions. The government along with the World Bank are making efforts towards better health outcomes. In 2017, World Bank provided $570 million for enhancing Bangladesh's health sector and Public Procurement performance. 'Health Sector Support Project' and 'Digitizing Implementation Monitoring and Public Procurement Project' are two financing projects for strengthening country's health sector (The World Bank , 2017). The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) and the government has been implementing different health programs from time to time. Health Population and Nutrition Sector Development Program (HPNSDP) (2011-2016) is the third largest sector wide program along with other two programs, Health and Population Sector Program (HPSP) (1998-2003) and Health Nutrition and Population Sector Program (HNPSP) (2003-2011) for overall improvement of health of the country (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2010).

Table 2.1 Level of Achievement of the Main 8 Indicators of the HPNDDP Programme Bangladesh (2011-2016)

Main Indicators	Base Line, Year and Source	Target for (2016)	Results, Year and Source	Level of Achievement
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	52.0 (BDHS, 2007)	31.0	30.7 (United Nations, 2015*)	Achieved

(Cont.)

Under 5 Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	65.0 (BDHS, 2007)	48.0	37.6 (United Nations, 2015)	Achieved
Neo-Natal Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	37.0 (BDHS, 2007)	21.0	23.3 (United Nations, 2015)	Nearly achieved
Maternal Mortality Ratio	194.0 (BMMD, 2010)	<143.0	176.0 (United Nations, 2015)	Not achieved
Total Fertility Rate (children per women)	2.7 (BDHS, 2007)	2.0	2.07 (United Nations, 2017)	Achieved
Prevalence of stunting among children under 5	43.2% (BDHS, 2007)	38.0%	36.0% (BDHS, 2014)	Achieved
Prevalence of underweight among children under 5	41.0% (BDHS, 2007)	33.0%	33.0% (BDHS, 2014)	Achieved
Prevalence of HIV in most at risk population	<1% (SS 2007)	<1%	0.1% (SS, 2014)	Achieved

*United Nations ** World bank

Source : World Bank, 2016

Over the years, Life expectancy at birth increased steadily from 65.33 years in 2000, 70.24 years in 2010 and 72.22 years in 2015. Mortality rate of Bangladesh has also

been declining. In 2000, country with mortality rate value stood at 87.4, in 2010, it came to 49.4 and in 2016 it was 2.3 This shows that there has been significant upgradation in natal and neo-natal care and women's health care facilities.

Figure 2.3: Mortality Rate of Bangladesh over the years
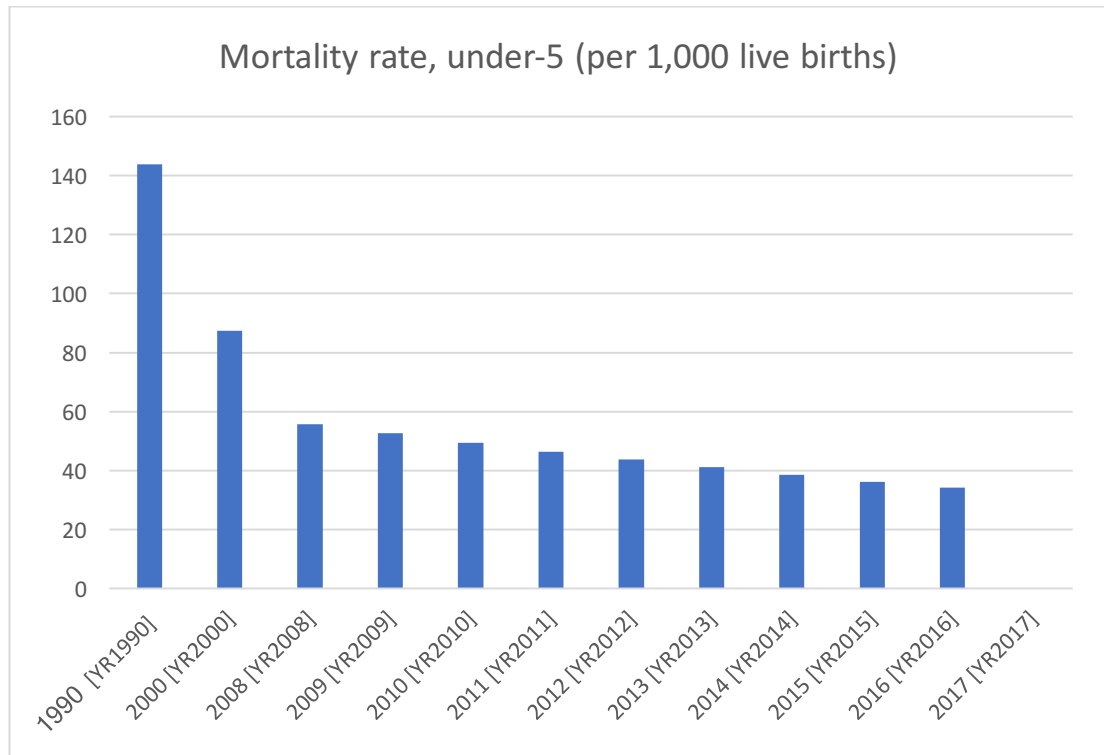
Source: Database World Development Indicator, World Bank, (2017)

Despite all these improvements in many health indicators, the Bangladesh health sector continues to suffer from various challenges like limited public facilities, misuse of resources, political instability and low expenditure on health by government. In 2014, Public health expenditure from government was around 0.8 per cent of the GDP which was the lowest in South Asia (UNDP, 2016). Political violence, strikes, street agitations, killing of bloggers, causes destruction and disturbances within the country creating disastrous environment for health care system and hampering economic growth as well. Looking at miserable conditions of living and population density, the government needs to take proactive measures to address the problems in society.

Bangladesh's HDI value represents overall increase in socioeconomic condition of the country. HDI is a measure for assessing progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and access to decent standard living. The HDI value has increased from 0.545 in 2010 to 0.578 in 2015, making it at the rank of 139 out of 188 countries. In 2015, Life expectancy at birth in Bangladesh stood at 72 years, expected years of schooling at 10.2 years, mean years of schooling 5.2 years and gross national income (GNI) per capita $ 3,341 (UNDP; Human Development Report, 2016). It shows an upward trend in human development in the country.

Figure 2.4: Human Development Index of Bangladesh over the years, 1985 to 2015
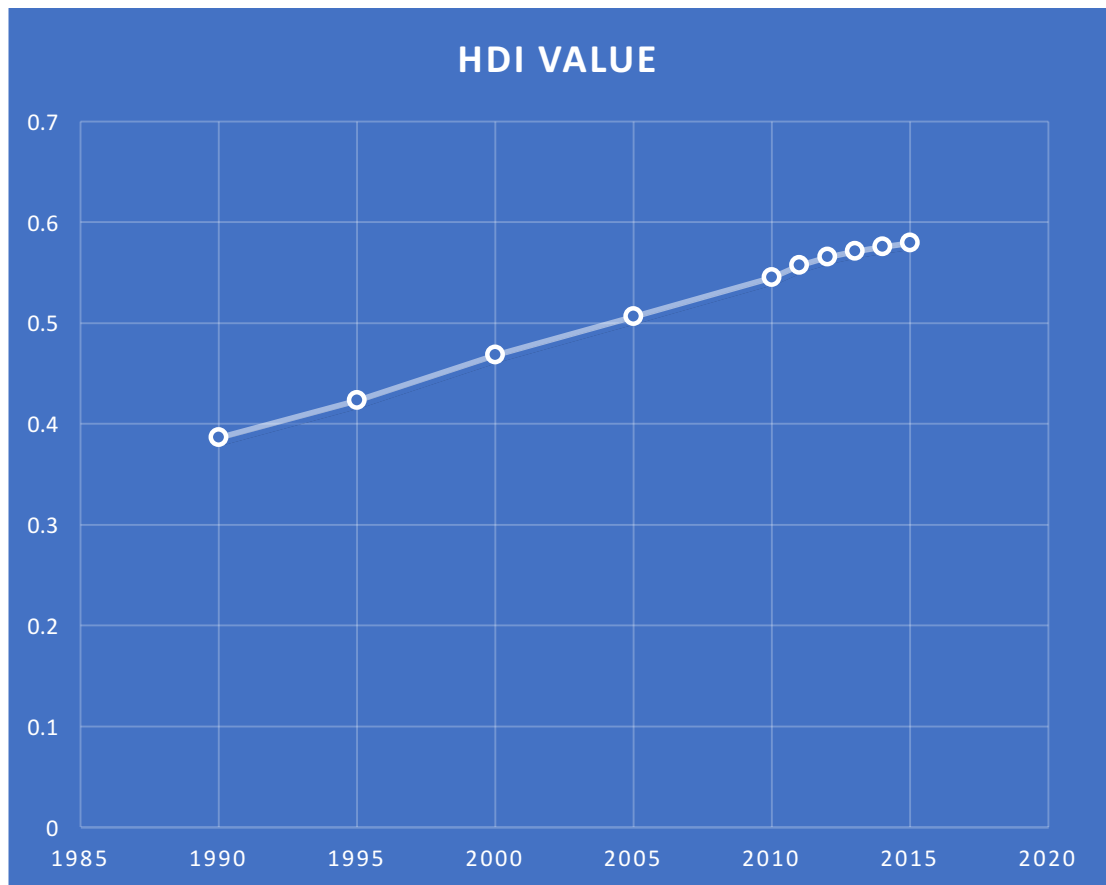
Source: UNDP; Human Development Report. (2016)

Bangladesh is known as one of the world's poorest countries. It is an agriculture based society. In Bangladesh, 31.5 per cent of the population was living below the national poverty line in 2010 which was the highest percentage of population below the

National Poverty Line in South Asia (ADB, 2017). But over the years from 2000 to 2016, Bangladesh's poverty (headcount ratio) has shown significant decline and number of people living below poverty line are reduced.

Figure 2.5: Poverty of Bangladesh over the years, 2000 to 2016
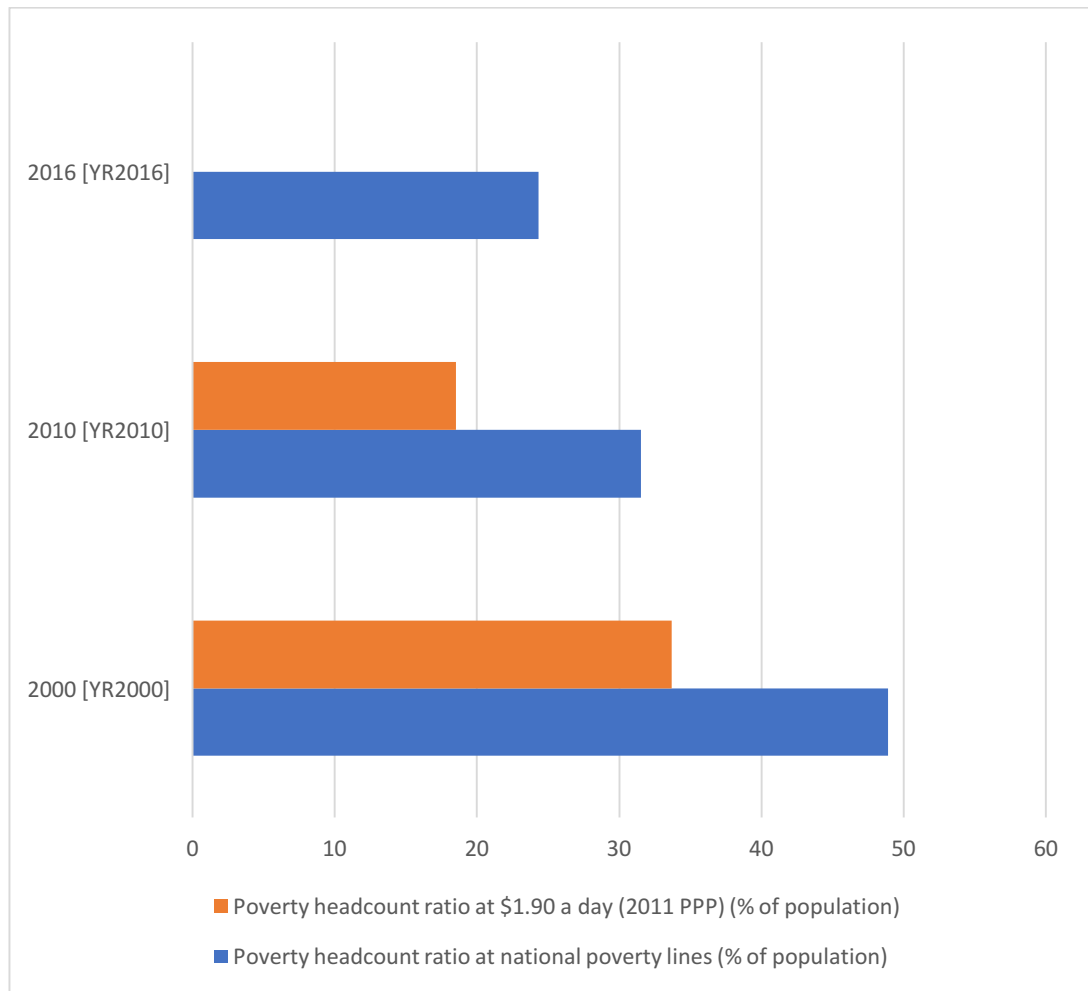
Source: Database: World Development Indicators, World Bank, (2017)

Economic development without socio-economic challenges is inconceivable. In education, efforts have been made at reducing the percentage of children not attending school. Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a measure to know the ratio of the female to male literacy rates of the population. Bangladesh has achieved a commendable success story in elimination of the gender gap in primary and secondary education. Literacy rate among the population has also shown good results with population 15 years and older is 72.76 per cent and population within 15-24 years is 92.24 per cent (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018).

Figure 2.6: Gender Parity Index of Bangladesh, 1990 to 2017
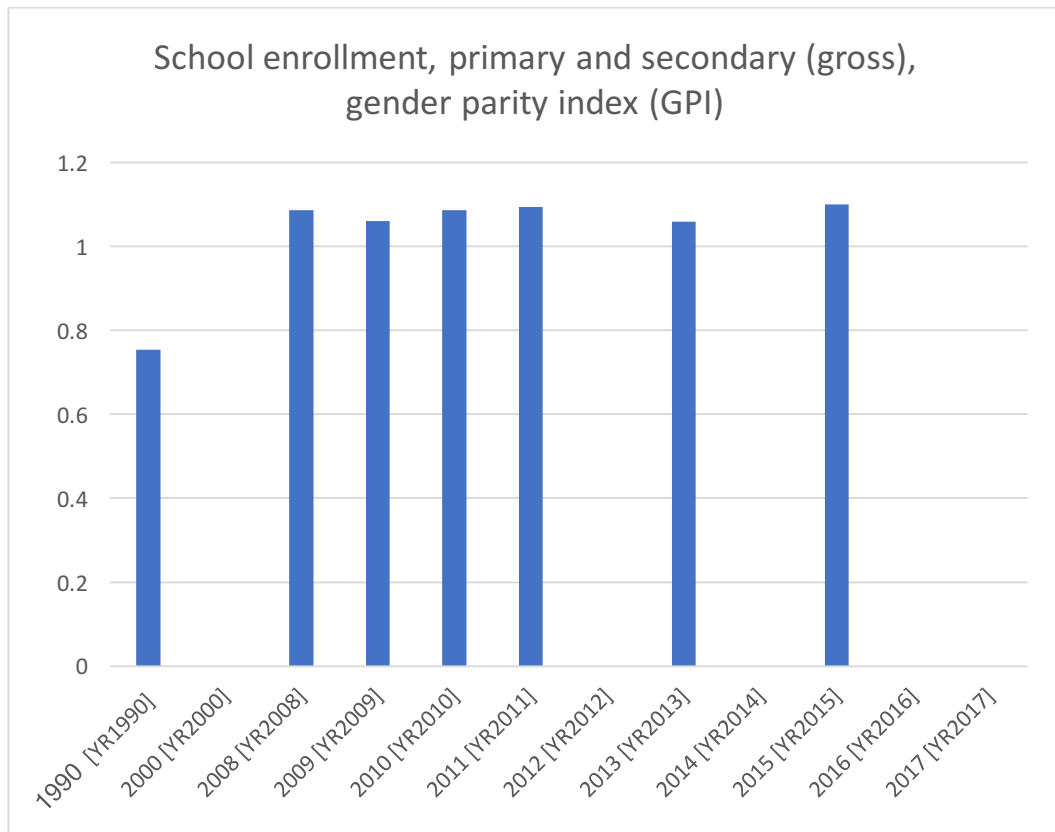
Source: Database: World Development Indicators, World Bank, (2017)

But despite these achievements, there are various challenges in the education sector. Government's inability to provide quality education in the country has led to the rise of Madarssah education. Islamic extremism has penetrated the education system in Bangladesh. Islamist militant activities and madrassah education has aggravated tension in a country. Currently, government spending on education is around 2 per cent of the GDP which is the second lowest in South Asia and is also lower in relation to other countries which are at same level of development (World Bank, 2016). The Minimum international standard for teacher-student ratio is 1:30 and the country's ratio is far higher from the suggested ratio. The number of students in a class in few of the pre-primary classes came out to be from 60 to 80, making it difficult to conduct meaningful learning (Government of Bangladesh, 2014). Other problems like poverty make children to join the workforce instead of going to schools. There are varieties of schools (government schools, NGO schools, madrasa) in which children learn, study and all are different in terms of teacher quality, performance, course structure. Overall, the performance in the education sector is improved but there is greater need

for a quality inclusive education to save the system from political instability and Islamic influence.

Since gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh has covered a long journey in social and economic progress. Despite this progress, Bangladesh has been facing a wave of political violence, social issues and economic problems. The issue of integrating different racial groups into the nation is not completed in Bangladesh. The monolithic formation of nation state and national identity had led to undermining of people. Fair distribution of resources is also missing and it ends up giving rich more resources and poor are left with nothing. We can say though, Bangladesh has shown improvement in solving its social issues, but more efforts to be put for seeing upcoming results of booming economy and stable government regime. Country should focus on its political stability, reviving its civil society so that it is more active and help people to live better life.

4. <u>Brief Economic Profile:</u>

Bangladesh has covered a long way in its economic history since the time of independence. Despite, being plagued with corruption, high population density, low resources, socio-political instability, and the country has gone through a process of economic transition from the times when economy was totally ruined to times when its GDP growth is increasing year by year. Nine months of war destroyed Bangladesh's infrastructure, food supplies were scarce, there was low investment and State led development programme could not come with fruitful results. The new nation faced many problems of inhibiting its reconstruction. Despite that, the country has achieved significant levels of social and human development and has performed really well in recent years.

The country over the years has undergone several structural changes. To boost up the economy, Bangladesh opened up in the early 1980s. Wide-ranging trade policy reforms have been brought out. Different trade barriers, both tariff and non-tariff, have been removed. The reduction in number of tariff slabs, bringing down tariff rates and their dispersion among similar commodities were carried out. Maximum tariff rates were reduced from a level of 350 per cent in 1992 to 50 per cent in 1996 to 25 per cent in 2004 (Bangladesh High Commission, 2008). Manufacturing sub-sector and services

sector have been given importance and have been made strong enough so that they can contribute to economic growth. Non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations have also contributed in providing alternative delivery channels and institutions for socio-economic development. Bangladesh's economy has grown roughly 6 per cent per year since 1996 despite facing number of problems like political instability, under construction buildings and infrastructure, endemic corruption, inadequate power supplies, and poor implementation of economic reforms (Central Intelligence Agency (US), 2018).

Bangladesh's economy has experienced tremendous transformation. In the FY 2016-2017, the GDP growth rate has been 7.1 per cent (ADB, 2017). The country has achieved a significant growth if compared to 1990 when it was 5.6 per cent and 2010 it was 5.5 per cent. In most of the least developed countries, Bangladesh has more stable GDP growth rate.

Figure 2.7: GDP Growth Rate over the years, 1990 to 2016
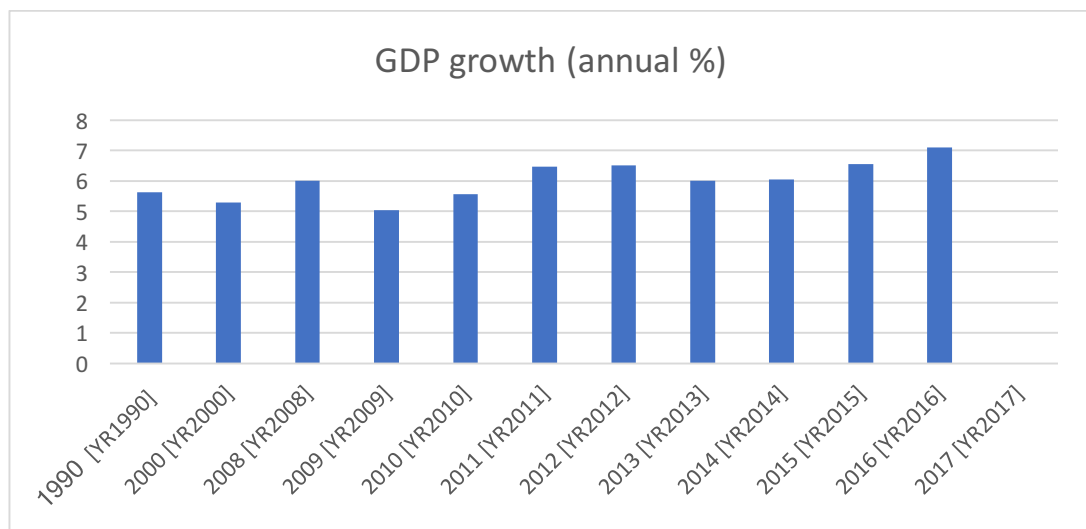
Source: Database: World Development Indicators, World Bank, (2017)

In 2016, Bangladesh's employment to population ratio was 56.1 per cent while Employment in agricultural sector was 42.7 per cent and share of services in total employment was 36.9 per cent (International Labour Organisation, 2018). Almost half of the Bangladeshis live in the rural areas and are employed in the fishing activities

and agricultural sector. The government always comes up with different policy intervention in agricultural sector to achieve the view of food self-sufficiency. It is predominantly a rural society. Jute is the traditional non-food crop grown in Bangladesh but with passing years, there has been steady decline in the export of jute and has not contributed much in the economy. Country's most important industry is its ready-made garment industry which contributes to large share of exports. The industry relies largely on female workforce from rural areas. The backbone of Bangladeshi's industrial sector, Garment exports, reported for more than 80 per cent of total exports and were on path to again exceed $25 billion in 2017 (Central Intelligence Agency (US), 2018). The country is well known for the work done by "nongovernmental" sector in the fields of education, agriculture and health. They have occupies an important place in encompassing socio-economic difficulties of the country.

If we look up at Country's purchasing power parity, it is increasing which means the income is rising. It's also a positive sign for an economy.

Figure 2.8: GNI per capita, PPP of Bangladesh over the years, 1990 to 2016
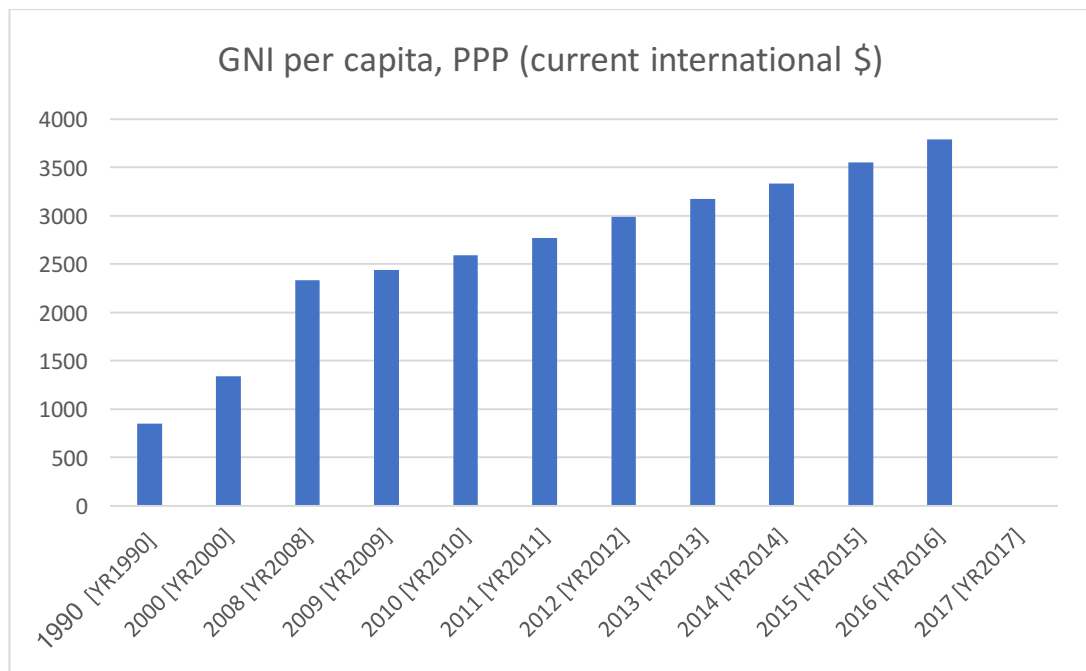
Source: Database: World Development Indicators, World Bank (2017)

Bangladesh Awami League prior to the 2008 general elections announced its manifesto which had action plans of "Vision 2021" and "Digital Bangladesh". These projects were taken to transform Bangladesh into a fast developing Middle Income Country by 2021. The vision of "Digital Bangladesh" emerged as the first ever development strategy in the world for taking initiatives for poverty reduction and converting the fate of common women and men of Bangladesh (UNDP , 2011). It has brought change in social hierarchy and contributed in economic prosperity.

As the nation would mark its golden jubilee in 2021, the government's Vision 2021 is focussed on achieving a prosperity ground in political, economic and social freedoms. This "Perspective Plan of Bangladesh (2010-2021): Making Vision 2021 a Reality" is to reduce poverty, inequality, to focus on infrastructural development, good governance, political stability, democratic parliament and to accelerate growth. The main goal of a country is to be counted in a middle income countries' bracket. Accordingly, the Perspective Plan targets annual real GDP growth rate to rise to 8.0 per cent by 2015, and further to 10.0 per cent by 2021 (Bangladesh Government, 2012). Though, 2015 target has not been achieved. Despite daunting challenges, the government has come a long way and made progress in its economy.

The youth unemployment rate is an issue in the country. In the NEET rate which is the share of youth not in education, employment or training, Bangladesh is third-worst one in Asia Pacific region. It indicates about the vulnerabilities among youth of the country in unemployment, early school leaving and labour market discouragement. It was 40 per cent in Bangladesh after Maldives at 56 per cent and Yemen at 48 per cent. And the share of females was 62 per cent and males 14 per cent (International Labour Organization, 2016). This severely impacts economy because of absence of good education and scarcity of skilled young workers. Political instability hampers regular schedule of classes, schools and also leads to delayed education which affects the future prospects of education. It puts a lot of pressure on the government as well as local private sector to provide employment opportunities to such massive population. There are also chances that these young people become frustrated out of unemployment and opt for criminal activities which can harm the society.

Political instability and economic development are two concepts which are inversely proportional to each other. A political unstable environment is detrimental to the

development of economy of any country. It affects the GDP growth, revenue collection and income of the people. For any country, Foreign Direct Investments are important factor in contributing to the growth of the country's economy. But the uncertain environment, unrest political situation puts challenges to FDI. Foreign investors fear of investing their capital in Bangladesh because of the uncertainty, corruption and weak rule of law. Though many countries are investing in Bangladesh and many ones are interested but to attract investments, Bangladesh has to make its political environment stable and secure. The attainment of FDI can help the country to reduce the deficit and to increase the revenue of the government to ensure socio-economic development of the country.

Bangladesh has abundant natural gas reserves and is a primary fuel of its energy generation. But at present there is no trade in it. Export of natural gas is a political issue and opponents argue that meeting domestic energy demands should be prioritised and export of natural gas should be considered thereafter. Apart from natural gas, Bangladesh has high quality coal reserves in abundance. There is a desperate need to diversify sources of energy but problems of food security and livelihood of farmers generating with coal mining are not been addressed. The country lacks capital and technology to undertake gas exploitation and hence Energy shortages remain a major problem in the country. Government needs to address issues such as poverty, high population density so that the country can gain economically in energy sector and can contribute in meeting domestic energy demands.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in its economic sector despite so many problems. The Country has set a target to reach the status of middle income country by 2021. For that the government will have to look upon the activities which hamper economic growth. Bangladesh's economy has been confronted with the problems of high population rate, Islamic militancy, poverty, floods etc. which affects the continuous economic development of the country. It is necessary to reduce unemployment as employment contributes in accelerating economic development. Out of total population, about 40 per cent comes under the slot of underemployment and many people who are represented as employed work only few hours a week at low wages. The manipulation of social and economic programs of the government and NGOs by Islamic extremist groups need to be stopped. Other issues such as maintaining law and order, absence of efficient physical infrastructure, absence of

technological infrastructure, lack of educational opportunities also need to be addressed.

5. <u>**Political Evolution of Bangladesh (1971 - 2017):**</u>

Bangladesh has experienced many political crises and seen several changes which have taken place in the socio-economic and political fields. The changing nature of political economy in the country has shaped the nature of dominance and its policies. The polity has been dominated by weak institutions, political violence, internal crises, changing nationalism, weak law and order, terrorism and increasing Islamic extremism. Social and economic issues of the country are not getting addressed properly because of the personal animosities and rivalries between main political parties, including the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) led by Sheikh Hasina and Bangladesh National Party (BNP) headed by Khaleda Zia. The country has gone through different experiences of political regimes since its independence and can be divided into following seven eras and these are:

5.1 <u>*Mujibur Rahman's regime (1972-1975) : -*</u>

In 1971 when it separated from Pakistan, Bangladesh promised to have a stable democracy but within few years, it turned into a one party system. On March 26 1971, Bangladesh was declared independent by Sheikh Mujibur Rahiman. After independence, the new Bangladesh government, Awami League came in charge of reconstructing and rehabilitating economic and social conditions. Sheikh Mujibur Rahiman was elected as the first president of provincial government of Bangladesh. The party was acquainted with the mechanism and practices of being as a constitutional political party but soon, Mujibur Rahman's regime became authoritarian and was considered as civilian supremacy in the political field. The new Constitutional amendments moved in 1972 with the four guiding principles of nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism (Turner, 2011). But these principles were not followed properly.

Mujibur Rahman nationalised the entire economy including banking, industrial sector. There was heavy corruption within his party which led to famine in 1974. Afterwards, looking at the continuing economic deterioration of the economy, a state of emergency was announced by him and Awami League was renamed the Bangladesh Krishak

Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL) and put an obligation for all the members of Parliament (and senior civil and military officials) to join. The party took control of government machinery and identified itself with the rural masses and labourers. There was abolition of civil liberties and the basic democratic institutions like constitution, legislature, judiciary, press and media, turned into an autocratic one. All other opposition political parties were banned. It turned from a principle of secular belief to one-party presidential system of monolithic character in 1975. There was criticism all over and Bangladesh's one-party presidential form of government and constitutional arrangements of totalitarian rule was soon replaced by an army coup in August, 1975 after an assassination of Mujibur Rahman.

5.2 *Military dominated regime (1975-1990) : -*

Bangladesh eventually witnessed military rule from 1975 till 1991 when its parliamentary elections held. There was an emergence of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ziaur Rahman. He became Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) and promised national elections to be held in 1978 and in those elections; he won 5-year term (Oberst, 2015). The ban on religious parties was removed in 1976. Ziaur Rahman consolidated his power base and founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). It was mainly associated with another kind of nationalism that was Bangladeshi nationalism. It concentrated on religion and territorial base. In May 1981, Ziaur Rahman was assassinated and Army Chief Lt. Gen. Hussain Mohammed Ershad took power in a bloodless coup in 1982. He founded the Jatiya Party and assumed power till 1990. The Jatiya Party has largely remained a military-establishment party. There was political use of Islam to legitimize the rule. The reason for it could be lack of leadership or crisis of constitutionalism which crippled an economy and polity of the nation.

5.3 *Khaleda Zia's Regime (1991-1996) : -*

There was a removal of Ershad regime and an establishment of representative democracy. The provision of care-taker government[2] was added for contesting free and fair parliamentary elections within three months (Pattanaik, 2006). Bangladesh

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[2] Interim care-taker government shall hold elections within three months and the head of the interim government should be non-partisan and a genuine person. His ministers would not participate in any election. Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed formed a care-taker government and held elections of 1991.

thus restored its parliamentary republic in 1991. Bangladesh National Party won elections and formed the government with Khaleda Zia as Prime Minister and Awami League came as the main opposition party along with other parties like Jatiya Party, Jamat-e-Islam. 12th amendment to the constitution was passed thereafter, which stated a switch from presidential to parliamentary form of government.

After military regime, the nation was burdened with a task of building democracy but parties could not retain parliamentary values. In March 1994, there were protests by opposition parties on 1994 Magura by-elections as firstly, they were held before the next parliamentary elections and secondly, opposition alleged BNP for having rigged elections. They demanded resignation of ruling party and to hold new elections under interim care-taker government. New elections held in February 1996 and Khaleda Zia was re-elected as other political parties had boycotted the Parliament. There were nationwide strikes and street allegations and parliament was dissolved to stop these political crises. In pressure, 13th Constitutional amendment[3] was passed and elections under Neutral Care-taker government (NCTG) became an integral component of Bangladesh's politics (Khan, 2015).

5.4 *Sheikh Hasina's regime (1996-2001)* : -

Awami League came as a winning party in 1996 June elections with Sheikh Hasina as Prime Minister. By this time, it was clear that the nation has turned towards bi-party system. Like other regimes, it could also not bring fruitful results. There was crime, violence and rampant corruption. In June 1999, BNP and other opposition parties announced to boycott upcoming elections if the government do not take steps of ensuring electoral fairness. The Awami League government stepped down in July 2001 and allowed caretaker government to held elections.

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[3] 13th Amendment provisions-
- All elections to be held under Care Taker Government.
- Interim Government would ensure free and fair elections.
- It would constitute 1 Chief advisor and 9 advisors.
- Last retired judge of Supreme Court would be chief advisor of NCTG. If he/she declines, then last judge of SC. Last retired judge of appellate court in case, of others rejecting position. And if all three declines then an eminent person from civil society, would come who will be accepted by all parties. Last option will be president who would become chief advisor of NCTG if all rejects.

5.5 *Khaleda Zia's regime (2001-2006) : -*

In 2001, BNP with the four-party alliance, Islamic parties like Jamat-e-Islami Bangladesh, won elections and Begum Khaleda Zia headed as Prime Minister. Jamaat e islami upholds Islam in its entirety and aims to mould all the sphere of human activities based on the guidance and lines of Prophet Mohammed.

There was tremendous rise of Islamic militancy throughout the country in this regime. The Islamic militant groups expanded their transnational networks with the help of the BNP government. Groups like Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) which had a close link with Afghan Jihadis and like Harkat-ul-Jehad-al-Islami Bangladesh which had links with Al-Qaeda, gained power. There was landing of Al Queda and Taliban escapees in Bangladesh after the crash of Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The onset of regular elections could not remove public protests, political violence and rather with the coming of Islamic party in alliance with BNP, fundamentalist forces and activities increased its space in political arena.

5.6 *Military-backed interim government (2006-2008) : -*

The situation took a turn for the worse in late 2006 and Awami League government returned to Parliament demanding early elections to be held by the caretaker government. There were a series of general strikes and transport blockades. In 2007, January a state of emergency was declared by the Chief Advisor President Iajuddin Ahmed and the government. Constitutional rights were deleted as there was suspension of fundamental rights. Army conducted unconstitutional things and tried to ban two former prime minters form politics (minus two formulae) and did not hold 2006-2008 elections.

5.7 *Sheikh Hasina's regime (2008-2017) :-*

There was a pressure from within the country and from the international community to return to elected governance. Thus, a new election held in 2008 and Awami League won the elections with Sheikh Hasina as Prime Minister. During the AL tenure, there were changes made to the constitution. In 2014, after the removal of caretaker government, a new election as held in which BNP boycotted elections and AL again came into power. Therefore, looking at the political history of Bangladesh, it can be said there is lack of internal democracy within main political parties; the political

scenario is influenced by the rivalry between them. Since the independence, there have been several changes made to the constitution, regular strikes, lack of consensus, boycotting elections have become a part of the country and has contributed to conflict, political violence, and weak law and order within a country.

6. <u>A phase of Islamization of Bangladesh's Politics</u>

The idea of secularism instilled at the time of independence was unclear and within few months, it was quite noticeable in the actions of the regime. Their policy of state-controlled media, indulgence of the government in all religious practices, increased funding for religious education were steps which marked a slow drift away from the spirit of secularism. The nation which emerged at the basis of Bengali nationalism and secularism could not retain it and the process of Islamization soon started. The addition of being crippled economy made it to diversify and developed her external relations with the Islamic countries. And later with the coming of Military regimes in 1975, there started a phase by political-bureaucratic-military elites of using Islam as a tool to authorize their leadership. Bengali nationalism of pre and post liberation period was replaced by Bangladeshi nationalism (Rahman, 2003). Since then, many constitutional changes are adopted which has led to the growth of Islamic ideology and its influence in everyday public life.

To be in contact with the Arab countries was considered an important step because of the strength Bangladesh could gain from them. This opened new possibilities of mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Arab world was seen as possible donors for meeting economic hardships of the new country. It was seen as a ray of hope for significant aid requirements. This was the reason that Bangladesh's foreign policy has important space for Islamic countries. And it became important for Bangladesh's policy makers.

The new nationalism had Islam as its core and created a new ideological terrain to remain in power. The new identity created a contradiction between being Muslim and being Bengali. Constitutional changes like addition of 'BISMILLAH-AR-RAHMAN-AR-RAHIM' (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, and the Merciful)' or replacement of 'struggle for national independence' added to the strengthening of Islamic values and created a hegemonic cultural national identity (Jahan, 2015). It resulted in taking

Islam into consideration for formulating country's varied policies and led to the alienation of religious minority groups. Besides constitutional changes, there were other factors too which encouraged the influence of Islam in the country. There was re-emergence of Islamic parties, re-introduction of Islamic studies, and the highlight of Islamic symbols in daily public life were contributing to the growth of Muslim identity.

There are many Islamist groups working in the country and since the time BNP came in power with the Islamist party, the Islamist parties have gained more power in the main stream politics. The four-party alliance led by the BNP included party, Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) which was in support of Pakistan during the liberation war. It was against the Bengali nationalism and its aim is to establish an Islamic state. With the Jamaat, its militant youth group, the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) is involved in islamization of academics, dominates privately run madrassas and spread Islamic ideology in university campus. There are claims that illegal madrassas in the border area have resulted in the Talibanisation of the society in country (Bhardwaj, 2014). Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) is another organisation which came to highlight in 2013 after the attack and killing of secular bloggers. Jumatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB) founded in 1998 is also involved in spreading extremist violence.

There are instruments by which government induces Islamization in public. To coordinate religious activities, the government established a 'Ministry of Religious Affairs'. The Ministry administered four funds for four different religions. The funds were for the cultural activities, literacy and religious programs. The funds were the Islamic Foundation, the Christian Religious Welfare, the Hindu Welfare Trust, and the Buddhist Welfare Trust (Ahmad, Tariq, 2016). There have been criticism that the government is biased in funding the trust towards Islamic Foundation and do not fund the trusts on an equal basis.

Religion has remained an important part of the Bengali Muslim identity. The national identity of Bangladesh is based on the exclusionary characteristics. The exclusionary character has neglected the non-Muslim identity and overlooked the diversity of the country making minority group subservient to the majority. Inclusion of Islamist forces in the government have made them more secure and opened more channels for them to spread their activities. Islamist groups have got a strong foothold in the

country's mainstream politics. Despite the country's transition to democracy and having regular elections, the ruling elites have connected to the military regimes to gain legitimacy. There is a need to stop state-sponsored Islamization so that country can be on the path of true spirits of secularism.

7. **Phase of Confrontational Politics:**

Party politics in Bangladesh is vibrant since the institutionalisation of parliamentary democracy in the country. The competition between the two major political parties has led to the culture of violence. Political differences have resulted into parliamentary boycotts, attack on political rallies, hartal and street violence. The density of hartals has grown exceptionally high since 1991 parliamentary elections. The culture of armed violence is prevalent in the country and each party formulates their strategic tactics to win elections. There are own-armed cadres of main political parties which strengthen their political background and helps in countering the cadres of opposition parties (Moniruzzaman, 2009). Political parties are opposed to each other on a different nationalist ideology. AL , the oldest party strongly believe in Bengali nationalism, which implies Bengali identity supersede all other identities and on the other hand, BNP and other like-minded rightist parties believe in Bangladeshi nationalism, which has geographical notion implying Bangladeshi first and then the rest. This results in causing violence in the public sphere.

Bomb blasts are new dimension of political violence which is mainly used by Islamic religious groups. These blasts create an environment of fear, causes death and destruction and are aimed at places such as mosques, cinema theatres, and cultural functions. The power of political parties on key institutions like Election Commission (EC) has aggravated the situation of political violence. To make the political scenario stable and to reduce political violence in the country, the party system is required to learn and follow democratic principles.

The country deals with various kinds of other problems like extrajudicial killings, arbitrary or unlawful detentions, attack on minorities by extremist groups, poor working conditions, strikes, gender-based violence, forced disappearances by government security forces and infringement of constitutional rights. The government has taken limited measures to investigate cases against Security forces, including

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) who is accused in several high-profile crimes involving forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Politically motivated killings are prevalent by both the ruling and opposition parties for their benefit and along with them, their students and youth wings are also contributing in spreading violence.

The constitution provides for respect for Civil Liberties, Freedom of Speech and Press, but the government has been unsuccessful in protecting these rights. There are restrictions put on the freedom of speech, representative institutions are under political control (Country Policy and Information Note, 2017). There has been criticism by Media outlets against the government for not allowing them to be independent and secular on their views. Some Independent journalists and bloggers have self-censored their content because of the intimidation and harassment they face and after the killing of bloggers who advocated secularism. The government maintains editorial control over the Bangladesh public television station (BTV), and private channels were mandated to air government content at no cost. There are complaints from civil society that all television channels have political interference as only those channels which provide support to ruling party are granted license (United States Department of State, 2016).

The government and big businesses have control and ownership of media in their hands. Censorship or Content Restrictions are used as a weapon to curb its freedom. "It's shocking that Bangladesh authorities not only failed to protect the bloggers despite complaints to the police about threats against them, but instead are proposing self-censorship," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The present Bangladesh's government had also previously targeted free speech, censored media channels that criticised the government, threatened journalists and arrested human rights defenders who were in critical view of security officials. There is a necessity for taking quick and instant actions by the Bangladesh government for securing people and their independent voices.

Status of minorities all over the world has examples of discrimination and insecurity. Bangladesh was built up with the sacrifice of number of people belonging to different ethnicity, language, culture but their compromises have been forgotten and they are undergoing through same problems for which they fought. In Bangladesh, 98 per cent of population speaks Bengali language, and rest are people who have distinct

languages. The construction of homogenising society by taking Islam as a state religion has led to the exclusion of minority groups.

In 2011, a constitutional amendment was passed, which declared the restoration of secular principles and ethos but retained Islam as the official religion (Ahmad, Tariq, 2016). According to the constitution, "the state religion of the Republic is Islam, but the State shall ensure equal status and equal right in the practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other religions" (Ahmad, Tariq, 2016). But despite these constitutional measures, religious, ethnic, national minorities face discrimination and inequality in almost every sphere. Violent attacks against religious minorities are continued to be motivated by transnational violent extremist groups such as, Da'esh and AQIS for economic and political reasons. On October 30, 2016, an unruly mob of hundreds of people armed with locally-made weapons demolished at least 10 temples to the ground along with vandalising hundreds of houses of the Hindu community at Brahmanbaria's Nasirnagar (Dhaka Tribune, 2016). In that area, around seven to eight idols of five temples were attacked and vandalised by150 to 200 people. Religious minority advocacy groups, including The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC), have criticised the government for not taking adequate actions to protect the country's religious minorities. Though more recently, due to attacks on minorities, secular and liberal figures, the government responded with arrests of suspected Islamist militants. Still the minorities appear to be losing hope. Underrepresentation of Religious minorities in politics and state employment remain a problem. Though several members of such groups has been appointed by the secularist AL government but the situation remains grave. (Freedom in the World, 2015). Cases of private discrimination in employment and housing have also been reported by some members of religious minorities.

There are reports submitted for land ownership disputes of Religious minority communities (who were often also ethnic minorities), especially Hindus, for disproportionately displacing them (United States Department of State, 2015). Religious associations said such disputes often have high occurrence in areas near new roads or industrial development zones, where land prices had recently increased. There are around 45 different ethnic groups in Bangladesh in regions around Chittagong Hill Tracts, Rajshahi division, Mymensingh, Sylhet division. Bengali Muslims and Hindus hardly have any difference in their culture and way of living but still Hindus feel

deprived in economic opportunities and are treated as secondary class citizen. The Vested Property Act, led to Hindu members alienation of their land. Though Act was repealed in 2000 but its impact is significant. They have not been given customary rights and there is forceful capture of their land. They face extortion, bad health and deprived development.

Bangladesh is going through the problems of governance which are wrapped in the ruler's legitimacy. Countries like Bangladesh which had their first parliamentary elections in 1991 are proved to be 'illiberal democracies'. These illiberal democracies aim at establishing authoritarian rule over people and unlike liberal democracies; they fail to provide free and fair elections (Zakaria, 1997). These countries lack in providing effective rule of law, strong institutions and to ensure the protection of freedom of speech and expression. The country needs to take actions so that its political culture does not become an obstacle to the social and economic development of the country.

8. <u>Conclusion:</u>

Bangladesh started its journey with a parliamentary democracy but turned into a place of conflicts, strikes, tensions, and instability. The government has remained sluggish, centralised and dominated society. But Bangladesh has achieved a significant progress in the social and economic arenas. The credit of success goes to the policies of government, their action plans of implementing, the hard work of poor productive sections of the country- farmers and workers. Yet, they face inequality and feel unsafe in the current economic and political structure. Since its emergence, Country has been occupied solving two contentious identities based on nationalism, Bengali and Bangladeshi. The two major political parties based on their different nationalism have created the bipolar political party system which has resulted into a competitive and violent political environment.

Several measures need to be taken by the country to overcome its problem of nation building. There must be an acknowledgement of indigenous groups living there. Bangladesh needs to adopt a principle of multi-cultural society and accept diversity in the nation to maintain a society. There must be a culture of tolerance and respect. Rule of Law to be given attention where each individual is equal under law and are not

discriminated, all have attainment of economic justice and problems are solved by peaceful means instead of violent force. Political parties need to make consensus with each other and within them to democratise organizations. Economic reforms should be brought with strict rules and regulations so that economy can boost and its result could help country to prosper. Political uncertainty and instability remains a major challenge in achieving economic development. Politics scenario must be transparent and contributes to country's growth. State sponsored Islamization should be stopped and other minority groups be given equal right and status. Gap between rich and poor need to be bridged and political parties with corrupt rich people should be punished. The nexus between North east insurgent groups, Bangladesh Islamic politics and bureaucrats need attention and is to be solved.

Country should focus on concerns which are significant contributing factors in the nation building growth, which includes preserving national sovereignty, of restoring law and order, economy, development. Without solving all these constraints and uncertainties, country cannot move on the path of peace. Though, Bangladesh has shown some improvement in solving its economic issues, but more efforts to be put for seeing upcoming results of booming economy and stable government regime. Country should focus on its political stability, reviving its civil society so that it is more active and help people to live better life. There is a need to strategically think of eradicating social economic problems and analysing country's potential in sectors of growth and development for peaceful future.

CHAPTER-3

TRACING THE TRAJECTORY OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN BANGLADESH

1. **Introduction:**

Bangladesh was founded in 1971 on the basis of secularist principles. It was a part of India under the colonial rule from 1757 to 1947 and thereafter it was a part of Pakistan till the time of its emergence i.e. 1971. The country came through a nine months long devastating war promising to follow the secular principles of nation building. Its emergence was seen as a victory over the dominant use of religion by the state to stay in power. The West Pakistan, with its appeal on Islamic unity dominated East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and internally colonized it. In the way of using religion as a uniting force, distinct language and culture of Bengali Muslims was forgotten. After the formation of Pakistan, people of East Pakistan realised that religion was not only the source in formation of society, nation and state. Bangladesh succeeded in getting the independence in the hope of secular Bengali nationalism. But sadly, the nation could not hold its promises and in post-independence, ruling elites continue to misuse religion and Islam to maintain their authority over people.

The lack of a clear perception of the politicians and civil society about nation state of Bangladesh and Bengali nationalism resulted in the ambiguity about the identity. There were certain changes noted in the political landscape within less than three and a half years. Because of the ill motive and machinations of political rulers, the country has witnessed corruption, terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism which became an obstacle in the overall development and pushed it to the verge of a failed state.

Bangladesh is the third largest Muslim majority country. Muslims in Bangladesh are predominantly of Sunni denominations and the tradition of Shi'a denominations are followed by a very small number. Hindus comprise of the largest minority section in the country. The growth of Islamic fundamentalism and compromise of secular principles can be indicated by the decline of minorities in the country. It can be noticed from the significant change in the aspect of religious composition in the country as

there has been sharp drop in the Hindu population from 1951 when it was 22 per cent, 1991 it was 10.5 per cent and in 2001 it came to 9.2 per cent (Riaz, 2010).

People, who once championed the separation between state and religion, were the same who adopted religious rhetoric after Independence. The country which used to take pride in its syncretic tradition was soon burdened with Islamic militancy. The country after the formation banned religion-based political parties but with the upcoming of military rule, the ban was removed making Islamist parties function at the national politics. By 1977, influence of Islam and its shades were visible on the political scene. Political parties are important elements of a political system, they are imperative and their governance affects the functioning of democracy in the country. It can be traced to various factors that Bangladeshi citizens do not have positive views on them. In 1988, by the constitutional amendment, Islam was declared as the state religion and this was the defeat of secular notion of state on which it was originated (Hasan, 2011). And in 2001, the largest Islamist party and smaller groups came in mainstream polity with the ruling coalition. Since then, growing extremism, the volatile political environment, violence and breakdown of governing institutions have drawn the attention of the world's media to Bangladesh.

Even though, the country came up from a nationalist principle, political Islam periodically played an important role in the process of nation building of Bangladesh. The history of political Islam in Bangladesh and the formation of the unique identity of Bengali Muslims have to be traced in the history of Indian sub-continent. Bengali Muslims certainly became habitual of local cultural idioms, values and practices to produce a syncretic form of Islam (Islam, 2018). The growth of Islam in the country is a consequence of various factors such as oppression and socio-economic disparity of Muslims, external factors and development of close connection with Middle-East countries and the institutional set-up which propagated pure and orthodox Islam.

2. __Problems of Religion and Ethnicity in South Asian Politics:__

There has always been a close nexus between religion and politics. Religion has been a cause of political organisation in many nations and is also the source of political conflicts. Religion, in the modern world is seen as a central force that motivates and mobilizes people (Adhikari, 2011). South Asian countries are polytechnic and possess

multicultural and multi-religious population. The South Asia at the time of independence was marked by underdeveloped economy, poverty, structural inequalities and in this situation it was forced to promise erect secular and democratic states. Therefore, the elites and majority groups pressurised the state to announce particular one religion to use it as a political means and to continue their legitimacy of authority.

The concept of ethnicity is seen an important social category relevant to countries. Every ethnic group has an identity which brings out distinctive features of that group. Groups based on affinities like language, religion, culture, habitat, caste and so on are the foundation factors that give rise to the feeling of nationhood and identity formation. It usually associates itself with the feeling of "us against them" attitude and resulted in competition and repression (Mishra, 1988). Ethnicity has a close relationship with identity and when there is overspill of ethnicity, it leads to conflict and clashes in the region.

The third world countries acquired the model of nation building before they could develop a truly sovereign state and a national identity based on language, culture and religion. Nationalism and national identity in these countries was founded on the majority ethnic group and the other ethnic communities came to be known as 'minorities'. The ethnic tensions got sharpened with the elite class started viewing majority ethnic group as the national identity and all other ethnic groups in its social, political and cultural opposition. Thus, the state got equated with the majority ethnic identity and other ethnicities started demanding their own vehicle of the state. The South Asian experience is also on the same line process of implementation of nation-building. If industrialisation and modernity leads to development of idea like nations and nationalism then the idea of nationalism do not suit South Asia as the region has neither experienced industrialisation nor modernisation (Mishra, 2014).

The synthetic communities made by national entities in the wake of decolonisation, or in search of better living have created the evolving pattern of multiple plural societies. In third world countries, ethnic problem have become acute as there are different national identities which have different language and culture and in the process of state formation and nation building, countries have started colonizing its own regions and people. If we look up at South Asian states, they do not have a satisfactory situation.

Because of several ethnic pulls and pressures, minority groups are continuously discriminated by majority ethnic group and are always at disadvantaged position in the distribution of national resources or in other important areas. There has been a tendency to oppress ethno-nationalities either through religion or military repression. Parameters like religion, language, caste plays a key role in domestic national policies and in international relations of the country.

The makers of the Indian state attempted to build a nation-state on the political framework on the ideas of secularism, political equality, giving all citizens equal constitutional rights and ensuring that the state shall not differentiate any citizen on the ground of religions, language, ethnicity, caste, creed or gender (Sheth, 1989). The Constituent Assembly at the time of independence rejected religion, language and any other ethnic criteria for building a nation-state as they were quite aware of the large ethno-linguistic, ethno-cultural and religious groups. But soon the federal character and democratic practices of the state started diluting by ethnic pulls and pressures. Some of the provinces started demanding autonomous political arrangements for them. In the process, state has become more centralised, sections of some elites are seen as providing basis for nationalism and majority ethnic group is seen into the national identity (Sheth, 1989). This has resulted into the fear and insecurity of the ethnic minorities.

Sri Lanka also deals with the ethnic problem between its two ethnic communities namely, Tamils and Sinhalese. The political parties represent interest of majority Buddhist Sinhalese population and marginalise Hindu Tamils. There has been loss of political stability and cultural respect. Sri Lankan Tamils feel discriminated by majority Sinhala ethnicity and always find them at disadvantaged position in political, economic and social platform. The Sri Lankan Tamils thus began asking for an autonomous political arrangement for themselves and problem in nation building continues.

The idea of Pakistan was based on a united Islamic religion but series of events dampened the nation's integrity and proved to be ineffective. The significant fall-out of the emergence of Bangladesh resulted in the demise of the 'Two-Nation Theory'. At the time of partition between India and Pakistan, a sectional demand was put forward by Muslim League that follower of same religion to constitute a single nation.

But after 1947, there were problems witnessed in the process of state building. It was believed that the religious nationalist sentiment would nullify all other types of ethnic divisions. But, one shared religious identity soon began to yield over other principles of nationalism that is the largest ethno-linguistic group (the Bengalis) in Pakistan. The West Pakistan took punitive military action against East Pakistan, they faced discrimination at every societal, political and economic level, and there was distrust and discontent developed in them. All this led to the culmination of the emergence of a new nation-state of Bangladesh. The formation of Pakistan on religion-based nationality showed the hollowness of the Two-Nation Theory. And the nation which was built on religious unification of people was never undertaken seriously and the idea of solidarity was never achieved.

Bangladesh, the then East Pakistan was constituted because of the disadvantages and inequality faced by them by West Pakistan. The country was created on the secular ethos and democracy. There was a super ordinate and subordinate relation between the two units which was also describes as intra state colonialism. As a consequence, there was an establishment of the new nation-state based on Bengali ethnic nationalism. But the country itself could not maintain national integrity and came with the military regime and Islamic hegemony. The Bengali ethno-linguistic identity could not override other national identities and their aspirations. There is hardly any difference in the lifestyles and cultural practices of the Bengalee Muslims and Hindu. But the latter is not been treated equally, they feel socially and politically disadvantaged and economically deprived. Buddhists, Christians and people of other minority religions do not get fare share in natural resources.

Bangladesh has adapted Islamic principles and practices and attempt to forcefully create a homogeneous national identity, deriving the legitimacy from religion, Islam. The country is divided into Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism through political parties where the former believe in ethno-linguistic Bengali identity and the latter believe in religious and territorial basis. The two prominent political parties Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh National Party (BNP) accommodate religion into the mainstream politics. The military-bureaucracy axis is strong in the country and military has played an important role in forming the Islamic national identity of the state. The 2007 military-backed government posed a serious threat to civilian democratic practices. The state of Bangladesh, which rejected religious nationalism in

favour of ethno-linguistic nationalism, is again on the path of reclaiming its religious identity.

There are problems of integration such as coercive executive which poses threat to democracy, the tyranny of two major political parties which could not bring good governance because of their personal competitive national ideology. Islam is declared as the state religion in the constitution and the result is that minorities of the state feel socio-economic insecurity and political instability. To hold the coercive power, Patronage politics was emerged in political and economic life in Bangladesh, with social structures like wealth, land and education. Patron-client relation is the dominant form of political practice and is a cornerstone of society in Bangladesh. Thus, Bangladesh has also undertaken the principle of religious majority to define its nationhood.

In nutshell, it can be derived that a religious identity cannot override or subordinate or subsume within itself, the politicised ethno-linguistic identities and in the same manner the ethno-linguistic identity cannot override religious identity. Historically, political systems in South Asia were based on the territorial lines without having the concept of nationalities. Unlike Europe where nation states developed on the line of homogeneity, in South Asia, there are multiplicities of nationalities, overlapping geographical boundaries which make difficult for an inclusive national identity. The political and economic life of the country is dominated by the western concept of nation-state and ruling elites to remain in power keeps trying to find its foothold in one identity resulting in losing many other national identities. Under these circumstances, a specific religious national identity or a specific ethnic cultural identity does not have a strong tie to hold the country together.

3. <u>Contextualising Political Islam:</u>

Political Islam as an ideology is seen as arising in the context of disjunctions of the petty bourgeoisie and landed interest against Western models and wave of globalization. It is a contested concept where the fundamentalists believe that Western-style democracy and the onset of nation-state system has led to constant regression and shrinking of Muslim people (Mishra, 2012). Followers of political Islam believe that Democracy is not compatible with Islamic cultures and values.

Muslim political movements demand for 'the return to Islam' by establishing an Islamic law with the fundamentalist doctrine, particularly known as nizam Islami (Islamic order) (Mishra, 2012).

Islamic fundamentalism is not homogeneous in character. It is a multidimensional, multifarious movement emerged from varied social and historical conditions with distinct purpose, manifestations and components. Islamists have tried to capture the state power by inducing the surge of Islamic militancy and jihadi terrorism. And where they have failed to come at the state politics, their focus has been on masses and public life of individual Muslims. Their ultimate goal is the re-Islamisation of society. Political Islam has played a significant role in the process of nation building of Bangladesh

The rise and growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh can be traced by the country's 'over-developed society (in terms of the level of political consciousness due to mass mobilisation during the liberation movement) with an 'under-developed state' (in terms of institution-building). Simultaneously, which are considered the cause for poor governance, mismanagement and weak rule of law (Mishra, 2012). After independence, Mujib's governance failed to deliver a leadership of maintaining democracy and a secular state. External factors including the cold war super-power rivalry, inflow of petro-dollars, victory of the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviet army and the subsequent Taliban rule in the country have supplemented the Islamist movement and the process of Islamisation in Bangladesh.

The examination of Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh has proposed different views which Islamists keep emphasising. That is, the application of Sharia, status of women and religious minorities. The Quran and the Hadith are the two most important drawings of Islamic religious and legal thought. Sharia is the Islamic law based on the code of regulations (Quran and Hadith) (Knapp, 2003). The relevant versus of Quran gives many rights of dignity and freedom for women. It treats them equally with men. But there has been continuous misinterpretation of traditional practices and customary laws.

Muslim identity in Bangladesh is seen as a natural phenomenon that has been in the making since pre-modern time. The evolution of Islam in east Bengal was propagated by egalitarian Muslims of West and Central Asia. It came as a consequence of

agricultural civilization because of the hierarchical Hindu rituals which kept Muslim community downtrodden for political, economic and social reasons.

4. <u>Pre- British era: The Origin of Muslim Identity in Bengal:</u>

Historically, in South Asia, Islam was introduced through the military conquest by Seljuks and Mamluks (Hasan, 2011). Seljuk Muslim rulers from a Turkish background formed Islam in the region which is now known as Afghanistan and Pakistan. And Mamluks fixed Islam in the powerbase in India that is the sultanate of Delhi around 1190 (Hasan, 2011). Later, with the arrival of the Mughal dynasty (1530-1757), Islam spread throughout the Indian subcontinent and was adopted by people in large number. The Muslims made their root in Bengal in the medieval period. In the Bengali fabric, Islam got so intermingled with the local indigenous population that the identity of 'Bengali Muslims' emerged which was different from other Islamic cultures.

The process of Islamization in East Bengal can be traced in the context of the establishment of an agrarian civilization (Eaton, 1993). People in Bengal had their own cultural religious practices and were largely dependent on agriculture and cultivation. In the early Vedic period, Indo-Aryans group came from the north-western parts of the Indian sub-continent. They settled mainly in the north western part of Bengal and influenced the indigenous population of that region. They brought with them the social hierarchies on the basis of Brahmanical socio-cultural practices (Bhardwaj, 2010). Until the conquest of east Bengal by Muhammad Bakhtiyar in 1204, the region remained neglected with the new techniques of agriculture. With his invasion, east Bengal came under the Islamic expansion through the fusion of Islamic cultural values and mosque patronage; indigenous communities were introduced to the Islamic faith. In this enterprise, under the continuous constraint of economic growth and urbanisation, a homogeneous Bengali Muslim entity came up and maintained separate religious identity from the Hindu community of Bengal. As a consequence of agricultural expansion, there was a development of Bengal into a set of syncretic values that had religion inclusion (Bhardwaj, 2010).

The Islamic culture got involved with the various aspects of the Bengali rural life which led to flourishing and transforming the Islamic identity of the local converts. This resulted into the origin of a typically Bengali form of Islam. The Bengali Muslims

had an egalitarian ideal in contrast to the Hindu society. There was allowance of all Muslim ethnic groups to perform Islamic practices or entering the mosques, unlike Hindu Brahmanical system where lower castes are not allowed to perform certain rites and rituals.

The dynamics of Islam could not produce social equality and the spirit of individual freedom in Bengal. Muslims in the region got divided into social classes that are the 'Atraf' and the 'Ashraf'. The former were the indigenous people and considered to be inferior and lower Muslim class and the latter were those who were immigrants from outside, maintained their ethnic-cultural separateness and considered themselves as superior (Adhikari, 2011). The latter prescribed to the Arabic and Persian cultural values and languages.

5. <u>Consolidation of Political Islam in Colonial Bengal:</u>

Under the oppressive regime of the British Raj, there was a series of movements occurred in the Indian subcontinent to revive and consolidate the Islamic identities. Movements like Faraizi, Wahabi and the Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya movement gained a mass popularity and were seen as revolutionary movements for the Muslim brotherhood. In 1818, Hazi Shariatullah of Faridpur in eastern Bengal initiated the Faraizi movement which demanded the distinct identity to Bengali Muslims and led to the establishment of the preaching of Islam in a more fundamental way and had profound relation with Wahabi tradition of Saudi Arabia. Another movement which was simultaneously gaining impetus during the 1820s and 1830s was the Tariqah- i-Muhammadiya movement under the leadership of Shah Sayyid Ahmad. People like Shariatullah, Sayyid Ahmad and Titu Mir came up and involved in the revival movements because of the discriminatory measures and frustrations imposed to the Bengali Muslims by Hindu Zamindars and the British colonial government (Roy, 1999). Titu Mir was an Islamic preacher who led to peasant uprising for the protection of socio-economic and religious rights of Muslims in Bengal.

Bengali Muslims were deprived of society; they were abused and faced economic injustice by the excessive power of Hindu Zamindars. The purpose behind these revolutionary organisations was to unite and integrate all Muslims on the line of religion and to increase Islamic brotherhood amongst them. Later, in 1857 there was

a landmark development in South Asia which led to the growth of Islamic culture and practices. The conservative schools were set up specifically the Deoband Madrassah which believed to produce Ulema, and promoted the traditional understanding of Islam (Hasan, 2011).

After a century of colonial rule, Britishers realised that Muslims were no longer a threat to their power rather Hindu princely states were seen as risk to the colonial rule. So, after the revolt of 1857 they came up with the new land law in 1859 which stated that cultivators who cultivated a land for consecutive twelve years would automatically be granted the ownership of the land. This led to the strengthening of the Muslim cultivator class of Jotedars (rich farmers) and made them aware about their religious identity (Bhardwaj, 2010). Therefore, in the late 19th century, the revival movement of uniting Muslims shifted from rural peasant class to elite Muslim class. It was more rigid, conservative and originated from the Arab world. The more pragmatic Muslims took steps in developing Muslim solidarity and providing education and employment opportunities to masses for the religious and political revival goals.

Thus, a process of Islamization began with the underlying issue of socio-economic problem of oppression and injustice by Hindus and the government. The Muslims were drawn towards Islamization out of conflict and fear of losing their identity. The sense of deprivation and exclusion was developed amongst them which were making them aware of protecting their Islamic identity by non-Muslim Zamindars and planters. These movements assured them with a sense of communal identity. With the politicisation of Muslim community under a common Islamic practices and faith, there was a fear developed within the Hindu Zamindars and this resulted into the deepening of the distinction between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. Therefore, the process of Islamization in Bengal was an outcome of the social, economic and psychological changes of Muslims. It became a political force for the voice of the oppressed and led to an increased religious consciousness. Leaders such as A.Q. Fazlul Haque, Abul Hashim, M.H. Bhashani also came up in the forefront and fought for the Bengali Muslims and their identity. The Khilafat movement of 1919 was another event for uniting Bengali Muslims by Islamic ethos of universal brotherhood (Ummah). It helped in giving rise to a strong sense of Bengali nationalism in Bengal and to stop

the oppressive regime. By this time, it was clear that Hindus and Muslims in Bengal had distinct religious and cultural identity.

6. <u>Political Consciousness of Muslim community in Partition of Bengal (1905-1947):</u>

In the late nineteenth century, Hindu bhadralok (gentlefolk) class used to dominate Bengali nationalist politics and public affairs (Hossain, 2008). They had a narrow social base and little support from the masses. Except the Khilafat movement, the Muslims of Bengal did not support movements led by the bhadralok. The bhadralok nationalists drew their inspiration from Hindu fundamental rituals and spiritual tradition and emphasised religious precepts. The tendency was to make a greater Hindu political community in Bengal. But in 1905, with the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon, the bhadralok identity came to rest and the Bengal renaissance dominated Bengal. Hindus were against the partition because they had a fear of losing their power on Muslims. The partition of Bengal led to the immediate formation of the Muslim League in 1906 under the leadership of Aga Khan. After its emergence, Muslims formed the majority at politics and got better chance of education and employment.

In 1911, after the series of violent actions and protests, the British government repealed the partition of Bengal. But the Muslims in Bengal wanted the partition to continue and were contended in having a separate electorate for Muslims at government platform. Muslims felt that they had been betrayed by the government as the British government promised them to establish a university in Dhaka but it did not happen. Fazlul Huq announced that the annulment of partition led to the parting ways between Bengali Muslims and the British government (Hossain, 2008). Afterwards, several communal riots broke out between the two communities which led to the coming of two state solutions in 1947- India and Pakistan, the former for Hindu majority and the latter for Muslims.

Bengali Muslims wanted separate state for their identity but during the colonial struggle, they supported the All India Muslim League because it was seen as a better option in comparison to the Indian National Congress. In 1940, Fazlul Haq chaired the historic Resolution which had ideas relating to having more than one state for the

Muslims of India. The demand was put forward on the basis of language speaking regions in the Indian sub-continent (Adhikari, 2011). The purpose was to thereby secure Bengali Muslim identity and their rights but it went into vain when in 1947 India got divided on the religious lines of Jinnah's Two-nation theory. Bengal was again partitioned and West Bengal came under India and East Bengal later known as East Pakistan came under Pakistan.

It is to be noted that a section of Hindu bhadraloks who protested against the partition of Bengal in 1905 was the very same section of people who later in 1947 were demanding the separation. The same Bengali Hindu elite now came out in favour of divided Bengal in 1947. They preferred a divided Bengal instead of the whole Bengal being ruled by a Muslim majority.

The study of Bengal shows that the economic factors can become so sharp that it can result into different set of secular, cultural, lingual identities. Islam's encounter with Bengal had its own specific social and cultural contexts. The expansion of Islam in Bengal was brought about by twin process of agrarian growth and colonization. The evolution of Islamic society and culture in Bengal began with the gradual incorporation of Islamic values by indigenous communities. Hindu community was dominating and discriminating people of other religious community and against the backdrop of injustice and inequality, the unification movements started amongst the Muslims of Bengal which led to embracing Islam in the Indian sub-continent. The revival movements helped them in gaining a distinct identity of Bengali Muslims. The religion in the Indian sub-continent was continuously reinterpreted by different social classes in different periods.

Later the Indian sub-continent was ruled by colonial power and they further aggravated communal between the two communities with their divide and rule policies. During the British rule, there were two main incidents which contributed in strengthening the Bengali Muslim identity and they were; first the partition of Bengal in 1905 and second the immediate formation of Muslim League in 1906. These events made it more strong and conscious. When colonial rule came in India, they occupied a single unified province of Bengal but in their ruling period, they divided people on the basis of communities and religion. The result was the partition of Bengal in 1905 and then partition of 1947 where Hindu bhadralok came under India and Muslims

went under Pakistan. Islam in Bengal took over a long period of time to mix with Bengali culture and to be blossomed into a rich syncretic culture and to form the identity known as Bengali Muslims.

7. <u>Resurgence of Bengali Nationalism in East Pakistan (1947-1971):</u>

The partition of India did not lead to the happy ending for most Bengali Muslims as soon after the separation; Muslims of East Bengal or East Pakistan province faced internal colonisation by West Pakistan. It brought about the political and structural changes in the state. There were voices raised in East Pakistan to become a separate state on the basis of their lingual ethnicity i.e., Bengali language and disregarded the unification of Pakistan on the religious identity i.e., Islam. During this period, Bengali nationalism became more dominant over the Muslim identity because of the domination by the Pakistani government.

The Bengali Muslims wanted to have a broader religious policy inclusive of all communal lines but the West Pakistan rulers wanted to suppress all other communal identity under the one religious line. Bengali Muslims knew that under the idea of using Islam as a unifying factor, they would lose their Bengali nationality and would be marginalised and discriminated. The West Pakistani rulers were also aware of the fragility of the new state and for protecting the two-nation theory; they sought to consolidate Pakistan by idea of Islam. These two views became the source of the emergence of a new state in South Asia as both the groups articulated distinct conflicting identity.

Under the leadership of Awami Muslim League, a nationalist movement hit the Bangladesh, though the word 'Muslim' was deleted later to make the process secular (Hasan, 2011). The leaders of Bengali Muslims from the pre-partition era stood in the opposition of West Pakistan and contributed to the liberation of Bengali Muslims. The group included Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who became Prime Minister of Pakistan in the 1950s, and politicians such as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who followed his political aspirations and later became head of the Awami League (Hashem, 2010).

The Bengali Muslims continued to oppose constitutional arrangements which marginalised East Pakistan. They aimed at having a state on the heterogeneous and

pluralist basis. The language movement was launched by students and other political activists in protest of making Urdu the official national language. The movement catalysed the assertion of Bengali nationalism. Later in 1966, Awami League leader came with the six-point programme for making East Pakistan autonomous. Although, the proposal was out rightly rejected but in 1970 parliamentary elections, Awami League won most of the seats in former East Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman mobilised protests and campaigns against the West Pakistan and emphasised on the autonomy of East Pakistan.

After the revolt in 1971 with the help of Indian Army, Bangladesh won its independence and autonomy on a Bengali linguistic platform (Hossain, 2008). But soon, the secular theme of a country got downgraded and Islam came as a binding force and national identity. The country which fought for the survival from Pakistan military repression re-emerged the same Muslim identity in Bangladesh's politics and culture.

8. <u>Formation of Bangladesh and constitutional compromises with secular identity:</u>

After a nine month long war with Pakistan, Bangladesh emerged as a separate country on 16 December 1971. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became the first president of the country under the representation of Awami League party. In March 1973, he got an overwhelming majority and won the first general elections. The country formulated its first ever constitution in 1972 under the regime of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which had four basic principles- democracy, secularism, socialism, and Bengali nationalism. On the one hand, it was the second largest Muslim state in the world after Indonesia at the time of its emergence and on the other hand, it proclaimed itself as a secular polity. Therefore, the first government of the new state of Bangladesh was made up of an apparent dichotomy and this came as a paradoxical for many Muslims. Bangladesh now is the third most populous Muslim majority country.

The country was ruled by him till 1975 when he lost people's support and got assassinated. The country after the bloody battle war was devastated and Mujib's government from 1973-1975 could not stabilise its social, political and economic structure. His government lost the support of many Bengalis and marked corrupted. In

1974, to gain more power, he created a personal army, the strong Jatiyo Rakhi Bahini, a paramilitary force between the government and army. To remain in political power, he detained rival politicians, banned political parties, and abolished civil liberties. In 1975, he altered the constitution by declaring Bangladesh as a one-party state. All these changes frustrated masses and henceforth resulted in Mujib's assassination in 1975.

After the killing of Sheikha Mujib, the army came up as a ruling regime for subsequent two times, (1975-1990) and introduced Islamic values in the state. Major General Ziaur Rahman, the head of the Army Staff took the control and became President in 1977 after the interim President retired (Wilkinson, 2000). He relaxed restrictions on opposition parties and started another type of nationalism which was more based on communal lines. He founded Bangladesh National Party (BNP) in 1978 with an ideology of Bangladeshi nationalism. This was the period when Islam was started being used as legitimization tool by political-bureaucratic-military elite for their leadership. Policies towards Islamic ideology started and Bengali nationalism of the pre and post-liberation period was replaced by Bangladeshi nationalism (Rahman, 2003). The party reflected Islam in all spheres of state. He transformed Bengali culture on Islamic religious line.

With the amendment of Article 38, the word 'secularism' word was replaced by the principle as "the principles of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah", by amendment article 8 (1) of the constitution. Starting of constitution in the preamble began as 'BISMILLAH-AR-RAHMAN-AR-RAHIM' (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, and the Merciful). The 'struggle for national Liberation' was replaced by the 'war for national independence'. And to increase relations among Muslim countries, a new clause was added to Article 25(2) which stated 'Islamic solidarity'. (Bhardwaj, 2010). There was establishment of Islamic foundation, Islamic university, and funds were raised for the construction of mosques and madrassas. Bangladesh saw the acceleration in the proportion of practicing Muslims. It has been noted that with the funding of BNP government and Saudi Arabia, there were 1,40,000 masjids (Prayer houses), 5,766 madrasas (religious educational institutions) and 58,126 maktabs (community religious educational facilities) in 1991 (Hussain, 2007). Fifth Amendment of the constitution altered "Bengali nationalism" with adoption of "Bangladeshi nationalism" (Jahan, 2015). The identity of the citizens changed from

being known as 'Bangalee' to 'Bangladeshi'. By converting nationalism, the country made a distinction between Bengalis who migrated from India and those who live in Bangladesh. The exhibition of Islamic symbols and quotations in government spheres was also authorised.

Similarly, on the military rule, Bangladesh was again ruled by another military regime from 1982 to December 1990. General Muhammad Ershad became President and consolidated his rule by establishing his own political party (Jatiya party). In 1988, he took a one step forward in Islamizing the country and that was declaring 'Islam as state religion' of Bangladesh. He ruled until mass demonstrations by students, political parties, unions, and civic organisations forced him out in 1990. After his resignation, a caretaker administration took over to conduct parliamentary elections.

There are external forces too behind instigating Islam in Bangladesh. After independence, Bangladesh's economy was crippled which needed funds to change its economic and strategic position in the world. During 1970s, Oil-rich Middle Eastern countries were seen as the only source of hope to change its economic situation. In desperate need to get foreign aid, Bangladesh started developing links with Middle Eastern countries. During Zia's regime, influence of these countries raised enormously. It can be noted from the fact that during 1971-75, the amount aided to Bangladesh was 78.9 million US dollars and during 1976-81, it rose to 474.7 million (Islam, 2018). It also became member in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1974. Mushrooming of mosques and proliferation of Islamic institutions and organisations began and since the JIB had good connections in the Middle Eastern countries, military regime collaborated with them. The second international issue which contributed to the growth was the Afghan war where many Bangladeshi jihadists participated and received training. Later, they created parties like Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) which practice fundamental Islamic faiths and values. Therefore, the Islamic version of Middle Eastern countries which was more fundamental started dominating the Bengali Muslims' Islamic faith which had secular vales in it.

There is a connection between the introduction of Islam in the public sphere of Bangladesh and the emergence of Jamaaet-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB). It was in favour of united Pakistan and has become the leading fundamentalist party of Bangladesh.

They strongly believe in Islamic unity and the party was banned after the emergence of Bangladesh. But military ruler, Ziaur Rahman uplifted the ban and since then it is playing a significant role in Islamizing the Bangladesh's society. Military regime also added up to the growth of government funded Madrassahs which taught students the more fundamentalist Islam. The military-bureaucratic era of Zia and Ershad used religion into politics and simultaneously strengthened Islam-based political parties and militant groups.

Since the military ruler Ershad's resignation in 1990, the country has become a bi-party system, switching political power between AL and BNP. BNP came in power in 1991 parliamentary elections. Bangladesh's student groups, workers' association also played an important role in 1994 when it seemed that the Magura-by 1994 elections were rigged by the BNP (Wilkinson, 2000). Later in 1996, a constitutional amendment was introduced making a caretaker government mandatory to uphold elections of the new parliament. The elections in 1996 were won by AL on a free and fair basis. The change of military regime to parliamentary elections did not bring down Islamic politics, Islamic ideas, and extremism from the society. The change in the ideological outlook of AL between 1991 and 1996 and its close connection with the Jamaat-e-Islami indicated the tilt towards Islamic rhetoric and symbols. The party started presenting itself as a guardian of Islam and started highlighting the developments which were done towards Islam in Mujib's regime.

In order to achieve state power, a new trend of getting support of the Islamic parties began. To win elections, political parties need power and support from various sources. So, both the main political parties AL and the BNP, started forming alliances with the Islamist parties whenever they felt they are losing an absolute majority in the parliament. Meanwhile, this resulted in the increased power of Islamist parties in the country's politics. Thus, with direct and indirect connections of major political parties with Islamist political parties, Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism began to emerge in the country's politics.

By the late 1990s, Islamists had emerged as a political power and had started influencing the rural society. There was a rise in use of local tradition institutions like salish (village arbitration) and fatwa (religious edicts) to make Islam an eminent political ideology (Riaz, 2005). These traditions became a common feature of

Bangladesh's society and subjugated Women and Non-governmental organisations to Islamic practices. Salish was a traditional mode of arbitration in rural areas which usually comprised of village elders or village clergy (or Mullah) and did not have any legal authority. Fatwa too had an origin in Islamic jurisprudence (Riaz, 2005). In 2001, Supreme Court came with the verdict of declaring fatwa illegal. Afterwards, there was general strike in the roads of the capital, Islamists protested and launched violent demonstrations. It all revealed a close connection between Islamists and autonomous local mullah. Thus, throughout 1990s, traditional practices like Salish and fatwa led to the rise of Islamists in the political sphere of Bangladesh.

The growth of political Islam can also be traced by the presence of number of Islamist political parties and militant groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) set up in 1992, Hefazat-e-Islam, both Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the Islamic State (IS), Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) and many more. The BNP (2001-2006) made Islamic extremism increased rapidly during its regime. It got Islamic extremism legitimized in politics of the country. There was an enormous increase in violation of minorities, secular people, and liberal democratic forces. The BNP-led governing coalition included Islamist parties, like Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Islami Oikyo Jote. During Bangladesh's liberation war, the members of JI were an active anti-liberation force. It is the largest Islamic political party and wants to keep the Muslim community united. It has been most successful Islamic group in Bangladesh of creating a strong social and political foundation. Hizb Ut Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB) another Islamist party which has created a political ground for the philosophy of Political Islam. It works at all levels of society and wants to establish an Islamic state. These religious parties gained strength, consolidated their platform of an Islamic state and opened door for terrorism and violent attack in the country.

The country then from 2006-2008 was ruled by the Army. In 2008 elections, Secular forms of politics and the removal of use of religion in politics was promised by AL in their manifestos. After winning the elections, the government with the absolute majority in the parliament replaced Islamic symbolism from Secularism. In 2010, the AL government ordered to remove books written by Syed Abul Ala Maududi from nearly 24,000 libraries attached to the mosques (Ranjan, 2016). He was the founder of Jamat-i-Islami in pre-partitioned India and his writings were against the peaceful ideology of Islam. The ruling AL outwitted the BNP in 2014 elections as well, which

chose to boycott the elections. Currently, it does not have any representatives in Parliament raising questions on democracy and electoral politics. However, the victory of AL does not mean that Islamist parties would remain silent or would not influence the polity or mean that there is a demise of political Islam in the country. The state of Bangladesh has shown the weak apparatus of ruling which has been unsuccessful in curbing the violence against minorities and secular beliefs.

9. <u>Conclusion:</u>

Identity as a concept is very fluid in its character. The chapter traces the origin of Islam in Bangladesh's society and showed the conversation between how this particular concept of Islam in Bangladesh has underwent a transition from 1200 to till date. There are various forces that led to the development of political Islam in Bangladesh. Initially, after facing the Hindu majority domination, Bengali Muslim identity came in the forefront as a method of reaction. During the colonial period, Political Islam arose through the Faraizi movement and the Khilafat movement which demanded the distinct identity to Bengali Muslims against the suppression of the Hindu elites and the colonial forces. Later, in 1947 after the partition of India and Pakistan on religious basis, Islamic identity could not unite two wings of Pakistan. The regional hegemony on East Pakistan by West Pakistan created frustration amongst the Bengali Muslims and the political way of using Islam took a backseat during the Liberation war. Bangladesh emerged in 1971 on linguistic nationalism, giving importance to Bengali identity.

After the war of liberation, Islamic identity re-emerged as a strong political force in the country. Elements that supported united Pakistan and were not in favour of a separate state of Bangladesh stayed in the country and led to the growth of Political Islam in independent Bangladesh. The constitution which was drawn on the secular principles was changed and brought on Islamic lines. Factors such as corruption and economic disparity made groups like the JMB or JI managed to influence their ideology on vulnerable sections of the society. In order to achieve their goal, they spread violence by nation-wide bombings and killing of secular people. International factors such as the oil crisis in the 1970s boost of Islamic institutions, the economic support of Middle Eastern countries after the independence and the Soviet-Afghanistan war contributed to the growth of Political Islam. In contemporary

Bangladesh, institutional set up of Quami madrassahs also play an important role in making Political Islam active in the country.

Bangladesh from the time of its emergence has shifted from secular state to religious state, alienating minority groups by hegemonic Islamic national identity. The present debate between two types of nationalism portrays a debate between secularism which emphasise on Bengali language/ethnicity and Bangladeshi nationalism which emphasise on Muslim/Islamic identity. Though, Shahbag Movement of 2013, demanding capital punishment for the war criminals of 1971, tried in the International Crimes Tribune (ICT) in Bangladesh showed us the hope of secular Bangladesh and eliminating fundamentalism form the country. It shows that common people do not want a use of religion in politics and displays their demand of banning Islamic parties which shelter such criminals. But the effects of majoritarian, Islamist militancy, and communalism are enrooted in the country and are encouraged by the state apparatus of Bangladesh. Islamic conservative groups are misusing religion and seeking to destroy communal harmony, secular sprit of people. Such protests, violence reinforce ongoing tension between secularists and Islamists in the country.

Till the time, the country do not respect the grounded secular religious and cultural values, there is a danger of Islamisation of Bangladesh's society. Both secular and non-secular political practices have to be honest, liberal and follow legitimate electoral ethics. The significance of Islamic principles and Islamic parties in the political domain has to be reduced. The consolidation of democracy, restricting the use of religion in politics and maintaining a vibrant civil society thus remains the best antidote for a secular identity of Bangladesh.

CHAPTER-4

POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF RISING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

1. <u>Introduction:</u>

The third decade of the nation's political history began with the free and fair elections in which a civilian government headed by Khaleda Zia took power from another civilian regime headed by Sheikh Hasina. The country returned to the parliamentary system in the early days of 1991 under a caretaker government (CTG). There was popular expectation amongst people and the eyes were mainly on the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which were the two major political parties of the country. Hasina's regime was the first government in the history of Bangladesh to complete its term in 2001. Power was handed over to the CTG and the elections were held on 1 October 2001. The era of representative democracy and parliamentary system lasted till 2006 when against the backdrop of increasing violence; a military-backed caretaker government came in power. There was apprehension that the country may return to the long military rule of 1975-1990. But the election held in December 2008 broke the fear of people of being ruled by military and the AL-led alliance secured a landslide victory.

It was an ironic moment for a nation which emerged in 1971 on the basis of secular principles, linguistic nationalism, and whose constitution restricted the use of religion in to the politics of the country. The same nation after thirty years of its emergence brought a government which had a coalition to power with the two Islamist parties. It crushed the hopes of the secular and liberal democrats. A centre-right four-party coalition formed in 1998 contested the elections and won a landslide victory with a two-thirds majority. The four-party coalition was headed by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The BNP alliance consisted of the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Islami Oikya Jote (a conglomeration of seven radical Islamist parties) and a faction of the Jatiya Party. The period saw a number of negative developments: bitter quarrel between AL and the BNP, who were the major political parties of the country, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to the nation's peace and security and the deterioration of democracy and democratic rights.

In recent years, with the coming up of the BNP regime in 2001, Bangladesh has attracted the attention of the international media and has been portrayed as a hotbed of political and religious violence. The victory of BNP-led coalition attributed to the success of the growth of Islamic sentiments and pushed acceleration to Islamization program. Political violence, patterns and dynamics of radicalization, extremism, terrorism and the religious fanaticism has posed a serious threat to nascent democracy in Bangladesh. The country-wide bomb blasts by Islamic extremist groups, the killings of secular bloggers and journalists, attack on religious minority groups have created insecurity among citizens of the country. In Bangladesh, the Islamic parties were not capable of winning the elections alone, so to achieve their ideological goal and to form the government they started forming alliance with the two major political parties. As a result there has been a tremendous growth in the number of Islamic parties and their contribution in the mainstream politics.

Since 2001, the Islamist militant groups have been able to operate freely in the country and the reason behind it is the emergence of Islamist parties as important political actors. Extremist-ideology driven violence has impacted to the emergence of Islamist militant groups onto the political arena. The rise has been facilitated by the increased role of religion in mainstream politics which has created an environment for further radicalization. Remarkably, the main objective of the Islamic militants in Bangladesh is to ensure the establishment of an Islamic Shariah-based state and to spread religious intolerance and fundamentalism in the country. To motivate activists, they use various tools that includes Islam based motivational music and drama which they incorporate in their religious propaganda which is then profess through Islamic conferences and Islamic texts. The growing Islamic extremism has impacted the socio-economic dynamics and power structure. They have established a wider political and social base in the society.

Samuel Huntington defines democracy as "the political system in which the most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (Huntington, 1991). Besides free and fair elections, democracy also includes freedom of speech and expression and freedom of organization until it's not harming other person's religious sentiments. In order to assess the freedom of expression, the country has a bad performance record.

Government institutions have failed in providing security to citizens. There has been brutal killing and murder of secular bloggers, serious strain has been put on the freedom of speech. Islamists have demanded anti-blasphemy laws and various punishments for these writers and bloggers. Therefore, the history of Bangladesh which started with high expectations for a democratic institution has seen several ups and downs.

If we look at the social impact of rising fundamentalism, there has been a shift of educational system from being secular towards Islamic religious education. Since Bangladesh was formed, education and especially the curriculum has been a site of contestation between Bangladesh's various social groups and classes. The nation which was formed on secular Bangladeshi nationalism promised a universal and uniform system of education. Until the 1990s, the state mainly remained a central actor in the education sector and came up with different educational policies for a far reaching impact. However, successive governments have failed to deliver a high-quality, uniform education for all of its citizens. Socially and economically disadvantaged sections have found it difficult to get educational opportunities. Thus, this scenario of educational environment along with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism contributed in the drift of educational policies. There has been gradual incorporation of Islamic education in the curriculum. It got away from secular learning as propounded in the Constitution of the country in 1972, to increased incorporation of religious and Islamic educational institutions, namely madrasas (Islamic seminaries). A separate "Madrasas Education Board" was set up to oversee madrasas education. During the military rule of Ershad when Islam was declared a state religion, emphasis on Islamic education was steeped up in the country. The Islamist militant groups use these Madarsas as their base to recruit and train students and to develop weaponries. From 2000, with the coming of Islamist parties at mainstream politics, Islamist influence on education was not only confined to Madrasas. The radicalisation had arrived at the educational policies and mainstream general education as well.

The process of Islamist fundamentalism in Bangladesh, has gradually gained momentum by capturing the state power with force. Because of the lack of state's inability to keep the economic structure maintained, religious fundamentalist forces have been successful in using the political platform of religion as a pretext to organise

a well-established economic power in the country. They have shrewdly compared people's aspirations and dreams with the logos of economic reality and achievements. On this doing of Fundamentalist forces, Abul Barkat has said that the fundamentalists have created "an economy within the economy" and "a state within the state" (Barkat, 2013). These fundamentalist forces have been able to maintain their political organisation and political power because of the immense economic strength (from micro to macro levels) they possess. As they have economic power as well as the political power, they have been able to recruit their representatives in key strategic position. Islamist fundamentalists grab political processes and influence the decision making institutions for their self-interest. All this does not play conducive role towards productive investment. Bangladesh's 2021 vision of becoming a middle-income country requires macro-economic stability, better economic governance and peace in the region. To overcome economics of fundamentalism and religious extremism, political and civic movements are necessary and requirement of a stable political environment.

Thus, the rise in Islamic fundamentalism has impacted Bangladesh's political, security environment. And along influencing political scenario, it has crashed with social and economic system too. The country still has not been able to achieve an inclusive democratic structure.

2. Political Implications:

2.1 Increase in the role of Islamic political parties and Political Violence

Political parties are indispensable part of democratic political system. They are of different types and Islamic political parties (IPP) are one among them. IPPs strive for power, to control government mechanism and aspire to implement Islamic ideology throughout the country. IPPs are defined as 'Islamic confessional parties', whose aim is to spread the Islamic religious ideology and culture to mobilise, recruit and campaign in electoral politics (Nazar, 2016). They have remained a constant feature of the political landscape of the Muslim world. Their significance has increased in the post-9/11 world order. The political openings in Muslim countries have led to the upcoming of IPPs in the mainstream politics also. In Bangladesh, after the victory of BNP-led coalition with Islamic parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Islami Oikya

Jote (IOJ) has opened space for these parties to work openly. A number of political organizations, social movements have emerged in the country for achieving the goal of establishing an Islamic state. These issues remained the key impediments on the path towards democratisation in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has seen a phenomenon rise of Islamic political parties where on one account in 1970, the number of Islamist parties was 11 and in 2006 the number stood at 100 (Riaz, et al., 2011). Islamic politics in Bangladesh has experienced a dramatic uplift from its independence. The participation of Islamic parties in the electoral politics started from 1979 when there came a removal on the ban of religious- based parties. The two Islamic parties which came into a coalition with the BNP in 2001 had a fundamentalist Islamic ideology. The smaller partner, IOJ had expressed its solidarity with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) often referred to as Jamaat is the largest and the strongest IPP of the country. It interpreted Bengali nationalism as a threat to Muslim unity and supported unified Pakistan at the time of Liberation war. It emerged as the fourth largest political party of the country in the elections of 2001 because of the support they provided to BNP and stayed in coalition power till 2006. It was formed in 1940s and since then it has emerged as a key to power politics. Jamaat insist a greater role of Islam in public life and claims itself as a movement rather than a religious or political party.

The party in its 2001 election manifesto stated, "To establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh." They made a statement that Bangladesh should be declared an Islamic Republic on the basis of Sovereignty of Almighty Allah and there should be only one source of all laws in the Republic that is Holy Quran and Sunnah (Riaz, et al., 2011). They believe in unquestioned faith in Islamic fundamentalism and want to establish an Islamic order revealed by Allah. Before the general elections of 2001, there were attacks on Hindus between 15 September and 27 October 2001, which included manslaughter, rape, physical torture, bomb throwing, and extortion. And in most instances, it has been reported that the perpetrators were members of the BNP and its coalition partner JI (Islam, 2011). During 2001-06 period, it took systematic measures to led Bangladesh on the lines of becoming an Islamic state. Ministries like industry, agriculture and social welfare were chosen to broaden its base. Also, the madarsas were used to increase its influence in society. Jamaat takes advantage of the state's inability to addresses issues like unemployment, poverty, political instability and

environmental degradation. And in exchange, demands people to follow Islamic ideology. The BNP leaders claim that they have a control over JI members but critics believe that Jamaat is making the BNP government more hollow and religious based. During its 2001-06 rule, the BNP regime not only overlooked the rise of militancy but also assisted the Islamic parties and their ideology.

It has been reported that there is a close connection between Jamaat and Islamic militant groups of Bangladesh. Following the countrywide bomb blasts of 2005, the authorities detained members of Jama'atul Mujahideen. All the members were part of either Jamaat or its student wing, the Islami Chhatra (Kumar, 2009). Islamic Chatra Shibir (ICS) is the student wing of JI which help them in Islamizing the country with full-fledged Sharia laws. It has been linked with several militant organisations like HuJI-B and JMB. It assists the organisation to expand its mission all over and is the main channel of recruitment as it consists of thousands of workers and supporters. It has contributed to the politicization of academics on university campuses, universities and in the madrassas. It is in opposition to forces of secularism, modernisation and democracy. Currently, it is the only group in the country which has not been banned and has the strongest ties to both political parties and the larger militant groups. On January 21, 2015 Police arrested five leaders and cadres of ICS and busted a bomb-making factory of ICS in Mohakhali in Dhaka, it recovered 130 crude bombs and many other bomb making materials (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2015). Its significant aim lies in establishing an Afghanistan-Taliban type Islamist regime (South Asian Terrorism Portal, 2001).

In 1953 The Hizb Ut Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB) emerged as a global Islamist party. It launched the group's activities in Bangladesh on 17 November 2001. It does not believe in democracy and elections and states that the Muslims are forbidden to participate in the election. According to their website, they want to fall back to the means of living an Islamic life under the Sharia based Khilafat State (Caliphate) (Hasan, 2011). It further stresses on the duty of Muslims to establish a Caliphate. It is the only Islamist organization in the country to speak openly of Khilafat. On 22 October 2009, the government of Bangladesh proscribed it as it was carrying out anti-state and anti-democratic activities in the country. However, it is still operating secretly.

The most worrying development of this era was the rise of Islamic militant groups and their activities. Groups like Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh and the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) emerged in various parts of the country. Originally, Islamic militant groups were returnees of the Afghan war that had links with a Pakistani Islamist organization called Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami which later formed its Bangladeshi chapter, Harkat-ul Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJIB, movement of Islamic Holy War). Militant organizations aim is to wage "jihad" all over the world. In 1992, HuJI-B did a press conference and came in the forefront. In the press conference they demanded the transformation of Bangladesh into an Islamic state (Hasan, 2011). HuJI-B was formed in 1992, reportedly with the help from Osama bin Laden's International Islamic Front (IIF). It is inspired from bin Laden and the erstwhile Taliban regime of Afghanistan. Its aims in establishing Islamic Hukumat (rule) in Bangladesh by waging war and killing progressive intellectuals. At one pint of time it issued a slogan Amra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan (We will all become Taliban and we will turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan) (South Asian Terrorism Portal, 2017).

The group connects itself with the Deobandi School of thought and recruits people at various training camps where teachings of radical Islam are indoctrinated. Both citizens and foreigners are recruited into the organisation. Stateless rohingyas are also part of their recruitment cell. To carry out their mission, they receive funds from several Muslim Non- Governmental Organisations in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and several Islamist groups that operates in India, including the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) gives patronage and assist the group. (Riaz, 2008). Over the period of time, HuJI-B has become a part of the mission of establishing global 'Khilafat' and has been alleged of a number of terrorist attacks in the country.

It has been linked to have ties with the BNP, JI and IOJ. Since 2000, its militants are connected at stabbing of secular journalist, attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. There was an increase in political violence in 2004 by throwing grenade on the British High Commissioner in Bangladesh. In August, there was attack on the AL's rally killing 20 supporters and injuring many people. Following high-profile raids on their training camps, the BNP government banned HuJI-B as an extremist organisation in 2005.

The real picture of JI was exposed when later the connection between the militant groups like Jamaaul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and JI came in forefront. The Jamaaul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) was formed in 1998 by Abdur Rahman. The primary goal of the organisation is the organisation of an Islamic state through violent means. It is against a secular system and urges the need for a coercive unity against secular forces. In 2004, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), another militant group formed under the leadership of Siddiqur Rahman emerged in the north-western district of Rajshahi. JMJB is known to be an offshoot of the JMB. Despite maintaining a strong madrassa foundation, JMB also has its members from secular schools.

In 2005, the JMB carried out the spectacular bombing campaign on 17 August. It exploded nearly 500 small bombs across the country, leaving two dead and many people injured. Leaflets were found at the blast sites which included threat to judges, government officials, politicians, and other "enemies of Islam", including the United States and the United Kingdom and demanded that Sharia law gets established in Bangladesh (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Later, JMB launched three suicide bomb attacks in November and targeted government officials, local non-governmental organizations, traditional folk festivals, and cultural groups. A militant involved in suicide bombs was arrested later and he had a handwritten leaflet which said that they do not want Taguti (non-Islamic) law; they want Qur'anic law to prevail (Kumar, 2009). It is believed that they got funds from Pakistani militant organisation Lashar-e-Tayeba (LeT), Middle East and Persian Gulf countries. Despite arrests and capturing of explosive materials, it carried out its nationwide attacks in pursuit of their goal of a fundamentalist Islamic state. Subsequently, the BNP government under intense international pressure put a ban on the JMB and the JMJB and hanged several of its activities. However, it still has efficient training facilities in various parts of the country and still is covertly operating within the country.

Bangladesh continued to arrest alleged members of JMB and had recovered bomb-making materials, grenades, chemicals and weapons from their hideouts. Another group called Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), surfaced in 2007 under the name of Jamaat-ul Muslemin. The group along with the JMB prepares their violent strategy of attacking people who are seen as obstacles in establishing an Islamic state in Bangladesh. Islamic militant groups employ people in the name of religion and create

an environment of fear and panic among citizens of the country. They carry out political violence through different tactics like assassination of political opponents; attack on minorities or by killing people by the country-wide bombing.

The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) has further aggravated the situation in the rise of militant activism in Bangladesh. Both ISIS and AQIS threaten the security of the country. ISIS recruits are mainly from local militant groups such as JMB and ABT existing in Bangladesh. They are from mainstream educational background studying at university or from more radical madrassas. The militant groups along with the ISIS are working together to establish a Sharia based state (Islamic law) in Bangladesh by 2020 (Bashar, 2015). Since 2014, number of local militants has been arrested by Bangladeshi authorities who were said to have connections with Al Qaeda. These included militants groups like JMB, HuJI-B and ABT. While the other two groups maintain a low public profile in having links with Al Qaeda but the ABT openly supports AQIS through their online websites.

The nexus between politics and religion is such that during the caretaker regime (2007 to 2009), the incidents of political violence reduced remarkably because of the ban on political activities. In December 2008, new general elections held and AL-led alliance secured a victory. The government after coming to power took several steps to counter domestic as well as transnational terrorist groups. The counterterrorism efforts made by the Government made the situation harder for the transnational terrorists to operate in the country. The government passed the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009 which also included Bangladesh's first counterterrorist finances provisions, during 2010. Bangladesh also signed international agreements and collaborated with the United States to establish strong control of its borders. Despite the initiatives of antiterrorism and counterterrorism programs and the government's will to combat violence, Bangladesh continues to face terror attacks.

In 2013, there were protests demanding punishment of anti-liberation forces. After the trial and execution of a significant Jamaat-E-Islami leader, Abdul Quader Molla in 2013, the youth of the country got outraged who were waiting for the justice for four decades (Rahman, 2003). This made the thousands of protestors assembled at the Shahbag Square in Dhaka. They demanded capital punishment for Quader Molla

along with other war criminals and demanded a ban on JI from politics. They wanted politics of the country to be religion free and to follow the secular path. This protest outraged members of JI who reacted with violent means. The supporters of JI torched police cars, public vehicles, worship centres of religious minorities. They tore the national flag of Bangladesh. The violent response made several JI leaders behind the prison. But, despite this pressing situation of the party, violence in street of the country continues against religious minorities, intellectuals and social activists.

In 2015, Bangladesh experienced a significant increase in violent extremist activity by AQIS and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). It went through terrorist violence against religious minorities and government installations. AQIS took responsibility of attacks on February 26, March 30, May 12, August 7, and October 31 which led to the murders of four bloggers and a publisher, including an American citizen. ISIL also accepted the crime of threatening minorities and attacking Christians, Hindus, and minority Muslim groups (U.S. Department of State, 2015). The year 2016 was also not violent free and it too faced terrorist activity. There was attack on July 1 on the Holey Artisan Bakery, an upscale restaurant in the Gulshan area of Dhaka's high security diplomatic enclave frequented by the expatriate community (United States Department of State , 2017). ISIS claimed responsibility for this attack and for other 18 attacks which occurred in the country in 2016. The five Bangladeshi attackers killed 20 hostages and two police officers using guns, explosives, and sharp weapons. It has been reported that the attackers spared those hostages who were Muslims and could recite verses from the Quran (U.S. Department of State, 2016). Similarly, another terror attack was organised in the Sholakia Idgah of Kishoreganj district on July 7 with crude bombs and gun shooting before the morning Eid prayers (Hossain, 2018).

The increased blend of religion into politics, the increased access of Islamists to state power have created a disturbing environment of rising fundamentalism. The strength of religious parties has increased and Islamists have not only returned to the mainstream politics but also brought changes in the contents of Islamist politics. The connection between Islamist parties and the militant groups has also surfaced. The rise of Islamic parties like ICS and HuJI-B within the political landscape has resulted in the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the country as at one time these were shunned as collaborators and today they are occupying and coming at mainstream politics.

Many Islamic militant groups are banned by the government but then also they are able to re-organize themselves under different names and operate in creating nuisance in the country. These organisations use social media to spread their ideology and in turn increase political violence and extremism in the country. These forms of political violence have serious socio-economic and political implications in the country.

2.2 Attack on Secular views and Freedom of expression

A series of attacks has been witnessed by the Bangladesh and these attacks have been targeted on those who are exercising their right to freedom of expression. The situation of human rights has been continuous worsening in regards of peace, justice and democracy in Bangladesh over the past years. The signs are there in form of individual targeting of liberals, secular bloggers, atheists and killing them in various parts of the country. Bangladeshi atheists and secularists are under attack from their government and Islamic extremists. Islamists allege secular uprisings and actions as anti-Islamic and believe in suppressing these people by killing. In 2013, opposing to the growing power of Islamists, Shahbagh movement started. It was secular in nature and was pro-liberation war. The protestors demanded the death penalty for war criminals, a ban on JI and a boycott of businesses which were involved with the party. As the movement gained momentum the JI feared of losing out its power in the country and its reaction came out with a violent means.

In this contentious environment, a new Islamist organisation, Hefazat-e-Islam (HI) burst onto the political scene with mass rallies and marches. HI is not a political party but is a broad Quami-Madrasah based organisation which was formed in 2010. It was precisely established to oppose government plans to give women the same right as given to men (Griffiths, et al., 2015). Hefazat's appearance in 2013 was quite sudden after Islamists felt the existential threat from the movement. JI could cleverly manage to instigate HI leaders that Islam was under attack. With the upcoming of HI, JI demonstrated that it was not the only Islamic party in the country. The HI demanded that the government should stop the movement and arrest its activists. It began a protest movement in demand of arresting bloggers who committed blasphemy. Following the negotiations between the HI and the government, the members of HI issued 13-point lists of demand for implementation by the government. This included provisions like punishing atheists, bloggers of Shahbagh movement, scrapping of laws

on women's rights and education, establishing and maintaining Islamic cultural values and practices, declaring members of the Ahmedya community non-Muslims and establishing a blasphemy law with a provision for the death penalty of people who make derogatory statements on Islam and Prophet Muhammad.

There are evidences of women journalists attacked and harassed during the HI's rally on 6 April, 2013. HI held rally demanding capital punishment for the atheist bloggers of the Shahbagh who demeaned Islam. Women reporters were badly physically attacked and severely harassed by the HI leaders and were made to recall their 13-point demands (Institute Of Commonwealth Studies). After a month of its Dhaka gathering, on 5 May, HI activists imposed a blockade of the capital. Its consequences were setting up of fire to various buildings including banks, shops, and government offices. Security officers were attacked and the clash between HI members and police resulted into the loss of thousands of lives. Political violence since 2013 led to the development of brutal killing of secular bloggers and widespread use of a law of putting restrictions on the criticism for both the government and of religious sentiments. Thus, placing restrained on the freedom of speech.

There has been violation of human rights in Bangladesh in the form of killing and persecuting news provider. Following the brutal murders of secular bloggers, journalists, Islamic activists justify their action by alleging them of demeaning Islam and the Prophet. Islamists say that these people make blasphemous statements in their writings and therefore anti-blasphemy law should be implemented. While the state uses the Information and Communication Act, particularly Article 57 for silencing its critics. The Act was formulated in 2006 and was not applied till 2008. There were amendments done to the act in 2009 and the most significant changes were brought in 2013 that law enforcement agencies can arrest someone without a warrant and can detain him/her for an indefinite period (Riaz, 2016). On the uprising of Shahbagh movement, JI echoed the statement that the aim of the protestors was to root out Islam from the country. Under pressure, the Information Minister of the state had to announce that it would not spare people who offended religious sentiments. On April 2 and 3 2013, under the Act, the government arrested four bloggers for making derogatory statements in their writings. These were Asif Mohiuddin, Subrata Adhikari Shuvo, Rasel Parvez and Mashiur Rahman Biplob. Their host website, AmraBlog was shut down and their Facebook page was also suspended. One of the bloggers,

Mohiuddin was attacked in January as well by three men wielding a machete near his office in Dhaka (Institute Of Commonwealth Studies).

From late February 2013 onwards, attacks on journalists started taking place. Journalists were injured, attacked and received death threats and warnings by Islamists. A number of media organisations too received telephone threats. On the evening of 15 February 2013, the first one to lose his life was Ahmed Rajib Haider. He was brutally murdered near him home in Dhaka. He was killed because of his participation in organising the Shahbagh movement which was at its height in demanding death penalty to the perpetrators of 1971 Liberation war. Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) claimed the responsibility for the murder. The movement activists blamed Amar Desh, a pro-Jamaat-e-Islami daily for the death of Rajib as the newspaper writings were against the blogger.

Later, four other bloggers and one publisher were murdered in 2015. On 27 February 2015, Avijit Roy, who was a US-based Bangladeshi-American blogger was hacked to death in Dhaka. He was the founder of a blog, Mukto Mano. Then on 30 March 2015, Washiqur Rahman Babu was killed by three men in Dhaka; Ananta Bijoy Das killed in Sylhet on 12 May; and Niladri Chattopadhyay another activist and blogger who were hacked to death at his home in Dhaka on 6 August (Ranjan, 2016). The ABT (a self-claimed representative of the AQIS) took responsibility for these killings. Afterwards, the killing of three foreigners in October and November 2015, by the armed Islamic extremist group (ISIS) heightened anxieties among people over the increased use of violence in the name of religion. In October 2015, ABT was banned by the Government and made several arrests related to these attacks. But it did not result into the liberty of expression.

Another secular activist was viciously killed on 6 April, 2016 by four masked men. They attacked Nazimuddin Samad, with a machete in Dhaka. He was a student activist who used to organise secular campaigns on social media. He was one of the 84 bloggers on a "hit list" who were described as atheists by Islamists in 2013 (Amnesty International, 2016). No organisation has taken claim of the murder but the pattern of killing was the same as used in other attacks on other secular activists by Islamist groups over the past year. In silencing the independent and opposition news outlets and journalists, there has been continuous use of criminal defamation lawsuits by

ruling party loyalists. It was escalated dramatically in 2016 and has remained a concern in 2017 as well. Mahfuz Anam, who is the editor of the Daily Star and Matiur Rahman, who is the editor of Prothom Alo, had to face several cases of criminal defamation in the 2016 (Freedom House, 2017).

Eventually, attacks by Islamic groups not only confined to secular bloggers but also to other human rights defenders. In 2016, those killed also included a killing of Xulhaz Mannan, a prominent Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex (LGBTI) rights defender, a university professor and a Hindu tailor accused of insulting Islam. These attacks are claimed by groups' purported links to Al-Qaeda but no specific organisation has taken the responsibility for these killings (Amnesty International, 2016). These killings have created an environment of fear among the human rights defenders of Bangladesh. As they feel that they have become the next target of Islamic extremists, they themselves have voluntarily gone underground or into exile out of worry. Many defenders have also reported that the police have not shown willingness to provide them with protection.

The most frustrating and unfortunate development in this regard happened with the shift in the attitude of the ruling party AL. In early 2013, on the death of Rajib Haider, the Prime Minister visited his parents and described him as a 'martyr'. But in February 2015, after the death of Avijit Roy, she only called the father of the victim. This was also not made public (Riaz, 2016). Additionally, the Bangladesh Ulema League, a wing of the BAL, demanded capital punishment for hurting religious sentiments (Prothom Alo, 2015). In August 2014, the National Broadcasting Policy was approved by the Government which is used to restrict the coverage of anything which will be critical of the government or security forces or which is detrimental to the security of nation (Freedom House , 2015). The authorities started making statements in the press against the bloggers and others who had secular way of writing. And despite that, if it is done then they will be subjected to prosecution. These developments not only created a climate of hindrance but also frightened secular bloggers.

Media face myriad forms of pressure from Islamists as well as from the legal and regulatory restrictions. The cases of harassment of physical attacks against the reporters and bloggers are high in the country. (Freedom House, 2017) Censorship has been put on internet-based content and websites like YouTube, Facebook and

high-profile Bengali blog are blocked. Several books and films are also banned or censored. While there is respect of academic freedom in the country but research on sensitive political and religious topics are discouraged. Openly discussing about these issues is also restrained by fear of harassment. In Bangladesh, there exist an 'alternative media' under the banner of Right-wing Media (Kumar, 2012). It is owned by Islamists. The two well-known newspapers Sangram and Inqilab are part of it. Another daily, AlMujaddidi has also joined the group. These newspapers along with other Bengali weeklies and monthly magazines publish articles to promote the cause of Islam and the Muslim cultural history in Bengal. It advocates the Muslim heritage and the importance of Islam in Bangladesh politics and society.

The government have not only failed to condemn these killings and murders but have also been unsuccessful in providing protection to people who have been exercising their right to freedom of expression. The authorities have been rather shifting the blame on the victims and has been instructing the secular activists to stop writing against religious sentiments. Since 2013, the Information and Communication Act, has become an instrument of the state to curtail freedom of expression. It is tool for allegedly hurting religious sentiments and criticising the government. Islamists to curb the secular voice of the nation, declare them blasphemous people. And thus, act assertively by punishing these people with a violent means without waiting for the legal judgement. Out of the fear of losing their lives, many bloggers have been forced into hiding or exile. These murders have sent a warning to those who speak openly without fear of the restrictions put by religious dialects. Sometimes, police has been reluctant to approach the culprit organisation out of the fear that they themselves could be hurt.

Although several Islamist militants in connection with attacks against journalists have been arrested but very little progress has been ensured in achieving justice to these killing. Because of the fear and constant threat, many bloggers have imposed self-censorship or fled the country. In many cases, there have been no notable progress done on the case, no one has been prosecuted and there have been no updates from the case. Bangladeshi authorities must take serious measures to curb these killings and take steps to end this horrific phase of violence. Culprits of these attacks should be held to account and proper investigation should be started. These killings need to be stopped and rule of law has to be restored.

3. <u>Social Implications: Impact of Islamic fundamentalism on Education:</u>

If there is a positive correlation between high poverty and rise in number of pupil enrolled in religious education then Bangladesh makes a perfect place for increased share of madrassas. Because of the abject poverty and lack of insufficient educational facilities, socio-economically disadvantaged group do not attend schools. The lack of physical access to secular schools acts as a factor for attending madrassas. The country where large proportion of population is below poverty line, madrassas that are free of cost or have lower fees are more attractive. Islamist organisations take advantage of the situation and target the vulnerable groups starting from the students of madrassa to the students of private university to poverty stricken individuals as well as to the elite section of the society. Madrassas is the fastest growing sub-sector of education in Bangladesh allegedly making up for the inability of government to provide education to everyone and as a response to poverty. The country records the largest number of registered Madrassas in the sub-continent and second largest in the world (after Indonesia) (Asadullah, et al., 2009).

The concept of secularism in the education sector got removed with the inclusion of religious education, Islamic universities and with the changes in the content and texts of school curriculum. The military dictators supported the growth of the private madrassas known as Quami Madrassahs, which only teach the Quran, Hadith, and orthodox interpretation of the Shari'a to its students. The most significant influence of Islamist over the content of education is seen in the textbooks produced by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). For example, in early post-independence period history textbooks recorded that the Islamists, namely the JI was anti of liberation war. They collaborated with the Pakistani Army and founded three paramilitary forces called Razakars, Al Badr and Al Shams. These paramilitary forces led by JI were involved in abductions, torture and killings of Bengali intellectuals. But these historical facts were purged from textbooks by 1978. Later in 1996, after the AL regime came to power, it corrected these deliberate omissions in the historical textbooks. But with the return of BNP in 2001 with its coalition partner JI changed the

textbooks again. And the text blaming Razakars and holding JI responsible for the deaths during 1971 war was removed after October 2001 (Riaz, 2011).

Bangladesh, unlike other countries in the region comprises of two types of madrassas. One is the state regulated and another is independent, private madrassas. The former is known as Aliya madrasas which are run by funds from the government's revenue and development budget, which gives both Islamic education as well as the modern general education. They are historically of Calcutta Aliyah Madrasa tradition. They are regulated and monitored by the Education Ministry and Madrassas board in term of their content provided to students and teacher recruitment policies. And the latter, privately owned Quami madrassas, exists outside the control of state power and don't have any financial access from the sources of the government. Quami madrassas are specialised in providing fundamental religious education to people and reject the idea of modernity and modern education. This has led to many of the students becoming terrorists. These types of institutions survive under community patronage and domestic and foreign NGOs. They are also funded by Islamic organisations and from private donations from Muslim households and individuals (e.g. through a process of alms-giving or zakat).

A major source of the independent religio-political power base of the ulama in Bangladesh is the financial autonomy of the Quami Madrassah system. The autonomy has enabled the ulama to resist all the positive efforts of state authorities to introduce reforms in the madrassah system. Because of which it has been difficult for the state to reduce the gap between the traditional system of Islamic education and modern secular education. The Quami madrassahs have predominantly untrained teachers with poor qualifications which contributes in terrible situation of education system in the country. Their unknown fraction of existence makes a daunting task for state to regulate curriculum and content of these institutions.

During the five year rule of BNP led coalition with Islamist parties (2001-2006), the country witnessed an increase role of Islam in the mainstream politics which further increased the proliferation of madrassahs. The Islamists brought changes in the content and contours of general education in public and private educational institutions and inculcated the same fundamentalist version of Islam that is influenced by the Taliban. Moreover, this period saw a rise in increase of Muslim militants and radical

organizations, such as HuJI-B and JMB. They gained hold on political stream and started influencing people with their fundamentalist ideology. The JI, the largest Islamic political party along with its student wing, ICS, rapidly gained ground in Bangladesh. Jamaat like all other organizations believe in establishing Islamic state. It uses madrassahs to increase its influence in Bangladeshi society. In 2013, another militant group Hefazat-e-Islam (HI) came on the political front whose strength of the organisation lies from its control over many of the country's madrassahs. Hujib too recruits its militants from various madrassas. It has been noted that the attacks on bloggers were also done by these Islamist groups which are critical of secular teachings and wants to establish an Islamic state. And because of the countless received death threats, many bloggers themselves have gone into hiding. There has been exert disproportionate influence of Islamist parties and organisations over the country's political, social, legal, administrative, economic and religious affairs.

These extremist organisations are funded by foreign Muslim NGOs through personal channels. In Bangladesh, there has been active contribution by these Islamic NGOs in fostering extremist activity. They use Quami madrassahs and orphanages as their centres for recruitment and training. These foreign-funded Islamic NGOs constructs mosques, madrassahs, orphanges-cum-madrassahs, educational institutions throughout the country. Many of which are proven to be centres of militant activities. For example, in March 2009, a raid by the law-enforcing agencies on a British-run orphanages in a remote island of Bhola, led to the discovery of 164 small arms, equipment to make small arms, walkie-talkies, two remote-control devices, army uniforms and Islamic book in line with extremists like Osama bin Laden and al-Qayeda (Hasan, 2011).

Visible focus on religious symbolism is a hallmark of madrassahs in Bangladesh. Islamist organisations have madrassahs exclusively for women also. They have strict dress codes along an orthodox Islamic style. These institutions indoctrinate them with Islamist ideology. They officially impose conservative social and gender norms in dressing. For example, Quami madrassahs strictly follow and implement the policy related to practice of 'Purdah' irrespective of being inside or outside the classroom. 95 per cent of Quami female students are required to practice 'Purdah' inside the classroom (The World Bank , 2010) . It becomes an important tool for expansion of their ideology. The Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics

(BANBEIS) prepared a report of total number Quami madrassahs existing and number of people studying in them. It said in 13,902 Qawmi madrasas across the country, a total of 1.4 million students have been studying. Further, in Dhaka division there are 4599 madrasaahs which is the highest whereas the lowest 1,040 are in Barisa (Ahmed, 2015).

The Jamaat is moving in a methodical manner to influence its Islamic ideology throughout the country. It has taken several steps for this purpose. The influence of Jamaat and its affiliate organisations have been continuously using madrassahs to increase fundamentalism in Bangladeshi society. A major proportion of their money is spent in arms training as preparation for 'jihad'. Jamaat also takes advantage of the state's inefficiency and inequality in the society. Their tactic is to identify intelligent but poor students in rural areas and assist them financially, emotionally and win their confidence. After this, students easily imbibe religious values and get attracted to Jamaat's ideology. To attract elite class, Jamaat has set up English medium madrassahs and schools also, like Manarat School and University. It provides students with the availability of coaching centres and gives the facility of lending books to people who cannot afford. By doing all this, the party's dual purpose of generating funds and moulding students in their ideology, both is solved.

The Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of JI, has a major presence in several universities like Rajshahi University, Chittagong University and is one of the strongest student fronts. It remains the main recruitment ground for JI. During the five year of rule when it was at centre, JI had been successful in placing its sympathizers in education, bureaucracy, police and other important organs of the government. It has infiltrated into universities. The crucial positions in the University and Public Service Commission have been taken by the party members and they have recruited its party cadres and sympathisers as professors to various universities in Bangladesh (Pattanaik, 2009).Thus, making its presence in the mainstream educational institutions and from its fundamentalist ideas polluting the system. Apart from campaigning in Mosques and madrassahs, Jamaat have hold on publications of newspapers, magazines to propagate their cause against secularists and liberals.

Another global Islamist party which is anti of secular education policies and demand religion-based politics and laws is Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). It floated onto Bangladesh's

polity and society in 2001. HTB found it easy to recruit university and madrassah students for jihad against the USA, the West and Jews as many of their workers are the university teachers. Further, madrassahs were also targeted by the HuJI B for their recruitment. They target school-outs with extremely poor financial background, provide them with training and use them as messenger between HuJI-B linkmen.

The forthcoming of Hefazat-e-Islam and its 13 point lists of demand in 2013 made a place for increased radicalisation of education sector. The Ameer (chief) of HI, Shah Ahmad Shafi is the chairman of Quomi Madrasa Board; he is in charge of the clerics who run number of madrassahs in Bangladesh that are unregulated by the state. He also heads 117 years old Hathazari Madrasa (Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Muinul Islam). It is the largest and oldest Deobandi Quami madrassah in Bangladesh with 50,000 students (Institute Of Commonwealth Studies). It is also said to be the second largest of its kind in South Asia. Students of this madrassah have to strictly abide by the rules like not reading any newspaper or books published by other institutions, not participating in any examination other than held by this Madrassah and many more. He also chairs the Quomi Madrasa Education Commission Bangladesh which is negotiating with the government to officially recognize the Quami madrassah leaving certificates. These norms are against the secular nature of the country and seculars believe that the recognition of the most retrogressive madrasa education system would be a disaster for the country's overall educational system. Its 13 point list included demands like making Islamic education mandatory from primary to higher secondary levels, not letting women study, to stop killing, shooting and threating Islamic scholars, teachers and Quami madrassahs and to release all the arrested Islamic scholars and madrassah students.

The most notable victory of the Islamists came in with the declaration of recognising "Dawra-e-Hadith" degree, the highest degree of Quami madrassahs as equivalent to a master degree in Islamic studies and Arabic. The government will have no supervisory power over the exams and related procedures. The decision was made without having consultation with the University Grants Commission (UGC), the national accreditation body for higher education. Even formulation of any policy guidelines in regard to implementation mechanism was not discussed (Riaz, 2011). Critics argued this step as going far from ideal, secular learning. The religious orthodoxy they preach would push many more poor youths into Islamic radicalization.

The growing strength of the Islamists has resulted into the Islamization of Bangladesh's society vis-à-vis education. The educational policies of successive regimes and poverty replaced secular principles and ideals and have embraced Islamist content. Although there is considerable success in regard to the overseas non-governmental organizations offering educational opportunities as well as in efforts of the state in providing formal schooling, there still remain millions of potential students whom the state system does not cover. Moreover, the religious influence and increase of Quami madrassahs in Bangladesh's society has caused a drift in educational institution. Quami Madrassahs are used as tools by Islamic militant groups as their training centres. Also, the Government does not spend the adequate amount of money on education. The government spends around 2 per cent of the GDP on education sector which is the second lowest in South Asia (World Bank, 2016). The education system of Bangladesh is influenced by various socio-economic, political and external forces. Because of the globalization where countries interact at the international world, these social concerns are extremely relevant for the country's status. It is vital for the government to identify strengths and weakness of the educational structure of the country so that an integrated social system can be formed.

4. <u>Islamic Fundamentalism and its Economic Implications:</u>

Political stability and economic growth are two strongly related concepts. The uncertain political environment, political violence can cause in decrease of investment and the infrastructural development of economy. While weak economy may lead to government fall down and political instability. In post-colonial societies, despite strengthening the democratic progress, political instability has been a part of the political culture. It has become a major problem for developing and underdeveloped countries. In a politically stable state all sections of society get their equal shares and are satisfied with their living standards. But in in the case of political fragility, people lose their faith on governing institutions and are more susceptible to take violent disruptions for removing their poverty and economic exclusion. They prefer their own interest over the state's interest. In better economic conditions, people won't be likely to initiate violent conflict both because they are more content and by indulging into violent activities, they don't want to bring harm of physical danger and economic disruption that war brings (J. Dumas, 2006).

Bangladesh's economy, despite having the political and social unrest, has proven resilient. It has achieved reasonably rapid economic growth and significant progress despite many impediments like lack of resources, widespread corruption, governance failure and religious extremist violent activities. The GDP per capita increased from US dollar 200 in the 1970s to around US dollar in 2011 in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). It was only because of the sharp increase in GDP over the period. The GDP growth rate hovered around 6 per cent over the first decade of 21st century (Hetal, et al., 2013). There has been huge economic progress in Bangladesh since its independence. The country has maintained her GDP growth at the rate of 6 per cent from 2005 to 2014. The country's GDP growth rate for the FY 2016-2017 amounted at 7.1 per cent (UNCTAD). The economy is largely led by export-led industrialisation. The textile industry of Bangladesh is the second-largest in the whole world. There has been a great improvement in the living standards of the poorer section of the population as well. Continue growth in ready-made garment exports and agricultural and aqua cultural production are other contributory factors to this dynamic performance of the economy. Remittances sent by overseas migrants have also shown an upward trend. The remittances boost foreign exchange reserves and have been at an increasing trend from the time when the practice of exporting workers was started. All these factors have contributed to the growth of economic development of the country.

In order to maintain this economic performance and to achieve the targets set for 2021, the country needs to focus on political instabilities like poor governance, strikes and parliamentary boycotts. The country's target of achieving 8% GDP growth rate by 2015 was not achieved. And setting to achieve a GDP growth rate of 10% by 2021 requires political peace and stability. The rising religious extremism poses threat to smooth working of economy. It creates an inconducive environment for external investment. State-sponsored Isalmization also need to be stopped. The GDP of the country decreases because of all these political unstable activities. When religious extremism is reflected in political choices then it has a direct impact on the growth rate of economy as well. A roughly one-percentage point decline in growth occurs when there is a one-percentage point gain in the vote share of right-wing or nationalist parties (Grüner, et al., 2010).The degree of inequality, level of extreme poverty and unemployment encourages extremist violence.

As part of a long term project, in 2010 the Government of Bangladesh adopted its 'Vision 2021' which has put more emphasis on the software development. It has come with the concept of 'Digital Bangladesh'. The associated Perspective Plan 2010-2021 set concrete development targets for Bangladesh in terms of prosperous achievements in political, economic and social indicators. The country would mark its golden jubilee in 2021 and therefore the target has been set up with a view to transforming the socio-economic environment of Bangladesh. The country's main goal is to come in a middle income countries' bracket. The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPoA) has set the ambitious goal for enabling LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020. Bangladesh, the largest least developed country is terms of population and economic size is amongst those which have met the graduation criteria for the first time in March 2018 (UNCTAD, 2018).

In Bangladesh, the "economics of fundamentalism" is a terminology used by Abul Barkat to explain the economic strength of religious fundamentalist forces through which they aimed at capturing the state power (Barkat, 2013). This approach is contrary to secularism which was laid down in 1972 Constitution and believes in religion-based communal politics. The governing authorities of the country have been unsuccessful in providing an inclusive economy. The free-market spirited economic system within the globalized monopoly capitalism could not develop national capitalism in Bangladesh. The system has not been conducive to poverty and inequality reduction. The system could not satisfy people's dream of standard of living, stable jobs and has not been conducive to accelerate generation of employment in a labour surplus economy. In this situation of alienation, market exclusion and crisis of identity, fundamentalist forces have taken an act of satisfying people's hopes and aspirations. The young population have been a major victim of the process of radicalisation because of the lack of education and job market. Unemployed youth are easily motivated and indoctrinated by the extremist groups to join their cause. This ultimately led that many economic enterprises are run by ideologically motivated and professionally competent persons.

However, Economic growth in the country has led to significant job creation in the country. Employment opportunities have been given on a large scale in the export-oriented readymade garments sector and shrimp production sector. But still the country needs to focus on creating more jobs to realize it vision of becoming a middle-

income country. Bangladesh is the third-worst one in Asia Pacific region in the NEET rate with 40% (youth not in education, employment or training) (International Labour Organisation, 2016). This shows the vulnerabilities among the section of youth that needs jobs in Bangladesh. The instant threat can only be dealt as a nation and as a society irrespective of internal political dynamics.

There is a drastic gap between being in power and oppositions which has led to aggravate the culture of hartals and blockades in the country. Hartal, a form of general strike is one of the forms of political violence apart from street agitations, protests, bomb blasts which causes huge destruction and political disturbance within the country and therefore having economic implications. From February to April 2013 there were more hartals called by Jamaat-e-Islami in protest over the sentencing of its leaders in the war crimes trial and a protest over the growing threats to Islam from secularists. This period saw more hartal than in the previous three years: 23 in total (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013). It was the first solo hartal of JI without the BNP or other opposition parties. The success of strikes showed that Jamaat had its own political street power and just do not ride on the back of the BNP. The economic implications of the strikes have both short term impact and long term effects. The strike of 2013 saw its immediate impact in the country's largest export industry, the readymade garment sector. Its estimated factories were losing £17 million daily in 2013 (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013). Hartals have longer term effects as well in discouraging foreign and local investment because of political uncertainty and violence. They result in causing monetary loss also. Continuous shutdown disturbs the daily lives of people, affects shipments of the readymade garment, disrupts transportation and damages property. It also often hinders commodity supply chains which have adverse impact on the prices of daily essentials.

Bangladesh's export relies more than 80 per cent on low end readymade garments. The country should start emphasising on diversification and in strengthening investment environment in the country. Priority sector like new labour intensive industries (e.g. footwear), skill intensive industries (e.g. electronics), ready-made garments need to be focussed for sustaining and increasing the current level of growth (World Bank, 2016).The garment sector is more vulnerable to unrest because of the time sensitivity of exports that need to feed modern supply chains. All this requires

the country to maintain law and order situation, control strikes and keep checking political violence and extremism.

Today, Jamaat's existence can be sensed in almost every sector of the Bangladeshi economy- from large financial institutions to micro credit organisations, from madrasas to mass media to big trading houses to non-governmental organisations. With the growing strength and increasing support-base of Jamaat, its business activities may also increase proportionally. Its net annual profits comes from banks, insurance, leasing companies, NGOs, education sector, transport and real estate business. Jamaat's controlled economy is growing at a faster pace than the national economy. In 2015, Jamaat's economy annual rate of growth was 9 percent and that of the mainstream economy was at only 6 percent. And nearly ten per cent of its total annual net profit of $278 million goes in funding the party's political activities. It can sustain nearly 600,000 cadres.

Moreover, the Jamaat central executive committee member, Mir Quasem Ali has been the director of the Islamic Bank of Bangladesh Ltd. (IBBL), known to be the financial arm of Jamaat and the country's largest private commercial bank. The bank is involved in many illegal activities and with no doubt Jamaat is the beneficiary of such illegal acts. It is now become one of the three largest banks in South Asia, with majority of its shares held by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In 2006, the Bank of Bangladesh, the country's top regulatory financial sector, had put a heavy penalty on the IBBL for involving in illegal activities under the purview of Money Laundering Act. In 2013, after the political controversies, especially involving JI leaders with the trial process of the war criminals, the foreign investors started losing their interest and ownership of the bank. This is an alarming signal to the foreign investors interested in Bangladesh. The governing authorities need to look upon the nexus between the politics of JI and Islamic Bank. Several measures need to be taken for the betterment of economy.

Bangladesh's economy has achieved considerable growth and social gains despite the environment of political instability, lack of perfect democracy and weak administrative government. This is quite often termed as Bangladesh development surprise (Mahmud, et al., 2008). But the future course of the country's economy is dependent on the cause of peace and political stability. It requires improved

governance and a regulation of religious extremist activities. Bangladesh's investment environment faces number of challenges and religious extremism makes it more difficult to bring peace to the country. The nexus between politicians and violent elements creates inhibition in the international business community to make investment decisions for the country.

The country aspires to undergo transformation by 2021 in aiming to register itself under the bracket of middle income countries' club. For seeking more investment in the country, a serious attempt has to be made in factors like to stop criminalisation of politics, improve governance, reduce corruption and check on political violence and religious extremism in the country. Political investors consider political factors like change of government, degree of nationalism, terrorism etc. before investing in the country. The recent economic performance of the country has raised hopes for a peaceful future where the development of the economy can place the country on a trajectory of peace.

5. <u>Conclusion:</u>

It can be said that Bangladesh has yet not become another Pakistan but Islamist forces in the country are no doubt rising, and the influence of extremist is growing, especially in the countryside. Fundamentalist forces have acted as a powerful catalyst to criminalize all spheres of politics, society and economy. The situation has arisen where the conditions are leading to active denial of addressing issues pertaining to human choices for full-life. Criminalisation of politics and society has trapped people within it wherein they are not ensured of freedom of speech and freedom to exercise their own free will. Threat from extremist forces is offering breeding ground for political and sectarian violence in the country and is contributing to political instability. Political polarization and confrontation between the two major political parties, the ruling Awami League government and opposition Bangladesh National Party has made the pathway for the rise of Islamist extremism in Bangladesh.

The expanded religious fanaticism and fundamentalism of economy is deep rooted in the society. It is an outcome of several reasons like fear, inequality, unemployment, poor educational facilities, and much more. The GDP growth rate of the country is increasing but to achieve its set target, the country has to improve productivity, raise income and increase foreign investments. FDI increases government revenue, increase

per capita income by employing local workers, reduces import by producing import substitute products and maintains balance of payment. In fighting religious extremism, the country's economy needs to be free from these fundamentalist forces. Developed economy would help in alleviating poverty and further causing larger section of youth to enter in a productive working sector of the country. The economics of fundamentalism has to be overcome by political movements backed by substantive public actions.

For maintaining stable political environment, Education system of the country should also be smooth and well-governed. Not only it needs to create a skilled workforce but it also needs to reduce social polarization. The increased radicalization of the society and non-state provision of education has impacted into expansion of madrasas. The government needs to come up with efficient educational policies to counter Islamic extremism. There should be regular check on the functioning of Quami madrasas so that they do not inculcate fundamentalist values amongst people.

The government need to put more efforts in the education sector so that it can come up with different initiatives to lead a progressive society. It is imperative to build an inclusive social system in which education is given to all as Education is one of the important means to face the challenges of radicalization and extremism in Bangladesh. There is a need to bring stable political environment so that education system can run smoothly. It is important for the government to provide knowledge to students/ groups on religious tolerance and ethnic tolerance.

Religious extremism in the country needs to be taken seriously. Continuous attacks of killing and injuring secular bloggers, media people, and student activist by Islamic militant groups have created an intimidated environment in the country. This has resulted into the deterioration of freedom of speech and abuse of human rights. Though, Bangladesh uses strategic communication to counter violent extremism, supports the global war on terror but its weak institutions, politically unstable environment, fight between the two major political parties creates problems in curbing extremism. It needs to scale up capacity in the cyber and digital domain, build technical capabilities for monitoring and countering extremist activities online. Operational responses alone are inadequate. Various Islamic political parties and

militant groups were banned and arrested but their activists still functioned regardless of the action.

The country still lacks dedicated policies and tactics of countering violent extremism activities and their implications on society, politics and economy. Various critical areas like proper arrest, investigation, prosecution, generating public awareness needs attention. Apart from this, the governing authorities need to create more jobs, reduce inequality and poverty and provide quality education to everyone so that more people can be equipped in having good working skills and can be less indoctrinated by Islamic fundamentalist elements. Islamic militant groups and their activities have to be controlled from causing political violence and instability. It is important for the government to have close allies with communities, media organisations to overpower the fundamentalism Islamic ideology and to strengthen the country on its foundation principles of secularism.

CHAPTER-5

CONCLUSION

The pronouncement of Bangladesh's independence in 1971 assured a country to bring equality, liberty, human dignity, nobility, self-respect, peace, harmony and justice but within short span of time the foundation blocks got trembled and was forgotten by the political elite class. The country came with the Constitution which promised to follow principles of secularism and democracy at every platform of governing but first it was repudiated by the architects of the constitution and later by military regimes. Bangladesh emerged as a new nation state after revolting against the fusion of religion and politics in Pakistan. It came in response to the promise of circumventing the Islamic hegemony imposed by Pakistani politicians. The country and its framers wanted the separation between state and religion and thus adopted principle of secularism. But soon the ray of hope of a secular state was faded and Islam cropped up as a distinct political ideology. It got its name in the constitution by being declared as state religion in 1988 and retained an apparent role in the public sphere. The ruling regimes adopted the religious rhetoric and Islamic rule established itself in the country which once took a pride in its syncretic tradition.

The history of Bangladeshi politics is marked by confrontational politics, instability of democratic structures, poor governance and fragility of political processes. The state which came into existence through violence has witnessed many more incidents of violence since the time of its independence. Bangladesh's volatile political scenario, violence, breakdown of political regimes, attack on people's right to express, bomb blasts and infringement of human rights have frequently gained world's attention towards the country. But the paradoxical notion in case of Bangladesh is that despite so much prolonged problems, lack of good governance and political uncertainty, the country has survived and constructed a development story in economy and social indicators. The country is remarkably been successful in achieving targets of economy, GDP growth, business development or in terms of purchasing power parity of people. Along with which, its social indicators have also shown positive trends in different parameters like Human Development Index, mortality rate etc. All this indicates that the country is on the right path of development and factors like confrontational politics, increase in Islamic militancy, political outburst, growth of

Islamic militant groups, demolition of secular values, Islamization of education system can create major hindrances for achieving future course of actions and targets in terms of its evolution.

Islamic fundamentalism today is not only confined to Bangladesh specifically but is crossing transnational borders where the Islamists are challenging modern and postmodern lifestyles of a globalised and western world. Fundamental Islamist groups form global networks and influence the Muslim youth by indoctrinating them with Islamic ideology. Islamic fundamentalism is not homogeneous in character, it is contextual, historical and with diverse manifestations. Their ideologies, tactics in gaining state power, strategies differ around the world. But one thing is common that they are in critique of ideas like nation state, nationalism and secularism because they think they are the tradition of western political ideology. And they want to establish an Islamic order to reconstruct Muslim identity and community. The Muslim youth is targeted and are inculcated with the teachings of radical Islamic thought and orthodox cultural values. The states incapability of satisfying people's aspirations and aims are fulfilled by these Islamic fundamentalist groups and as a consequence they get upper hand and win confidence of people. International events like the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and the victory of Taliban regime in conquering political power in Afghanistan in mid 1990s revitalized Islamic politics all over. Then in 2001, the occurrence of 9/11 attacks in the beginning of the 21st century grabbed the world's attention towards Islamic terror.

The emergence of fundamental Islamists as a key player in Bangladesh's politics can be assessed through number of incidents. First, after the independence, Mujib's government could not keep its promises of addressing socio-economic problems, could not retain itself to constitutional's secular-nationalist ethos and within no time replaced parliamentary system with an authoritarian rule. The country which was restless and founded after much deprivation and struggle again came into crisis of undemocratic culture. In response to the authoritarian approach of Mujib, Islamists emerged in the mainstream political arena. Second, Islamists took power in the form of military dominated rule. The successive regimes of Ziaur Rahman and Muhammad Ershad created conditions and ground for the rise of Islamism in the country. The ban which was put by Mujib's government on religious parties was uplifted, religious education was made compulsory, and the culture of patronising madrassa education

rose along with Islam being made as a state religion. Third, its reliance for aids and financial grants from oil-rich Islamic countries generated conditions in the country of revitalizing Islamic symbols. Fourth, after restoration of representative democracy in 1991, the constant conflict between the two great parties that are Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and their confrontation could not build up democratic structure efficiently. Nationwide strikes, street protests, boycott became a new trend in opposing elections. Fifth, political economy factors influenced helpless, agitated population to choose Islamists who had strong networks and immense economic strength. Islamists took advantage of the weak state which failed to fulfil people's aspirations. In return, they demanded people to follow the ideologically-motivated teachings and learning. Finally, the major uplifting of Islamists happened when BNP with the four party Islamic alliances won the 2001 elections. This made them to work in the mainstream politics. This period witnessed exceptionally high rise in Islamic fundamentalist activities. Islamic militant groups like Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkat-ul-Jehad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) emerged and acquired power. And religion became an important contributory factor in state politics and governance.

Bangladesh's Islamists grabbed attention inside and outside Bangladesh as a major influential force in 2001 emerging in political surface. The growing Islamists want future Bangladeshi society to be formed on Islamic revival movement. In the country, it can be noticed that people having anti-Islamic views and bloggers having secular writings are attacked and killed. All this leads to suppression of right to express as people themselves impose self-censorship or are being forced not to write anything which demeans Islam. Islamic militant groups justify their actions in the name of the holy text. The culture of crushing and controlling the revolt against any Islamic theology and acts is prevalent in the country. There is continuous violation of human rights in the form of persecution and killing. Though, the government has arrested several Islamist militants who were involved in attacks but for assuring protection and security of people, the Bangladeshi authorities would have to tackle the situation more progressively.

Islamist politics have not only confined itself to political structure but has its influence on education too. This has led to drifting away of education from secular principles to more fundamental kind of learning. These developments started in the country from

the time of its emergence as Bangladesh's reliance on Middle East countries for economic gains contributed to the development of Wahhabi ideology in Bangladesh. They follow a perverted and distorted theology which has led to the creation of a destructive ideology in the country and has given space for the escalation of Islamic fundamentalist activities like intensifying madrassa culture and mosques. But the main force came later in 2001 when there was a rise of Islamic fundamentalists in the mainstream politics and gradual increase in proliferation of madrassa occurred. Groups like Jamaat have used madrassas as a platform for training people and instructing them with orthodox teachings. With the constant increase of Islamists networking, it can be said that their influence has gone far beyond being restricted to madrassas. Now, several universities have their cadres who influence the education system and its policies. The Islamists are enlarging their reach and influence and the government needs to take initiatives to curb their actions otherwise a day is not far when they will establish their complete alternative system of education.

Islamic fundamentalists have impacted country's economy sector as well. Though, Bangladesh has extraordinarily performed well in developing its economy. In comparison to previous years, the country has experienced an excellent GDP growth rate of 7.1 per cent in the FY 2016-2017 (ADB, 2017). The garment sector of the country which is the strength of Bangladesh's economy showed positive results in its earnings. The country's purchasing power parity has also increased over the period of time indicating high rise in income of people. But then also the country needs to work really hard to achieve standard which it has aimed to come under the slag of middle income countries. Bangladesh's vision 2021 can only be attained if it does not get disrupted by political scenario and other political factors which cause hindrances in growth. Strikes, bomb blasts and other attacks by Islamic militant groups cause problems in transportation network and supply chains. Thus, it affects the production of a commodity and revenue collection. It is not only harmful for the domestic production but also to international arena. As foreign investors seek for political certainty and secure environment.

An Islamic party like Jamaat has huge networks and great economic power that their existence is seen in almost every sector of the Bangladesh's economy. The unemployment is an issue in the country and in these circumstances, the Islamic fundamentalist groups takes advantage and indoctrinate youth against the state and

tries to capture the power. Numerous young militants are now equipped with arms. With the development of Islamic groups like Hefazat-e-Islam in 2013, attacking personal faith and secular opinions have risen. It resists the government's reforming agendas which is a major potent threat to the country. Their 13 points demand which included provisions like propagating Islamic values and death punishments for people who demean Islam are a major cause of concern.

The country is on the path of becoming another Pakistan where secularists, atheists, religious minority groups, homosexuals are being slashed and attacked to death by Islamic fundamentalists. Islamic groups like Jamaat, HuJI-B, Hefazat-e-Islam, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) has created an environment of violence and fear. The government has not been able to take strict actions against the perpetrators. There is a speculation going on in minds of people that Bangladesh is undergoing the pathway of 'Talibanization' (Karlekar, 2005).

Another factor of expansion of fundamental Islamism is the Islamic Academy. It is the biggest umbrella organisation of the country of study on Islam. It was earlier when established was a small foundation but later converted into the Islamic Foundation. This organisation has contributed to the process of Islamization in the country by converting Quran into Bengali so that everyone can have access to its text (Griffiths & Hasan, 2015). The foundation promotes Islamic concepts and values in the country.

While the people of Bangladesh do not give their support to any form of Islamists and want to have institution which will provide them with democracy. The political leadership has failed in creating such institutions in the country. Political elites of all shades have manipulated the constitution and electoral processes and have been unsuccessful in delivering satisfactory socio-economic conditions. Today, the country faces problem of unemployment, hunger, inadequate nutrition and mass illiteracy. There is continuing economic underdevelopment, the nation is crippled with poor governance, frequent confrontation, which includes strikes, boycotts and political violence. It is a populated state and government with its available resources has to look after every one's needs. Country doesn't have enough resources to feed everyone. Civil liberties are not given to everyone, representative institutions are under political rule and power remains a resort to solve the problems. Role of civil society has too diminished in the country. Workers union and business organisations are controlled

by the two political parties. In this situation, Islamic fundamentalism adds on to worsening the society. It leads to violation of human rights, creates hopelessness, clashes among people and leads to low quality of life.

Bangladesh to boost future growth needs a well-functioning regulatory framework and enhanced infrastructure. Around 40 per cent of the youth is not engaged in education, employment or training (International Labour Organisation, 2016). For overcoming such huge amount of proportion, the country needs to create enough jobs for reaping the economic gains for future growth. The quality of education system of the country also needs to be raised so that more people can contribute in an economic development. It also requires more skilful and trained workers to contribute in production. FDI facilitates technology transfer, innovative ideas, and more developed techniques for compensating economy's resource gap. The country needs FDI but local entrepreneurs have complained that political unstable environment creates problem in fetching FDI in international arena. And, if they get also then it is on negotiable terms which are less beneficial to Bangladesh.

The current government, Awami League has effectively taken actions against the Islamist extremists with a series of police raids or putting ban on some Islamic militant groups. It has also taken different initiatives for de-radicalisation of the society. But the struggle to encounter Islamic fundamentalism and efforts in re-establishing secularism is not an easy task. It has become a challenging task for Bangladesh to separate religion from politics. The issue of two conflicting national ideologies that is Bengali nationalism and Bangladeshi nationalism has not accommodated the possibility of having stable political environment. A commitment to build up secular state requires the governing authorities to stick on to firm principles of democracy and political participation.

After the hard work of the resilient ordinary Bangladeshis, the country has attained a decent progress in economic and social development areas. Yet, manipulation of thoughts by different regimes has not been able to provide them with an unwavering political environment. The problem of religious fundamentalism has gained adequate attention only in recent years and still the government has not come up with fruitful results in curbing their activities. People face inequality and insecurity under the current political and economic system. Islamist forces are acting as a powerful

catalytic agent to corrupt all domains of economic, society and politics. To overcome fundamentalism, the country needs to establish secular and democratic state through substantive participation of citizens and effective governance.

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The Constitution

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami

Central Publicity Department

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami,

505, Elephant Road, Bara Maghbazar

Dhaka-1217, Bangladesh

Preamble

Whereas there is no Elah (Lord) except Allah and all natural laws are controlled, dictated and facilitated by Allah in the universe solely evidences His wisdom, superiority, authority, Omnipresence and sovereignty;

Whereas Allah has sent human beings in this earth conferring upon them the responsibility of Khilafah (vicegerent) and has set the duties and responsibilities of humankind as to follow and explore the truth and only the truth;

Whereas Allah sent Prophets and messengers (Nabi and Rasul) from time to time in this world along with the directives of that truth;

Whereas Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the prophet for the whole world, is the last and final prophet and the Al-Quran sent by Allah and the life of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is the only module and ideology that the human beings can follow;

Whereas this worldly life is not the end of human life, rather there is another endless span of life after death where man will have to be accountable meticulously for all good or evil deeds of the worldly life and have to face its appropriate result as Jannat (paradise) or Jahannam (hell) following an justifiable trial;

Whereas the real success of human life lies in the acquisition of Almighty Allah"s satisfaction in the form of getting emancipation from the aajab (punishment) of the hell (Jahannam) and simultaneously of getting infinite and uninterrupted peace and happiness in paradise (Jannat);

Whereas Bangladesh has been emerged in the global map as an independent and sovereign country through a massive struggle of the countrymen and the freedom fighters,

As such the constitution of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami is placed and promulgated in order to make a just society free from exploitation based on this fundamental belief and spirit.

Appendix- 2

Main Islamist Groups in Bangladesh

Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI)

The JeI is a political party that dates back to the British colonial era, and the (East) Pakistan period (1947-1971). It supported Pakistan against the Bengali nationalists during the liberation war, and most of its leaders fled to (West) Pakistan after Bangladesh's independence in 1971. Its then *amir*(chief), Gholam Azam, fought against the freedom fighters in 1971, but returned to Bangladesh a few years later. In December 2000, Motiur Rahman Nizami, another former pro-Pakistani militant, took over as *amir* of the JeI. In the October 2001 election, the JeI emerged as the third largest party with 17 seats in Parliament and two ministers in the new coalition government. The Jamaat's final aim is an Islamic state in Bangladesh, although this will be implemented step by step.

Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)

ICS is the youth wing of the JeI. Set up in 1941, it became a member of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations in 1979. The ICS is also a member of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth and has close contacts with other radical Muslim youth groups in Pakistan, the Middle East, Malaysia and Indonesia. One of its main strongholds in Bangladesh is at the university in Chittagong, and it dominates privately run *madrassas* all over the country. It has been involved in a number of bomb blasts and politically and religiously motivated assassinations. Nurul Islam Bulbul is its current president and Muhammed Nazrul Islam is the secretary general.

Islami Oikyo Jote (IOJ)

A smaller Islamist party that joined the four-party alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which won the October 2001 election. The IOJ secured two seats in Parliament, but did not get any cabinet posts.

Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI)

The HuJI is Bangladesh's main militant organisation. Set up in 1992, it now has an estimated strength of 15,000 and is headed by Maulana Shawkat Osman alias Sheikh Farid in Chittagong. Its members are recruited mainly from students of the country's many *madrassas*, and until year 2001, they called themselves the 'Bangladeshi Taliban'. The group is believed to have extensive contacts with Muslim organisations in the Indian States of West Bengal and Assam. Azizul Huq, Chairman of the IOJ is a member of the HuJI's advisory council.

'The Jihad Movement'

Osama bin Laden's February 23, 1998, *fatwa* (religious ruling) urging *Jehad* against the United States was co-signed by two Egyptian clerics, one from Pakistan, and Fazlur Rahman, "leader of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh." This is not believed to be a separate organisation but a common name for several Islamist groups in Bangladesh, of which HuJI is considered the biggest and most important.

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)

The ARNO is a political group among Rohingya migrants from Myanmar, who live in the Chittagong-Cox's Bazaar area, and claim to be fighting for an autonomous Muslim region in Burma's Arakan (Rakhine) State. It was set up in 1998 through a merger of the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO). Within months, however, the front fell apart. The leader of what remains of ARNO, Nurul Islam, is considered a moderate. He also led the ARIF before the merger in 1998.

Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO)

Following the break-up of ARNO in 1999-2000, three new factions emerged, all of them re-claiming the old name RSO. Traditionally, the RSO has been very close to Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir in Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar. In the early 1990s, RSO had several military camps near the Burmese border, where cadres from the ICS were also trained in guerrilla warfare.

Appendix- 3

Recovery of Arms, Ammunition and Other Articles- 2017

Sl.No.	Date	Place (District)	Seizure	Outfit involved
1	January 4	Gaibandha District	Large number of explosives	JeI
2	January 6	Dhaka city	One pistol, three bullets and a knife	Neo JMB
3	January 6	Jessore District	Eight crude bombs	JeI
4	January 11	Chapainawabganj District	Five crude bombs	JeI
5	January 13	Natore District	Four pistols, six magazines, 17 bullets, six knives, six straight razors and some bomb-making materials	JMB
6	January 16	Pabna District	One pistol, several rounds, as well as a number of sharp weapons	PBCP
7	January 17	Dhaka city	Two knives	JMB
8	January 28	Chuadanga District	Bomb-making materials	HuJI-B
9	January 29	Rajshahi District	Two crude bombs	JeI
10	February 1	Dhaka city	Two pistols, 21 bullets, four sharp weapons and huge explosives	JMB
11	February 14	Bogra District	One pistol, three bullets and several sharp weapons	JMB
12	February 15	Pabna District	Two shutter guns, two machetes and three rounds of bullets	PBSP
13	February 17	Rajbari District	One shutter gun and one bullet	PBSP
14	February 20	Narayanganj District	Five sharp weapons, five crude bombs and bomb making materials	JMB
15	February 20	Naogaon District	Two crude bombs and sharp weapons	JeI
16	March 1	Chapainawabaganj District	Seven home-made bombs	JMB
17	March 2	Bogra District	One pistol, three rounds of bullets and two magazines	Neo-JMB
18	March 6	Gazipur District	Two patrol bombs, two sound grenades, two crude bombs and two machetes	HuJI-B
19	March 7	Comilla District	Four crude bombs and a sharp knife	JMB
20	March 7	Chittagong District	Seven improvised grenades and large quantity of bomb making material	Neo-JMB
21	March 8	Chittagong District	29 grenades, huge bomb-making materials, including 280 packets of metal balls and 40 packets of explosive gel and nine machetes	Neo-JMB
22	March 12	Satkhira District	Two shutter guns, two bombs, two sharp weapons and two bullets	PBCP
23	March 15	Chittagong District	One pistol and a huge quantity of circuits used to prepare time-bombs	JMB
24	March 16	Chittagong District	10 bombs, three suicide vests and explosive substances possible to make 40 to 50 powerful bombs	Neo-JMB
25	March 16	Brahmanbaria District	25 improvised bombs, five pipe guns, four bullets and five locally made sharp weapons	HuJI-B
26	March 16	Joypurhat District	Eight Molotov cocktails, two crude bombs and 300 grams of gunpowder	JeI-ICS
27	March 18	Dhaka city	One IED and several bombs	NS
28	March 18	Chapainawabganj District	Two pistols, six rounds of bullets, two magazines and 1.5 kg gunpowder	JeI

29	March 18	Chittagong District	15 bombs and grenades, six drums of liquid hydrogen peroxide and jells	Neo-JMB
30	March 20	Kushtia District	20 hand bombs	ICS
31	March 21	Dhaka city	Raw materials used in making bombs and two fake firearms	JMB
32	March 24	Dinajpur District	10 crude bombs	Neo-JMB
33	March 31	Jessore District	11 crude bombs	JeI
34	April 1	Moulvibazar District	Some powerful explosives, including IEDs	NS
35	April 1	Tangail District	One 7.65 pistol and a magazine	Sarbahara Party
36	April 3	Mymensingh District	Explosive materials	NS
37	April 3	Chuadanga District	One pistol and four bullets	PBCP
38	April 21	Jhenidah District	Huge stash of explosives and a 9mm pistol	Neo-JMB
39	April 26	Dhaka city	Huge IEDs and remote controlled devices	Neo-JMB
40	April 27	Chapainawabganj District	IEDs, bombs and pistols	Neo-JMB
41	April 27	Dhaka city	One foreign made pistol, three rounds of bullets and bomb-making materials	Neo-JMB
42	May 2	Rajshahi District	One revolver and five bullets	ICS
43	May 3	Chapainawabganj District	600 grams of gunpowder and three sharp weapons	JeI
44	May 4	Rangpur District	Explosive-making materials	ABT
45	May 7	Dhaka city	A huge stockpile of IEDs and explosives	JMB
46	May 13	Rajbari District	One foreign-made pistol and one 22 bore rifle, one shutter gun, one sword and 60 bullets	PBCP
47	May 13	Chapainawabganj District	4.5kg of gunpowder and 52.5kg of explosive power gel	JMB
48	May 16	Lalmonirhat District	Five petrol bombs and local weapons	ICS
49	May 17	Jhenaidah District	186 PVC circuit boards, 18 units of explosive making neo-gel, four drums of liquid chemicals, one anti-mine, two suicidal vests and some other explosive making materials and electronics devices	JMB
50	May 19	Chpainawabganj District	800 grams of gunpowder	ICS
51	May 24	Chapainawabganj District	One foreign pistol, one magazine, four bullets and three kilogrammes of gunpowder	Neo-JMB
52	May 24	Chapainawabganj District	Three foreign pistols, nine rounds of bullets and two magazines	Neo-JMB
53	May 24	Narayanganj District	One foreign made pistol and huge amount of explosives	Neo-JMB
54	May 25	Dhaka city	Huge quantity of bombs and bomb making materials	NS
55	May 25	Dhaka city	One suicidal vest and bomb making materials	NS
56	May 31	Jhenidah District	Two foreign guns, a nine mm pistol, 15 rounds of ammunitions and a sword	PBCP
57	May 31	Dhaka city	Huge bomb making materials and 24 chocolate bombs	JMB
58	June 8	Chuadanga District	One homemade gun and five bullets	PBCP
59	June 8	Rajbari District	One shutter gun and two bullets	PBCP
60	June 8	Bogra District	One pistol, a magazine, five bullets, 1kg gunpowder and a knife	Neo-JMB
61	June 11	Narayanganj District	One firearm	Neo-JMB
62	June 12	Rajshahi District	Two suicide vests, a pistol with five rounds of ammunition and a magazine	Neo-JMB
63	June 26	Cox's Bazar District	Four local pistols, six bullets and four machetes	JeI-ICS

64	July 1	Kushtia District	One bomb weighing around 3kg, two suicide vests, 10 small bombs, a pistol, 12 bullets and 10 kilograms of bomb-making materials	Neo-JMB
65	July 7	Rajshahi District	Some sharp weapons	Neo-JMB
66	July 12	Chapainawabganj District	19 kg of explosive materials	Neo-JMB
67	July 14	Pabna District	One shutter gun, a rifle, four bullets and sharp weapons	PBCP
68	July 16	Dhaka city	Two pistols	Neo-JMB
69	July 23	Dhaka city	A foreign pistol, four bullets and a machete	JMB
70	July 28	Narayanganj District	Two firearms and explosive making materials	Neo-JMB
71	August 14	Kushtia District	16 petrol and crude bombs and some bomb-making materials	ICS
72	August 21	Narayanganj District	One foreign pistol and a knife	Neo-JMB
73	August 25	Kushtia District	One foreign pistol, two bullets and three sharp weapons	Neo-JMB
74	August 28	Mymensingh District	Four bombs and more than eight kilograms of gunpowder	JMB
75	September 5	Tangail District	One drone, some electronics devices and local weapons	NS
76	September 8	Dhaka city	30 detonators	JMB
77	September 8	Dhaka city	24 high-impacting bombs, 60 improvised hand grenades, 70 chemical bombs, 15 kilograms of splinters, nine empty cages, 20 kilograms of charcoal, and 1,500 pieces of igniting cords	JMB
78	September 10	Tangail District	One 0.9mm pistol and three bullets	JMB
79	September 24	Dhaka city	Two daggers	Neo-JMB
80	September 28	Dhaka city	Two grenades	Neo-JMB
81	October 9	Jessore District	Three suicide vests	Neo-JMB
82	October 15	Rajshahi District	One 7.65mm pistol, a magazine and four bullets	JeI
83	October 23	Jessore District	Five litres of acid, 150 detonators, 25 packets of explosive gel and a large amount of grenade-making equipment	Neo-JMB
84	October 28	Bagerhat District	Sharp weapons and sticks	JeI
85	October 29	Chapainawabganj District	One pistol, one magazine, three bullets, 1.1 kilogram explosive substances	Neo-JMB
86	November 3	Chapainawabganj District	Bomb-making substances	NS
87	November 7	Narayanganj District	Local weapons	Ansar al-Islam
88	November 16	Naogaon District	Two foreign-made pistols, 13 rounds of bullets, electronic devices, explosives and grenade making materials	Neo-JMB
89	November 16	Chapainawabganj District	One pistol, two magazines and eight rounds of bullets	Neo-JMB
90	November 28	Chapainawabganj District	Three IEDs, seven detonators, 12 packs of explosives gel and two pistols	JMB
91	November 28	Rajbari District	One rifle, another firearm and five rounds of ammunition	Sarbahara
92	November 28	Dhaka city	Huge amount of bomb-making materials	ABT
93	November 29	Chittagong District	One knife	NS
94	December 6	Bogra District	One foreign pistol, 15 rounds of bullets, a magazine, four knives and a machete	Neo-JMB
95	December 13	Dhaka city	200 detonators, five bullets and a pistol	Neo-JMB
96	December 19	Narayanganj District	Local weapons	Ansar Al Islam

| 97 | December 27 | Chuadanga District | One revolver, six bullets, six crude bombs and six knives | PBCP |
| 98 | December 30 | Bogra District | One pistol, one magazine, nine bullets and a machete | JMB |

*Data till December 31, 2017

Source:Compiled from news reports and are provisional.