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3. W.H. Morris-Jones, "Pakistan Post-Mortem and the Roots of Bangladesh", *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 18 (April-June), 1972, pp. 187-200.

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## **CHINA TRANSFORMED AND AWAKENED: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE NEW CENTURY**

Yue-man Yeung\*

### **Introduction**

Over more than three decades that have elapsed, the world has witnessed a period of epoch-making changes that have seeped into almost every dimension of economic and political developments, ways of life of people around the world, and the speed and velocity of change at national, institutional and personal levels. Wherever we are looking at the world no longer appears as what we used to know. We have entered a new era.

The year 1979 can be viewed as a watershed year. That year marked, for China, the beginning of reform and opening up after it was essentially closed to the world as a self-isolated new nation born in 1949. The bold decision to change from the previous Communist dogmas to tentative reforms was made in 1978 at the Third Plenum of the 11th Party Congress. In 1979 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned from Paris to Tehran after 15 years of exile, ushering in a period of rapid change and reform accompanied by religious fervour in Iran and other parts of the Middle East. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan resulting in the beginning a decade of its military involvement in that country and the presence of other Western powers in the region. In 1979, Pope John Paul II arrived in his native Poland, as the first Pope to visit a Communist country having the effect of solidifying the Polish peoples against Communism. Finally, also in 1979 Margaret Thatcher was elected the first female British Prime Minister who left a strong imprint on the British economy with her wide-ranging and effective economic reforms. A lot of these changes across many countries heralded a new world of globalization, economic openness, digitization and reform. Of the important events noted, what was to unfold in China changed not only that country to a path of breathtaking reform and economic success, but also the world in which China is increasingly being viewed to play a larger role.

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### **China Transformed**

In 1979 China was a poor and devastated country, deeply shaken by more than a decade of societal chaos and economic stagnation that almost brought down the country to a standstill. Almost anything would be welcome if it brought a ray of hope for change. Deng Xiaoping was the leader who rallied the country to a tentative beginning for new development the year earlier at the landmark political meeting mentioned earlier. What happened since China has fundamentally undergone transformation. It has grown so fast economically and so widespread across the sprawling land that many within and outside China can hardly recognize it. Its record of speedy economic transformation is an unprecedented phenomenon in human history.

China's economic reform began in 1980 in a small way by setting up four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen in Guangdong and Fujian. The choice of Shenzhen and Zuhai was predicated on their proximity to Hong Kong and Macau, respectively, and hence their benign influence on the two SEZs on a path of rapid economic growth. Indeed, they grew rapidly and had the effect of demonstrating to other parts of China how development could begin and be accelerated (Yeung et al., 2009). The story of how China became a world factory in the Pearl River Delta began modestly with vital inputs from Hong Kong (Yeung et al., 2008). The next stage was to select 14 coastal cities in 1984 to launch economic development in the extensive coastal region (Yeung and Hu, 1992). In 1992, Deng Xiaoping embarked on a crucial tour of southern China to ascertain the continued, indeed expanded, open policy after the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. It succeeded in calming nerves nationwide and favourable policies for development that began with the SEZs were extended to most parts of the country. Policies for greater openness and accelerated development were adopted when China was admitted into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. Development in China has since proceeded by leaps and bounds, and its impact on the world attracted greater attention.\*

The Hong Kong factor mattered a great deal when China began its reforms. In 1980 Hong Kong's GDP was one-quarter the size of China's. As much as 80%

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\* After almost two decades pursuing my graduate studies and career in the United States, Canada and Singapore, I returned to Hong Kong in 1984. I was therefore in a position to have witnessed and conducted research on the rapid and sweeping changes in China across a wide socio-economic front and have this documented personally (Yeung, 2012).

of China's foreign trade and 90% of its foreign exchange went through Hong Kong. However, the Chinese economy began to grow very rapidly in the reform period. By 2010, Hong Kong's GDP had dwindled to 3.1% of China's and China had more than enough foreign exchange on its own. In 2001 China joined the WTO to play by the rules of international trade, but by 2012 China was the world's leading trading nation and could change world rules (Sung, 2013). Indeed, China has grown spectacularly over the past decade. It had progressively overtaken the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan to become the world's second largest economy after the United States. China's economy is now five times as large as it was 12 years ago. China's GDP in 2012 was slightly over half the size of the United States (\$8 trillion vs \$15.8 trillion).<sup>1</sup>

China's record of economic growth is characterized by double-digit increase in its GDP in the three decades from 1980 onwards. To be specific, in the period 1978-2011, China's GDP grew by 120 times, import and export trade expanded by 637 times and enrolment of university students increased by 27 times. Sustained and rapid economic growth over a long period has enabled China to alleviate poverty on a massive scale. According to the UN estimates, China has been able to lift 650 million people out of poverty in three decades, a most impressive social engineering feat that has not been seen anywhere or at any time in the world.

China's unparalleled rise as a merchandise exporter in recent decades has been due to a combination of internal and external factors, with the availability of cheap labour/land and favourable policies on the one hand, and the slant towards globalization in many countries on the other. In 2012 China outstripped the United States as the largest exporter and importer of merchandise at \$3.97 trillion versus \$3.82 trillion. In 2011 China sold over 18 million automobiles (more than the USA), 86 million fridges, 300 million PCs, with its tourists making 70 million overseas trips and 2.6 billion domestic trips. In 2012 83 million foreign trips were made compared with only 10 million in 2000. With these patterns of spending, 2012 witnessed for the first time in China consumption overtaking investment as a more important source of growth. Consequently, according to the World Tourism Organization, China rose from the 7th place in 2005 to become the first country in the world in 2012 in tourism expenditure, reaching a total of \$102 billion.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to dollar in this paper applies to the US dollar

The fantastic growth machine in China, however, has entailed heavy costs to its environment and natural resources. UN sources have revealed that of the top 20 most polluted cities in the world, 17 are located in China. Serious problems of air and water pollution, land degradation and other environmental ills have posed real threats to the Chinese people and their health and the environment. It has dawned on decision-makers that China's rapid and impressive growth has been achieved at considerable costs. Not surprisingly, former Premier Wen Jiabao has declared China's growth to be "unbalanced, unsustainable and uncoordinated." The fifth-generation China leaders elected in March 2012 have taken note of this and have formulated new policies notably in favour of slower growth and sustainable development.\*

Since 1980 the most important factor that has driven change and development has been China's cities and urban population. From less than 20 percent urban in 1980, the level of urbanization in 2012 reached about 52%, with urban population increasing almost one percent a year. Indeed, deliberate urbanization is still pursued as a policy until the urban population will reach 70 to 80 percent by the middle of this century. In 2012 China had an urban population of 712 million out of a total population of 1,353 million. If the non-hukou (those with rural hukou registration but living in cities as almost second-class citizens) population in the coastal cities is deducted, the real level of urbanization, statistically, is about 35%. Whatever the real numbers, absorption of non-hukou population, estimated at about 230 million, into the mainstream of urban population will constitute a policy of high priority in the years to come.

Chinese cities have totally transformed the country by their new construction, modern infrastructure, high rises for residential and commercial needs, signature buildings, industrial parks, and so on. In Premier Wen Jiabao's final report before stepping down in 2013, he reported that just over the past five years, newly completed railways totaled 19,700 km, new highways 609,000 km, 31 new airports and 602 new berths in 10,000-ton ports. In 2005 China had a total of 1.930 million km of highways, second in the world after the United

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\* As a third-generation Hongkonger, I have been following development and change in Hong Kong and mainland China over the years. My first comprehensive visits to China dated fortuitously to 1978 and 1979 when I was still working and living in Singapore. They formed important baselines with which I have compared and marveled at how China has vastly improved and transformed itself. Since my return to Hong Kong to pursue my career in 1984, I have visited all provinces, special administrative regions and large cities in that country.

States. Many of these infrastructural additions were designed to link 160 cities with a population of over one million inhabitants each, anticipated to increase in number to 220 in two decades. Some 70 million inhabitants are concentrated in the top mega-cities of Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen and Guangzhou. In slightly over three decades, Shenzhen has grown to be a mega-city of some 12 million people from a fishing village of 30,000 in 1978. High-speed railways have similarly seen rapid expansion since their inauguration in 2007 to the foremost country of 9,300 km in 2012, anticipated to grow to 16,000 km by 2020. They cover an increasingly large part of the country, connecting key and other cities which have seen new opportunities of growth and development. Within large cities themselves, the subway or metro system would more than double in length from 2,064 km in 17 cities in 2012 to 5,300 km in 35 cities by 2020. Wen Jiabao called in October 2012 for more integration of land use with public transport within cities concerned to enable the sustainable development of China's metro railways. The level of urban development in China can to a degree be reflected and appreciated by the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and the Shanghai Expo in 2010. Chinese have taken great pride in hosting these global events and managed to impress many people around the world by their being unprecedentedly grandiose. Yet urban expansion has taken land from the countryside, leading to endless conflicts between developers and officials on the one hand, and landless farmers on the other. The list of urban ills must also include urban socio-economic inequality, the growing urban-rural income gap, rampant corruption, among others. A balance between the positive and negative dimensions of urbanization has to be struck when so much of Chinese urbanization and its cities are at stake in the future.

### **China in the New Century**

Fully two centuries ago the famous French ruler Napoleon Bonaparte who has been well known more as a military genius than a political observer, said something about China that has been often quoted. When the Qing Dynasty was clearly manifesting decline, Napoleon perspicaciously predicted, "Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world." It is a statement that appears to apply fittingly well to China's being transformed and awakened after two centuries of economic and military decline and suffered painfully from colonial aggression and subjugation. With China's astonishing growth record over the past three decades, it is ready to take a more heightened regional and global role in the new century.

While the past three decades have been exceptional for China to have shaken off poverty in a massive way, it remains a developing country by some yardsticks, such as GDP per capita and its huge and uneven population. China continues to look positively forward with the installation of fifth-generation leadership in March 2012 being viewed as the beginning of another three decades of growth and development. President Xi Jinping has spoken of his "China dream" with a clear emphasis on reform and attack on bureaucratic corruption. Premier Li Keqiang has fashioned a style of economic development with an emphasis on slower but sustainable growth, inflation at single digits, acceptable unemployment, and relaxed currency control, known in relation to a wide body of economic tools as Likonomics associated with the leader. The new government is facing a credibility gap with the Chinese public, as it was in the late 1980s. With worsening social and economic inequality, sharpened food safety, serious corruption, and rising middle-class expectations, Chinese governance is being tested in unprecedented ways. Reforms advocated by the present government are being seen as a means to address social cleavage and environmental degradation. Premier Li emphatically envisions the cities and increasing urbanization as new drivers of change. They will generate domestic demand-led economic growth. In a sense, the "China dream" is the "urban dream", because "the city of dreams" affects more than 200 million of non-hukou urban dwellers who form a huge underclass of urban dwellers (Chan, 2013).

China's success in its super-growth in recent decades has synchronized with increasing globalization across the world since the 1980s. Trade patterns have veered sharply towards the emerging markets, especially in the Asia Pacific region. In the 1990s, global trade was dominated by advanced economies which accounted for about 80% of the total. By 2010, this percentage sharply declined to approximately 60%. By contrast, the East Asian region is characterized by an efficient production-sharing network. Components produced by its neighbours are shipped to China for assembly before their final shipment to the United States and Europe. China has grown rich in this global division of labour. The new rich in China have emerged with a fast growing middle class. The country has become integrated with the global economy, and at the same time has acted as the focus of every other country's globalization in the region (Goodman, 2008). As a consequence, in the Asia Pacific region as a whole, the middle class has emerged as a new and growing phenomenon. According to OECD reports, the Asia-Pacific middle class will likely triple to 1.75 billion by 2020,

accounting for 54% of the world total. Looking ahead, trade between Asia-Pacific economies would expand over the next ten years by as much as \$5 trillion. China has the ability to evolve from the "world factory" to become the "world market". China is forecast to become the world's largest consumer market by 2015, with enough purchasing power to buy 14% of the world's products.

In the pursuit of rapid economic growth in the recent past, China has encountered problems of natural resource supply, especially energy and oil, to maintain its growth momentum. To add more impetus to its development spree, China has made efforts to reach out to countries in Africa, Latin America and Australia for their mutual benefit. As the qualitative importance of FDI to the Chinese economy has been falling, China has embarked on the route to tap expertise abroad through direct investment in foreign countries mainly in the form of mergers and acquisitions. While the former broadens China's search for new energy sources and natural resources, the latter further integrates China's economy with the world. With its involvement in Tanzania's railway construction, China had been active in assisting African countries to develop as early as the 1960s. China has adopted a novel approach to international development in Africa, posing itself as a powerful alternative market and collaborator, an equal partner, as distinct from the "colonial West" approach that has prevailed for at least the past two centuries. Consequently, China has invested heavily in its way of developing African resources, education, medical health, highways and railways, etc. in the most favourable terms to local governments. By the end of 2008, according to the former Premier Wen Jiabao, China had cancelled a total of 24.7 billion yuan of debt for 49 heavily indebted poor countries in various forms of aid. China had trained 15,000 African professionals, sent medical teams and provided free anti-malaria medicine to Africa. By 2010 figures, China-African oil ties have continued to strengthen. Of the yearly 4.8 million barrels per day China imported, 47% originated from the Middle East and 30% from Africa. The major oil suppliers of African countries are Angola, Sudan, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria. In President Xi's 2013 trip to Africa, he signed a total of \$20 billion of contracts in favourable terms to finance development in Tanzania, South Africa and Congo. Many of the projects centre on infrastructure projects and revenue creation.

With China being the second largest importer of oil in the world after the United States, China has to plan for increasing the security of its energy resources. With at least 83% of its imported oil supply coming from the Middle East and

Africa through the Strait of Malacca, it is imperative for China to avoid potential energy insecurity by overly relying on this route. Towards this end, China had been collaborating with Myanmar for years to build a pipeline from Ruili in Yunnan in China to the port of Kyaukpyu along the Bay of Bengal in Myanmar over a distance of 1,100 km. It was opened in May 2013 capable of transporting 22 million tons of oil and 12 million cu m of natural gas a year. This new route for oil and gas has great strategic importance to China and has changed the strategic calculus of major actors. This is substantiation of Beijing's "two-ocean strategy", greatly strengthening its security of energy imports. In addition, China imports oil from Central Asia, with the first Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline completed in 2009, marking a new source of supply from Central Asia. The pipeline from Kazakhstan's Caspian shore to Xinjiang in China, over a distance of 2,238 km, will reach nominal capacity of 20,000 tons per year in 2014. Beyond the China-Myanmar pipeline, China also builds ports, mostly in collaborative ventures, in Pakistan and Sri Lanka and has a presence in Seychelles along the eastern coast of Africa. This has raised some wary concern by India which herself has been exploring oil with Vietnam in the South China Sea, a locus of territorial disputes between China versus Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia. Likewise, China and Japan are locked in another territorial dispute in the East China Sea focused on Diaoyu/Senkaku.

These territorial disputes must be viewed not simply as bones of contention in bilateral diplomacy between China and neighbouring Asian nations. The role of the United States looms large in the regional picture. The China-US relationship can best be described as one of strategic distrust (Leiberthal and Wang, 2012). Since 2009 the United States has emphatically pronounced its "pivot to Asia" policy based on military and diplomatic rebalancing towards the Asia Pacific. This involves building a "containment wall" against China by warming up with other Asian countries along the western Pacific Rim. This "rebalancing" policy towards Asia is highlighted by the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), with the involvement of almost all Asia Pacific countries with the exception of China. For the past two decades under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, the preferred style of diplomacy was "keeping a low profile". It is argued that this is no longer adequate as China's newfound economic and military power necessitate a change of the state of play. China faces an unsustainable status quo. Shrewd observers have argued that the world needs a more active China in dealing with regional and global affairs (Huang, 2013). Its under-powered agencies for international diplomacy and negotiation lag well behind its impressive

economic achievements. China's active participation in G20 and BRICS (with South Africa joining in 2010) can be viewed, from China's standpoint, as constraining American unilateralism. In addition, in the 2013 Human Development Report, a tectonic North-South shift in global economic and political affairs has been highlighted. The report recommended, among others, the enhancement of South-South learning and integration and greater representation for civil society and the South in the international system. For example, China has but a 3.3% share in the World Bank, versus 4.3% for France. This is a blatant anachronism not reflective of their current global economic and political standing.

### **Conclusion**

With China's accession to be a member of the WTO in 2001, it has accelerated its pace and range of economic growth. Dazzling patterns of growth have truly awakened China, and the oft-asked question is, when China will return to its former greatness as the foremost country in the world. Indeed, two centuries ago China produced some 30% of global economic output which was reduced to a shadow of less than 5% in 1950. After three decades of double-digit growth, China's share of global production was recently estimated to reach about 15%, or about half of what it once was.

As the second largest economy in the world, when China will be able to catch up with the United States is another question often posed. The relative growth of these two countries can be appreciated by comparing recent historical figures. In 2003, when the United States launched the Iraq War, its GDP was eight times as large as China's. In 2012 China vastly narrowed the gap as its GDP was 53.5% of America's. According to IMF estimates, China's total GDP may overtake the US by 2017. By mid-century, China and India will be the biggest economies in the world. Together these two Asian powers now have a GDP of more than \$10 trillion and are expected to make up around 30% of the world's GDP by 2015. Before the onset of Industrial Revolution these two ancient Asian powers accounted for at least 40% of the world's economic output.

Notwithstanding the favourable prognosis for China in the years ahead, there is a downside to China's march to become a country that is balanced between economic growth and sustainable development, between technological/scientific strengths and soft power, between rapid growth and increasing inequality, and between an ageing population and a middle income trap. The reform agenda as

part of the "China dream" is long and arduous, but China's top leaders must have the courage to take the bull by the horns to move the country forward. The impressive fruits of progress over the past three decades must be the foundation on which to take China and the world to prosperity, peace and happiness to mankind. Chinese new leaders appear to sense an inflection point ahead of them to rejuvenate the country with a legitimacy that transcends pure economic growth to general human progress and development and that will find resonance within the country and the world.

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**UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICAL SECULARISM IN A  
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: FRANCE, USA,  
TURKEY AND INDIA**

Shantanu Majumder\*

**Introduction**

The cardinal objective of this article is to understand whether secularism has a universal meaning, follows a single template, or whether existing realities and historical trajectories can influence its meaning and the process of experiments. Notably, in this article the word ‘secularism’ has been used as ‘political secularism’ instead of ‘secular humanism’, a term which focuses on the role of religion in an individual’s life. Paul Kurtz identifies naturalism, non-theism, democracy, ethics, and planetary scope as the characteristics of secular humanism,<sup>1</sup> while ‘political secularism’ is meant to be a doctrine that guarantees freedom of religion and seeks separation of religion and politics, religion and state affairs in order to check religious tyranny and oppression. ‘Political secularism’ promotes freedoms and equalities for the religious and non-religious.<sup>2</sup> ‘Political secularism’ is also distinct from ‘philosophical secularism’, which opts for a godless system of the world. Indeed, political secularism is recognition of politics as an “autonomous sphere, one that’s not subject to ecclesiastical governance, to the governance of a church or religion or the church’s expression of that religion”.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of the above mentioned concepts, the first section takes into account the events that have been contributing to the development of a notion of secularism in the sense of the erection of a wall between the state and religion

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1 Paul Kurtz, *What Is Secular Humanism?*, Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2006

2 Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism”, in T. N. Srinivasan (ed.) *The Future of Secularism*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 20-24

3 Wilfred McClay, Speech on “Religion and Secularism: The American Experience”, Pew Forum’s Biannual conference on Religion, Politics and Public life, December 3, 2007 [<http://www.pewresearch.org/2007/12/03/religion-and-secularism-the-american-experience/> (visit October 15, 2013)]

in France and the USA. The discussion on France is important in order to understand the application of a model of secularism where the state adopts an apathetic (for some, antagonistic) attitude to religion, as opposed to the USA approach that highlights the state's accommodative roles towards religion.

The second section deals with the secularism of the Republican People's Party (RPP) (in Turkish: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) (CHP) in Turkey and the Indian National Congress in India. The RPP's experiment is significant in the sense that this party led the struggle for independence and initiated the secular agenda in Turkey.

As a result of the RPP's initiatives, Turkey is so far the only Muslim majority country which has been officially practicing one of the strictest versions of secularism since the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite a religious political party in power since the beginning of the twenty first century, the abovementioned version of secularism still officially exists. In any analysis on secularism in India, a specific discussion on the INC is essential due to the fact that this party led the independence movement and had dealt with the question of relationship between state and religion even before the independence of India and partition of the Indian subcontinent on the basis of religion in 1947. Both RPP and INC formed the first governments and followed a secular line after independence in two highly religion-centric areas in this world. Besides, the RPP and the INC are still active as a major political party in their respective countries. The third section briefly discusses the similarities and dissimilarities in the experiments with secularism in the above-mentioned case studies.

## **Section 1**

### ***Laïcité in France***

#### *French revolution and the triumph of state*

France officially initiated the principles of secularism (known as *laïcité*) in 1905 through the enactment of a law by the Chamber of Deputies, i.e., the Lower House of the French parliament. However, evidence of *laïcité* can be traced back to the era of French revolution. For example, within a few months at the beginning of the revolution, the French National Assembly stated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of August 26, 1789 (Article 10) that “no one shall be molested for his opinions, even religious, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.” This declaration was incorporated in the preamble of the Constitution of

October 4, 1958.<sup>4</sup> The new Republic which emerged out of revolution confiscated and auctioned land and assets of the Catholic Church. The state also demanded huge restructuring of the Church hierarchy and ordered the clergy to swear allegiance to the government. The first secular state of France was declared in 1795; the new Constitution declared that the state shall not recognize or subsidize any religion.<sup>5</sup>

State domination over religion continued through the Concordat of 1801. Though it re-established Roman Catholic Church in France, the Concordat of 1801, in a real sense, enhanced the grip of state over religion. For example, Roman Catholicism was recognized as the religion of the majority of French citizens. But Judaism, the Lutheran and Reformed Churches were also recognized by the state.<sup>6</sup> Besides, Catholicism was not declared as the official religion of the state although the Concordat and the government agreed to pay salaries of the clergy on condition that they swore an oath of allegiance to the state. The Catholic Church had to give up its demand for lands confiscated at the time of the revolution. Besides, the state continued to exercise its right to nominate bishops. Article 8 of the Concordat pronounced that a prayer would be repeated in the Catholic Churches in France. The prayer read: *Domine, salvam fac Rempublicam* (God save the Republic); *Domine, salvos fac Consules* (God save the Consuls).<sup>7</sup>

#### *State and religion since the third Republic*

The conquest of secular ideology over religion was cemented in France during the early phase of the Third Republic (1870-1940). The 1905 law repudiated the Concordat. The law (*Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des*

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4 “Text with Constitutional”, *La Documentation Française*, The Directorate of Legal and Administrative Information (DILA), Head office of the France Prime Minister, 2004

([http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate\\_c?hl=en&sl=fr&u=http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/dossiers/laicite/fondements-juridiques-laicite.shtml&prev=/search%3Fq%3DRepublique%2BFrancaise,%2Bla%25C3%25AFcit%25C3%25A9%26hl%3Den&rurl=translate.google.co.uk&usg=ALkJrhjhPn0F6uFr8iKfBm7OXa28buoyeg](http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?hl=en&sl=fr&u=http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/dossiers/laicite/fondements-juridiques-laicite.shtml&prev=/search%3Fq%3DRepublique%2BFrancaise,%2Bla%25C3%25AFcit%25C3%25A9%26hl%3Den&rurl=translate.google.co.uk&usg=ALkJrhjhPn0F6uFr8iKfBm7OXa28buoyeg)), (visit June 14, 2013)

5 Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 30-34, 139-140 & 242-246

6 “Concordat of 1801”, *The Columbia Encyclopaedia* (sixth edition), New York: Columbia University Press, 2008

7 “Napoleon's concordat (1801): text”, *Concordat Watch*, Translated by Muriel Fraser from the French original. ([http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showkb.php?org\\_id=867&kb\\_header\\_id=826&kb\\_id=1496](http://www.concordatwatch.eu/showkb.php?org_id=867&kb_header_id=826&kb_id=1496)), (visit June 27, 2013)

*Églises et de l'État*) asserted that the Republic did not recognize, employ, or subsidize any religion. The law also abolished religious practice-related expenses from budget of the state (Article 2), and ordered the transfer of moveable or immoveable property and other public facilities for worship to legally formed associations within one year time after the adoption of the law (Article 4).<sup>8</sup> Besides allowing an individual to follow or not to follow a religion, the 1905 law in France criminalized interference with religious freedom (Article 33).<sup>9</sup> The spirit of the 1905 law on the separation of Church and State was reflected in the France's Constitutions of 1946 and 1958. The preamble of the 1946 Constitution guaranteed "free, public and secular education at all levels." The first article of the 1958 Constitution declared France as a secular, democratic and social Republic and ensured the equality of all citizens before the law irrespective of origin, race or religion.<sup>10</sup>

France's commitment to a stricter version of secularism again came into forefront in the first half of the current decade. On 11 December 2003, a Commission,<sup>11</sup> formed by the government to evaluate the application of the *laïcité* principle, recommended banning of wearing conspicuous religious signs or clothing in public schools. The list of prohibited items included headscarves of Muslim girls, large Christian crosses, yarmulkes of Jewish boys and turbans for Sikh boys. The commission however, recommended allowing wearing discreet symbols of faith, for example, Fatima's hands, Star of David or small crosses.<sup>12</sup>

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8 *The Legifrance* – public service broadcasting law by the Internet, Secretariat General of Government (SGG), France [ English Version ], 2009

[http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate\\_c?hl=en&sl=fr&u=http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do%3FcidTexte%3DLEGITEXT000006070169%26dateTexte%3D20081012&prev=/search%3Fq%3DRepublique%2BFrancaise,%2Bla%25C3%25AFcit%25C3%25A9%26hl%3Den&rurl=translate.google.com&twu=1&usg=ALkJrhgeZNFnQCcFkvY4e5dlbknmLcwmKQ](http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?hl=en&sl=fr&u=http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do%3FcidTexte%3DLEGITEXT000006070169%26dateTexte%3D20081012&prev=/search%3Fq%3DRepublique%2BFrancaise,%2Bla%25C3%25AFcit%25C3%25A9%26hl%3Den&rurl=translate.google.com&twu=1&usg=ALkJrhgeZNFnQCcFkvY4e5dlbknmLcwmKQ), (visit April 25, 2013)

9 Robert O'brien, *The Report of the Committee of Reflection on the Application of the Principle of Secularity in the Republic*, New York: William S. Hein & Co., INC, 2005, pp, X1-XIV

( <http://www.wshein.com/media/catalog/3/331650.pdf> ), (visit March 20, 2010)

10 "100th Anniversary of Secularism in France", The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Washington, DC, December 09, 2005 (<http://www.pewforum.org/2005/12/09/100th-anniversary-of-secularism-in-france/>), (visit October 18, 2013)

11 The Commission, known as Stasi Commission, was set up to examine the principles of Laïcité. Named after the Chair Bernard Stasi, Ombudsman of the French Republic from 1998-2004.

12 Murat, Akan, "Laïcité and multiculturalism: the Stasi Report in context", *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 60, Issue 2, 2009, pp. 237-256

French legislators promulgated a law (Law 2004-228) on 17 March 2004 in line with the Commission report. On 10 February 2004, the lower house (National Assembly) adopted the law by a majority of 494 to 36 votes and the Upper House (Senate) by a majority of 276 to 20 votes, and it took effect when the new school year started in September 2004.<sup>13</sup>

### **Separation of Church and State in the USA**

#### *Constitution erected a wall*

The United States Constitution, constitutional developments, and the initiatives of several founding fathers can be seen as another set of examples of secularism within the public realm. The United States declared its independence in July 1776. The US Constitution was adopted in September 1787 and ratified in June 1788. It is true that there was no direct mention of the separation of State and Church, or freedom of religion in the Constitution. But, notably, the US Constitution begins in the name of people instead of mentioning God or any other similar authority. The Preamble of the Constitution<sup>14</sup> declares that, “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” Again, Article VI, Section III of the Constitution<sup>15</sup> pronounced the principles of separation of Church and State by prohibiting religious tests for holding public office. It says, “The Senators and Representatives ..., and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.”

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13 Alex Lefebvre, “France: National Assembly bans Muslim headscarves in schools”, *World Socialist Website*, February 18, 2004 (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2004/feb2004/scar-f18.shtml>), (visit October 16, 2013)

14 “Constitution of the United States” & “Bill of Rights”, *The National Archives*, The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the official record keeper in the USA. ([http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html)), (visit August 27, 2013)([http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)), (visit August 27, 2013)

15 *Ibid*

Separation of the state and religion in the US can also be noticed in the historic Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights consists of the first ten amendments of the Constitution and was introduced to the Congress in 1789 and came into effect in December 1791. First Amendment of the Constitution<sup>16</sup> states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”.

*Arguments of the founding fathers*

The writings of more than one founding fathers profoundly contributed to the expansion of pro-secular ideals in the US. Charles Bogle<sup>17</sup> identifies several writings of Thomas Jefferson<sup>18</sup> and James Madison<sup>19</sup> in this connection. For example, a decade before the adoption of the constitution, in a draft of a proposed *Bill for Religious Freedom in Virginia* in 1777, Jefferson argued that “our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinion in physics and geometry”.<sup>20</sup> In 1781, criticizing the Virginia common law, which barred non-Christian or non-believers from holding office or employment in ecclesiastical, civil or military departments, Jefferson said, “The legitimate powers of the government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg”.<sup>21</sup> The 1777 Bill formed the basis of Virginia 1786 Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, which is considered as “the template for the secularist provisions of the federal Constitution”.<sup>22</sup> In defence of continuation of separation, Jefferson

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>17</sup> Charles, Bogle, “Secularism and the American Constitution”, *World Socialist Website*, July 18, 2005 (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2005/jul2005/secu-j18.shtml>), (visit September 10, 2013)

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the third President (1801-1809) and main author of the Declaration of Independence (1776) of the USA.

<sup>19</sup> James Madison (1751-1836) was the Fourth President and one of the founding fathers of the USA.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Peterson Merrill (ed.), *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, Harmondsworth: Penguin publishers, 1977 p. 252

<sup>21</sup> “Query XVII: The different religions received into that State?” *Notes on the State of Virginia*. From The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Vol. 2, Electronic Text Centre, University of Virginia Library, 2008

(<http://web.archive.org/web/20080706082743/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=JefBv021.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=17&division=div2>), (visit October 18, 2013 )

<sup>22</sup> Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*, New York: Henry Holt & Co, 2004, pp.19-29

in a letter to Alexander von Humboldt on December 6, 1813, reiterated a fact that “history, ... furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government.”<sup>23</sup>

Madison, similar to Jefferson, also supported the view that the state should not stand in favour of any religion or church. In 1785, years before the adoption of the Constitution, he argued that religion and government should be free from each other. Madison was also aware of the risk of the supremacy of one religion over the others derived from state patronage. In his *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessment*<sup>24</sup>, Madison asked, “Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christianity, in exclusion of all other Sects?” It is widely believed that Madison’s *Memorial* played a significant role in developing an understanding between the opposite views, such as the freethinkers and nonconformist Protestant sects, regarding government’s non-interference with religion.

Finally, due to the alliance of the aforementioned groups, the Virginia 1786 Act for Establishing Religious Freedom passed in the General Assembly of Virginia. The essence of US secularism can be found in the 1786 Act. It states that “no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no way diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.” Susan Jacoby<sup>25</sup>, mentioned that in the Constitutional Convention in 1787 John Adams<sup>26</sup> and George Washington<sup>27</sup> “fully shared Jefferson’s views on the

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23 Source: American History: *From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond* website, EK Groningen: University of Groningen. (<http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/thomas-jefferson/letters-of-thomas-jefferson/jefl224.php>) (visit October 17, 2013)

24 “A Chronology of US Historical Documents”, *The University of Oklahoma College of Law* website (<http://www.law.ou.edu/ushistory/remon.shtml>), (visit September 27, 2013)

25 Susan Jacoby, *Op. cit.*

26 John Adams (1735-1826) was the second President (1797-1801) and one of the founding fathers of the US

27 George Washington (1731-1799) was the first President (1789-1797) and Commander in chief of the American Revolutionary war from 1775-1783

separation and religious and civil affairs” and “the “omission of God was not a major source of controversy at the constitutional Convention.” The secular nature of the United States government in the early years after independence was evident not only at the domestic level but also can be seen in sphere of international relations. For example, it was mentioned in Article 11 of *The Treaty of Tripoli*<sup>28</sup> that “As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion, as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity, of Mussulmen, and as the said States never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan [Mohammedan] nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries”.

## Section 2

### ***Laik and the RPP in Turkey***

#### *The Kemalist experiment*

Turkey’s experience to a great extent contradicts the generalization about the scope of secularism (an ideology) or/and secularization (a social process) in the Muslim majority states. According to Ernest Gellner<sup>29</sup>, “no secularization has taken place in the world of Islam” and Bernard Lewis<sup>30</sup> (2002) points out an absence of instruction about distinguishing “between God and Caesar and between the different duties owed to each of the two” as a reason behind truancy of secularist movement in the “Islamic world”. However, despite several setbacks, Turkey has been constitutionally exercising one of the most radical versions of secularism in this world for last eight decades and the Republican People’s Party (RPP) has been leading the secular movement since its beginning.

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28 *The Treaty of Tripoli* was an attempt to save the US vessels in the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean from the attack of the pirates authorized by the city state of Tripoli. The treaty was signed at Tripoli on November 4, 1796; ratified in the U.S. Senate on June 7, 1797. President John Adams signed the treaty on June 10, 1797. Source: Boston, Robert "Joel Barlow And The Treaty With Tripoli," *Church & State Magazine*, June, 1997 ([http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/archive/boston\\_tripoli.html](http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/archive/boston_tripoli.html)), (visit September 29, 2013)

29 Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rival*. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1994

30 Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.103

The RPP was formed during the Turkey's war of independence in 1923 and emerged as the ruling party after 1924. In an immense attempt to operationalise the project of modernity, in the 1920s and 1930s, the RPP government under the leadership of the founding father of the nation, Mustafa Kamal Atatürk (1881-1938) introduced all encompassing changes in favour of secularism in Turkey's state and society. The Republic introduced a secular system of law and education, shattered the influence and power of the *ulemas* (learned men of Islam) within the state administration, brought orthodox Islam under state control, banned the *sufi* (Muslim mystic) order and prohibited religious speech, propaganda and organizations with political intention. The regime also abolished *shari'a* (Islamic law), banned polygamy, and enacted a new civil code that allowed equal rights and equal opportunities for women in education and employment.<sup>31</sup>

When the Republic was formed in 1924, the article that described Turkey as an Islamic state was removed from the Constitution. The Roman alphabet was introduced in place of Arabic. Certain religious activities, including *Adhan* (the call to prayer) were moved to the Turkish language.<sup>32</sup> The RPP regime removed the line 'the Religion of the State is Islam' from the Constitution in 1928. The second article of the Constitution in 1937 clearly identified Turkey as a secular state. Since February 1937, the principle of secularism has been a non-amendable part of the Turkey Constitution.

In the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Turkey defined secularism, once more, in a distinctive way. The current Constitution of Turkey ratified on 7 November 1982 declared Turkey as a secular and democratic republic (Article 2). Article 24 of the Constitution allows religious belief and conviction and participation in religious services. It also states that no one shall be compelled to worship, participating religious ceremonies and rites, reveal religious beliefs and convictions, or be accused of religious beliefs or convictions. 1982 Constitution also declares that education and instruction in religion and ethics shall be conducted under state control and supervision.<sup>33</sup> In the first week of March in

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31 Ali Carkoglu and Barry Rubin (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Turkey*, London: Routledge, 2006; Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, religion and the Nation State*, London: I.B. TAURIS, 2010, pp.9-14

32 Alev Cinar, *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, pp.14-18

33 *The Constitution of the Turkish Republic*, November 07, 1982. Website of Turkish Constitutional Law (<http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1982Constitution-EYasar.htm>), (visit October 10, 2013)

1989, the Turkish constitutional Court opined, “Islam, unlike Christianity, had public claims. And in order to control such a religion and confine religion to individual spirituality, “a strict secularism” was essential. In mid-January, 1997, the Turkish constitutional Court maintained that secularism is not restricted only to the separation of the state and religion. According to the court, secularism means the separation of religion and worldly affairs which means separation of social life, education, family, economy, law, manners, dress codes, etc from religion.<sup>34</sup>

The experience of Turkey’s secularism can be seen from two perspectives. First, it can be branded as a success story. On the other hand, it is also possible to argue that increasing popularity of the pro-religious forces and repeated defeats of the RPP or secular forces in broader sense in the elections since 2002, regardless of complete constitutional and judicial safeguards for secularism, indicates a gradual unpopularity of the secular ideal in the country.

From the mid-sixteenth century the *Sultan* of Ottoman Empire (1299-1922 AD) claimed to be the ceremonial *Caliph* (leader) of all Muslims in the world. Certain reforms took place in the Ottoman Empire in the early and late nineteenth century. For example, a system called *Din-uldevlet* allowed both Islam and the state as sources of legislation. *Orf* or *Kanunname*, derived from the will of the ruler, worked as a source of law by the side of Islamic law. *Hatt-I Serif* of Gulhane guaranteed life, honour and property of the subjects of the empire regardless of their religion. *Tanzimat* emphasized equality for the Muslims and non-Muslims in the fields of public service, taxation and military service.<sup>35</sup> However, pro-secular laws in the Ottoman Empire were justified on the grounds that they were “necessary for the well-being of the Islamic community”<sup>36</sup>, which indicates an unambiguous supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal. From this point of view, a deliberate attempt to create a secular Turkey was started only after the establishment of Republic of Turkey in late October 1923. And all the successes as well as shortcomings in this venture can

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34 Kuru, Ahmet T., “Misperceptions on secularism in Turkey: Secular individual and society”, *Daily Today’s Zaman*, Turkey, July 17, 2008 (<http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=147703>), (Visit September 10, 2013)

35 Azak, Umut, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State*, London: I.B. TAURIS, 2010, pp.9-14

36 Halil, Inalcik, “The Nature of Traditional Society: Turkey” in Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (ed.), *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964, pp.42-63. Quoted in Azak Umit, *Ibid*, p. 3

been measured against the historical reality that the RPP under the headship of Kemal Ataturk commenced and worked to propagate the ideal in a state that was the leader of the Muslim *Ummah* for centuries, and where religion was the prime factor in state affairs and individuals' lives.

*Failure or a success story?*

However, there are downsides in the experiments of secularism in Turkey. There are scepticisms and criticisms about the way Kemalist<sup>37</sup> secularism attempted to deal with religion in Turkey from the beginning.<sup>38</sup> The victories of Justice and Development Party (JDP) ( Turkish: *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, or *AKP* ) in the 2002, 2007 and 2011 general elections strengthened criticisms against constitutional court-supported and military-backed top-down elitist secularism in Turkey. There is also evidence that revulsion against Darwinism, and admiration for theories like “intellectual design”<sup>39</sup> are also on the rise. For example, in 2008, the then Education Minister Huseyin Celik, an admirer of “intellectual design”, branded Darwinism as a “weapon of the materialists and infidels”.<sup>40</sup> Again, there is also information available that shows pro-religious forces are active among the lower strata of the Turkish society with an intention to strengthen political support by providing instant economic benefit and

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37 Kemalist ideology or Kemalism, also known as "Six Arrows" (Turkish: *Altı Ok*). These six arrows are republicanism, statism, populism, secularism, nationalism and reformism. Kemalism developed by the Turkish National Movement and its leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Kemalism urges for a secular national state on the basis of the principles of enlightenment, rationalism and positivism. Source: (1) “Kemalism”, *Oxford Islamic Studies online* (<http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0440>), (visit 23 February 2010); (2) Webster, Donald Everett, *The Turkey of Ataturk; Social Process in the Turkish Reformation*. New York: AMS Press, 1973

38 Sami Zubaida, “The Survival of Kemalism”, *The Journal of Studies on Eastern Mediterranean and Turkey and Iran* (CEMOTI), No 21, January-June 1996

39 According to the Intellectual Design theorists ‘certain biological features appear to be “irreducibly complex” and thus incapable of evolving incrementally by natural selection, they must have been created by the intervention of an intelligent designer’. Leading scientists consider this theory as “neither sound science nor good theology”. Source: “Intelligent Design is Non-sense, say scientists” and “The Concept of ‘Intellectual Design’, International Society for Science and Religion, 2008 (<http://www.secularism.org.uk/92192.html>) and (<http://www.issr.org.uk/issr-statements/the-concept-of-intelligent-design/>) (visit October 15, 2013)

40 Source: Steinvorth, Daniel, “A Muslim Creationism Debate: Taking on Darwin in Turkey”, *Spiegel Online*, September 23, 2008. (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/a-muslim-creationism-debate-taking-on-darwin-in-turkey-a-579913.html>), (visit September 24, 2013)

portraying themselves as the emancipators of the poor.<sup>41</sup> All these realities suggest a rethink about the top-down approach of the RPP-led secularism project in Turkey.

In spite of the above-mentioned non-secular realities, it can also be argued that the RPP's eight decades long project of hard-line secularism has had a secularizing impact on the psyche of the Turks. They seem to prefer a moderate version of secularism in general. For example, a 2008 survey revealed huge acceptance of religion in personal life but strong opposition to the role of religion in public affairs. This can be described as an unambiguous indication of a triumph for secularism in public arena. In March 2008, the independent polling company Veritas conducted a survey of 4,500 adults in 33 cities in Turkey on secularism and religion related issues for the *Star Daily*.<sup>42</sup> Less than 5 percent respondents say they cannot accept women without head-cover. On the contrary, a little more than 5 percent of the hard-line secularists are intolerant toward women covering their heads. Nearly 87 percent of the RPP voters have no strong stance against headscarves. These views of the officially hard-line seculars plainly show an inclination for a soft version of secular ideals. Among the participants, 92 percent define themselves as believers and nearly 44 percent say all the daily prayers, whereas slightly more than 7 percent are atheist.

However, for nearly 44 percent of respondents, religion is a highly personal matter, between "man and god". Although, a pro-religious party, i.e., the JDP, was in power, less than 8 percent preferred a political system based on religion. The Veritas poll shows that most people in Turkey consider secularism as something more than a legal principle and accept it as a life style, and a majority of the respondents support separation of religion and state, and the state's equidistance from all faiths.

The profound impact of secularism in Turkey can also be measured from the other side. In Turkey, government affairs and politics revolve to a huge extent around the idea of secularism. Even the pro-religious politicians and political

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41 "Turkey's AKP targets poor in regional vote", *World Bulletin*, Turkey [(http://www.worldbulletin.net/news\_detail.php?id=39025), (visit September 20, 2013)]

42 Source: "Religious Tolerance Prevails in Turkey, Poll Shows", *Today's Zaman*, March 14, 2008 (http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=136373), (visit October 09, 2013)

parties have to speak in favour of secularism openly though they differ on the definition and jurisdiction of secularism. For example, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Prime Minister and leader of the pro-religious ruling party AKP, has to agree that secularism is one of the guarantors of democracy and peace.<sup>43</sup>

### **Secularism and the Indian National Congress (INC)**

#### *Roots of Indian Secularism*

There are differences of opinion amongst the scholars about the roots of Indian secularism. It is argued that European secularism emerged as a result of struggle against church and for that reason carried an atheistic trend and implied indifference toward religions. By contrast, secularism was conceived in multi-religious India, where religion has always been the area of prime attention, as a philosophy which teaches equal respect for all religions.<sup>44</sup> In this line of explanation, taking into account the impact of Indian intellectual history and intellectual pluralism, Amartya Sen thinks that Indian secularism emphasises “neutrality” to the religions instead of “prohibition” of religious associations in state activities.<sup>45</sup> But there are opposite views. For example, according to Elst Koenraad, Indian secularism was “borrowed from Europe”. Though considering secularism as something “borrowed” from the West, he defines the ideal as neutrality of the government in religious affairs and also holds the view that secularism does not promote one belief system.<sup>46</sup>

It has also been claimed that secularism “has not been the product of a process of actual secularization of life” in India, but “developed as a response to the actual historic need of Indian society like the other ideas of democracy, socialism and the like”. In the same vein, M.T. Anasari argues that religion in the orient, unlike the West, is so powerful that it “often hinders the process of

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43 Source: “Two Definitions of Secularism”, *Turks.US: Daily World EU News*, November 12, 2004 (<http://www.turks.us/article.php?story=20041112065644363&mode=print> ), (visit October 11, 2013)

44 Asghar Ali Engineer, “Secularism and its Problems in India”, *Secular Perspective*, December 01-15, 2007

45 Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, London & New York: Penguin Books, 2005, pp. 16-21 & 294-296

46 Elst Koenraad, “Secularism as it is”, *Ayodha and After: Issues Before Hindu Society*, Chapter 10, New Delhi: Voice of India, 1991

social change”.<sup>47</sup> Ansari’s remark resonates with Shabnum Tejani’s observation<sup>48</sup> on the Constituent Assembly debates (1946-1950) in India in which the INC as the main political party played the most significant role. According to Tejani, debate in the assembly before and after independence established a meaning of secularism in India that emerged from the issue of political safeguards for the religious minorities in the form of reservations of quotas in the legislative branch, and adequate and fair representation of the minorities in the public services.

R. A. Jahagirdar states that despite modest debate on the term secularism prior to independence, it was accepted that “India will not discriminate against any religion and will allow freedom of religion to the followers of different religions.”<sup>49</sup> According to S. Radhakrishnan, the second President of India selected by the INC, “When India is said to be a secular state, it does not mean we reject the reality of an unseen spirit of the relevance of religion to life or that we exalt irreligion.” At the same time, he mentioned that no one religion should be accorded special privileges in national life or international relations, and no person should “suffer any form of disability or discrimination” because of religious belief.<sup>50</sup>

All these observations indicate strong presence of religion in Indian society. It can be argued that unlike the State versus Church tussle in the West, the omnipresence of religion, and the tension and antagonism between the two main religious communities, .i.e., the Hindu and the Muslim, since the early 20th century contributed to an enormous extent to the formulation of the idea of Indian secularism.

#### *Critique of the INC’s secularism*

There are allegations from both the pro-seculars and the anti-seculars regarding the INC’s experiment with secularism, the oldest, the largest and the main

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47 M. T. Ansari (ed.), *Secularism, Islam and Modernity: selected essays of Alam Khundmiri*, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2001, pp.233

48 Shabnum, Tejani, *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007, p.235

49 R.A. Jahagirdar, “Secularism in Indian: The Inconclusive Debate”, *International Humanist and Ethical Union*, Amsterdam, May 11, 2003 ([http://www. ihcu. org/node/298](http://www.ihcu.org/node/298)), (visit August 13, 2013)

50 S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol.1, 5th edition, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.232-234

liberal political party in India. For the pro-seculars, the INC's secularism is a sham and it miserably failed to uphold the cornerstones of the ideal and prevent religious bloodshed in the country. For example, when commenting on the 2002 religious riots in Gujarat province, Ashis Nandy, a noted liberal intellectual in India, expressed his views by saying that, "the Gujarat carnage of 2002 should make us openly admit what we all secretly know but cannot publicly acknowledge that our theory and practice of containing religious and ethnic strife, mainly powered by the ideology of secularism, has not helped us much".<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the anti-seculars, most notably, Hindutava nationalists, accused the INC of playing vote bank politics using the name of secularism. For example, in March 2009, anti-secular Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former chair person of the *Rajya Sabha* (upper house of the Indian parliament) Najma Heptullah accused the INC of keeping the religious minorities "captive" and creating "a fear psychosis amongst minorities in the name of secularism" since independence.<sup>52</sup> In April 2010, Nitin Gadkari, the president of the BJP, went further. He branded the INC's secularism as an effort to appease the minorities and the terrorists.<sup>53</sup>

#### *The INC's experiment*

Whatever is the bonafide of the allegations from the pro-secular and anti-secular forces in recent decades, and the much blamed failure in accommodating the Muslim elites that could prevent the partition of India, there is evidence that the INC has undertaken, at least officially, several pro-secular initiatives since its inception in the late 19th century. For example, in the early years, at least three Presidents of the party came from religious minority communities. That indicates an awareness of the importance of religious harmony in a predominantly Hindu India. The INC was established in 1885. Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), a Parsi and Badruddin Tyabji (1844-1906), a Muslim were the second and third Presidents of the INC, respectively. Naoroji was the President in 1886, 1893 and 1906. Tyabji became the President in 1887.

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51 Ashis Nandy, "Unclaimed baggage", *The Little Magazine*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, 2004

52 "Congress Secularism? Keeping Minorities Captive: Najma", *Outlook India*, New Delhi, March 17, 2009

53 "BJP Supremo Accuses Congress", *The North East Today*, April 05, 2010 ([http://thenortheasttoday.in/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1348:bjp-supremo-accuses-congress&catid=51:news-archive&Itemid=74&month=3&year=2010](http://thenortheasttoday.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1348:bjp-supremo-accuses-congress&catid=51:news-archive&Itemid=74&month=3&year=2010)), (visit July 29, 2013)

Rahimtulla M Sayani (1847-1902), a Muslim, became the INC President in 1896.<sup>54</sup> Supporting the *Khilafat* Movement in 1920, the INC extended its solidarity with the cause of the Muslims in a bid for religious harmony. The *Khilafat* Movement was launched by the Indian Muslims against the victor's plan of dismemberment of the Turkish *Khilafat* in the aftermath of the World War 1. The INC and the *Khilafatists* jointly initiated a non-cooperation movement against the British colonial rulers in India.

*Understanding of Gandhi and Nehru*

To understand the INC's and Indian secularism, examining the views of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964)<sup>55</sup> is most essential. Here Gandhi and Nehru are important for two reasons. Firstly, they were the two most prominent leaders of the INC and stalwarts of the Indian independence movement. Notably, they elaborated their ideas on secularism, which were reflected in the Indian Constitution later, long before the organized academic efforts and judicial interpretations were made on this issue. Secondly, it is evident from the writings and speeches of Gandhi and Nehru that they had basic differences in the way they looked at the issue of religion in private and public life. Gandhi was a religious person whereas Nehru was an atheist in his personal life, and did not hesitate to speak against religion. But importantly, despite being an atheist, Nehru replicates Gandhi's thought about secularism to a great extent, which is important in realizing the fundamentals of secularism in India.

In March 1931, in the Karachi session of the INC national conference, Gandhi and Nehru argued in favour of the religious neutrality of the state. In November 1933, Gandhi, a profoundly religious person, supported a bill related to untouchability and expressed his view that there were many situations when state needs to interfere with religion.<sup>56</sup> Gandhi elaborated his pro-secular ideas less than one year before independence. In September 1946, in response to a query on the role of religion in independent India, he said, "if I were a dictator, religion and the state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it.

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54 Source: Indian National Congress Website (<http://www.congress.org.in/past-president.php>), (visit May 18, 2013)

55 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi: the founding father of India and INC President; Jawaharlal Nehru: the first Prime Minister of India and INC President.

56 Anil Nauriya, "Gandhi on Secular Law and State", *The Hindu*, India, October 22, 2003

But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it.” He also opined that the state should look after the individual’s secular welfare, not his religion.<sup>57</sup> On 17 August 1946, two days after independence, Gandhi wrote that the state should undoubtedly be secular. He also spoke disapprovingly about state funded denominational education. On 22 August 1947, Gandhi reiterated his points identifying religion as a “personal matter”, and emphasizing the responsibility of the government and the public for the creation of a secular state that would build “a new India that would be the glory of the world.” Gandhi’s views were reflected in the resolutions of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) on 15 November 1947. The aim of the INC was described as building a “democratic secular state where all citizens enjoy full supports.”<sup>58</sup>

Along with Gandhi, to comprehend the INC’s secularism, it is imperative to deal with Nehru’s thought. Nehru, who became the first Prime Minister of India, was the key person to deal with issues like the relationship between the state and religion, safeguards for and the rights of the minorities in the new-born state. As mentioned earlier, Nehru had a basic disagreement with Gandhi regarding the issue of religion. Nehru was opposed to organized religion or religious scriptures or religious rituals. He wrote that “organized religion, whatever its past may have been, today is very largely an empty form devoid of real content.”<sup>59</sup> Nehru also stated that “the spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organized religion, in India and elsewhere, has filled me with horror and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seemed to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition, exploitation and the preservation of vested interests.”<sup>60</sup>

However, Nehru’s personal disbelief in religion did not encourage him to take a stand against the highly strong attachment of the Indian people to religion. Nehru rather was impelled to state, “a secular state does not, of course, mean that the people should give up their religion. A secular state means a state in which the state protects all religions, but does not favour one at the expense of

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57 *Harizan, English Weekly (1933-1956), founded by Gandhi, September 22, 1946* (<http://www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org/sfgandhi/seventeenth.htm>), (visit September 11, 2013)

58 Source: Anil Nauriya, *Op. cit.*, 2003

59 Jawaharlal Nehru, "Religion, Man and Society," *An Autobiography*, New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1962, pp.374-80

60 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, New York: John Day, 1941

others and does not itself adopt any religion as the state religion”.<sup>61</sup> This statement shows that Nehru was inclined to accept the immense importance and sway of religion over the hearts and minds of the people in the Indian subcontinent. Nehru continued to record his disbelief in religion even in his Last Will and Testament. He wrote: “I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not believe in such ceremonies, and to submit to them, even as a matter of form would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others.”<sup>62</sup>

This evidence again makes it apparent that Nehru did not mix up his personal belief and his role as a politician and statesman in developing the definition of Indian secularism. Along with a very lacklustre view of the role of religion in human life, it seems that the tragic drama, in which he was one of the prime actors, of the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 on the basis of differences and conflicts between the political elites of the religious majority (Hindu) and minority (Muslim) made Nehru acutely aware of the risk of giving official importance to a religion in a multi-religious society like India. In a nutshell, Nehruvian secularism has four dimensions - the separation of religion from political, economic, social, cultural sides of life; treating religion strictly as a personal matter; freedom of religions and religious tolerance; providing equal opportunities and no discriminations on religious grounds.<sup>63</sup>

The word “secular” was inserted in the Indian Constitution in August 1976 through the 42nd amendment. However, several Articles, such as, 22, 25-28 and 30 highlight secular ideals since its enactment in November 1949. The fundamental Rights section of the Indian Constitution maintains that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on religious grounds and no citizen shall be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition on the grounds of religion. The Right to Freedom of Religion in the Constitution allows the citizen to profess, practice and propagate religion; to establish and maintain institutions for religious purposes; and to manage his/her own affairs in matters of religion. But these rights are not unconditional. These are subject to public order, morality and health. According to Ramesh Thakur, the chapter on the fundamental rights in the Indian Constitution provides “a constitutional

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61 Source: *The Statesman*, Kolkata, July 07, 1951

62 “Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru (1889-1964)”, *British Humanist Association*, 2013 (<http://www.humanism.org.uk/humanism/humanist-tradition/20century/Nehru>), (visit June 17, 2013)

63 Bipin Chandra, *Ideology and Politics in Modern India*, New Delhi: Har Anand Publications, 1994, pp.29-30

guarantee to minority groups that their sensitivities could not be overridden in a majoritarian democracy”.<sup>64</sup>

It seems that the intellectuals and the religious minorities warmly accepted Nehru’s secularism. Those who had a profound faith in religion were also attracted to his concept of secularism.<sup>65</sup> Despite all the marked differences in defining secularism in the Indian context, one can easily trace the influence of Nehru upon the mainstream academics and intellectuals who work on secularism and its rationale in India.

The influence of Gandhian and Nehruvian secularism is also evident in the interpretations of the Indian judiciary. In 1962, the Indian Supreme Court described religious tolerance as the “characteristic feature of Indian civilisation from the start history.” The Court also stated that religious tolerance, which the founding fathers considered as the basis of the Constitution, serves to emphasise the secular nature of the Indian democracy.<sup>66</sup> In 1975, the Court defined secularism as “a system of utilitarian ethics” that seeks to “promote the greatest human happiness or welfare, quite independent of what may be called either religious or the occult”.<sup>67</sup> In 1994, the Supreme Court identified “principles of accommodation and tolerance” as the basis of secularism. The Court ruled that religion and temporal activities cannot be mixed, and strictly prohibited the encroachment of religion into secular activities.<sup>68</sup>

### Section 3

#### *Evaluation*

The experiences of secularism in France, the USA, Turkey and India indicate that political secularism allows freedom to practice religion. These case studies also show that political secularism does not advocate atheism or agnosticism as

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64 Ramesh Thakur, 1993, “Ayodhya and the Politics of India’s Secularism: A Double-Standards Discourse”, *Asian Survey*. Vol. XXXIII, No.7, July 1993, p. 647

65 Asghar Ali Engineer, *Op. cit.*

66 Justice Ayyangar, J., *Sardar Taheruddin Syedna Saheb v. State of Bombay Case* [AIR, 1962. (S.C.) 853, 871] Source: Summet Malik and Vikramjit Banerjee, “Changing Perceptions of Secularism”, *Constitutional Law*, Supreme Court CasesTM,7SCC(Jour)3,1998, Eastern Book Company website (<http://www.ebc-india.com/lawyer/articles/9807a1.htm>), (visit October 19, 2013)

67 Verdict of Ziauddin Burhanuddin Bokhari vs Brijmohan Ramdass Mehra Case, AIR 1975 SC 1788, p. 1800. Source: Menon P.B., “Meaning of Secularism”, *The Hindu*, India, 30 January 2001

68 Justice Ahmadi, J., *S. R. Bommai v. Union of India Case* [AIR 1994 SC 1918:(1994)3 SCC1], Source: Summet Malik, 1998, *Op.cit.*

something required for state affairs. At the same time, secularism does not allow the interference of religion in state affairs. And for this reason, it suggests to erect a wall between the state and religion. It also acts as an official safeguard to the religious minorities and sects, and checks domination of one religion over others. Secularism also opposes any official status of a religion in a state. The cases examined in this article also indicate that the meaning of secularism can vary from country to country.

For example, the nature of secularism in the USA and India is considerably different from France and Turkey. The founding fathers in the USA and India considered secularism as the state's neutrality toward religion and equal treatment to all citizens irrespective of religious persuasions. Secularism in these two countries does not ignore or disregard the presence of religion in individuals' lives and their emotional attachment to their religious faith. State recognition of Lutheran and Reformed Churches along with Catholic Churches at the time of the Concordat in France, and abolition of *shari'a* (Islamic law) system in Turkey after independence can also be seen as the state's effort to reach a neutral position towards religions and citizens of different faiths.

In contrast to the above experience, the confiscation of Church property in France after the revolution or the banning of wearing conspicuous religious signs in recent time, or in Turkey, in the era of Kamal Ataturk, decision to forbid religious speeches and the change in the language of *Adhan* (call for prayer) from Arabic to Turkish are examples of practice of 'prohibitory' approach of a state toward the course of religion. As opposed to these, secularism in the USA or in India emphasises on the state's neutrality to religion. Indian secularism allows equal treatment to all the religions in their attempt to flourish, something which is absent in case of France or Turkey.

The above examples signify that in spite of similarities in its basic premise, i.e., separation of state and religion, political secularism or experiments with secularism at the state level vary from country to country, and over time. It is also a fact that, as Rajeev Bhargava argued, each conception of secularism may interpret separation in a way which is to some extent different from other conception, and can place different weight on the same values related to separation of state and religion.<sup>69</sup> It is thus possible to speak of an indigenous version of secularism because things change over time.

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<sup>69</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, *Op. cit.*

Finally, in discussing secularism, it is also important to recognize that official experiments with this ideal have their ups and downs. The history of official acceptance of the national motto, “In God We Trust”, in the United States can be mentioned here as an example. There is no mention of the word God in the text of the US Constitution or Bill of Rights. But, the demand for the recognition of God in the US government system increased during the civil war (1861-1865). Under pressure for the “recognition of the Almighty God” and to relieve the nation “from the ignominy of heathenism” from the religious quarters, the government admitted that “no nation can be strong except in the strength of God, or safe except in His defence.” From this understanding, the Congress passed an Act in April 1864 that allowed “In God We Trust” to appear on the two-cent coin. The motto was placed on all gold and silver coins through another Act in March 1865. Nearly a century later, a law was passed by the 84<sup>th</sup> Congress in July 1956 declaring “In God We Trust” as the national motto of the United States. Acceptance of “In God We Trust” replaced the *de facto* secular national motto, *E Pluribus Unum* (Out of many, one) that was approved by the Congress as the Great Seal of United States in 1782.<sup>70</sup> Again, the coming of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power in India in 1998, and in Turkey of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002 highlights the decline of secularism in these two countries that started their journey by accepting secularism as an undeniable necessity for a modern polity.

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70 “History of In God We Trust”, *United States Department of the Treasury*, 2009 (<http://www.ustreas.gov/education/fact-sheets/currency/in-god-we-trust.shtml>), (visit October 05, 2009 )

## REVISITING BANGLADESHI NATIONHOOD: WALKING ALONG GLOBAL, GLOCAL AND LOCAL PATHWAY

Faheem Hasan Shahed\*

### Introduction

A prominent Bangladeshi female artist of *Rabindrasangeet*<sup>1</sup> in a recent TV talk show asserted that women who cover their heads with *ghomta* (extension of the sari over the head) and *hijab* (a separate piece of cloth covering the head) are not ‘Bangalees’. According to her, a quintessential Bangalee woman should avoid both of these to assert her identity as a woman bearing Bangalee-ness. In no time, this remark sparked quite a controversy in print media and social networking sites where people questioned her ‘right’ to decide the nature of Bangalee identity in her own terms. Some drew her attention to the fact that the Bangladeshi urban society have comprised women with Western, traditional and religious dress-codes, and yet society has never felt any problem with its proliferation of Bangalee cultural identity. However, others highlighted that the singer metaphorically pointed out to the self-inflicted imposition of hardcore conservatism by the average Bangladeshi Muslim women in the name of obeying religion and thereby denying the secular fabric of the society.

This never-ending debate can be related to two apparently-minor-but-acutely-politicized incidents that may provide the conflicting character of the current Bangladeshi nationhood. Early-2013 witnessed the unprecedented Shahbag Movement<sup>2</sup> of the youths where one captivating slogan was regularly chanted

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1 Songs written and tuned by Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore. Considered as classics, these songs are judged as prime components of Bangalee’s cultural heritage.

2 A mass movement initiated by some young online activists and bloggers in February 2013 protesting a verdict by the International War Crimes Tribunal against a fundamentalist war criminal Abdul Kader Molla, notorious as ‘Butcher Kader’, who was given life imprisonment despite his proven crimes of atrocities, rape and torture in 1971. The youths called on everyone via facebook and other social networking sites to join them in a sit-in rally at a central point in Dhaka known as Shahbag. Within 2 days, this rally turned into an unprecedented mass movement with tens and thousands of people from all walks of life joining and demanding death penalty of Kader Molla.

by the tens of thousands of people who gathered: *'Tumi ke, ami ke? Bangalee! Bangalee!'* (Who are you, who am I? Bangalee! Bangalee!). After some months, when Hefazot-e-Islam<sup>3</sup> came up with their Dhaka-seize program on 6 April 2013 as a protest against the present government's alleged 'anti-Islamic and pro-atheist activities' and consequently demanding implementation of their 13-points,<sup>4</sup> they chanted an alternative slogan *'Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar! Tumi ke, ami ke? Musalman! Musalman!'* (Allah is great! Who are you, who am I? Musalman! Musalman!).<sup>5</sup>

These examples typify the dialectic character of Bangladeshi Muslims' nationhood ideology which, having its root in the pre-Pakistan era, has gradually engulfed the mass psyche over the years. The century-old confusion of 'Are we Bangalees or Muslims?' —travelling through the tunnel of 'Are we first of all Bangalees or first of all Muslims?' —has eventually taken shape in the perplexity of 'Can we be good Bangalees and good Muslims at the same time?'

Admittedly, identity is the most crucial feature for any country or nation where race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language etc. play their respective roles in determining nationhood. All or some of these factors usually combine together in establishing the nationhood of any group of people living together, although the role of race and ethnicity is not as primary as that of religion, language and culture. Precisely, these three latter factors are so interdependent that one must be supplemented by the other so that each of them can act as a potent factor to become a component unit in the process of forming nationhood.

However, with the advent of globalization, this identity issue has undergone a fair amount of chaotic reformation. Anthony Giddens pointed out how the present 'world of transformation' affects nearly everything what we do and concludes: 'For better or worse, we are being propelled into a global order that

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3 An orthodox Islamic organization based at Hathajari Madrassa in Chittagong led by a 93 year old religious leader and head of the Qaomi Madrassah education system Allama Shafi. Literally, the name means 'Protectors of Islam'. This organization gained prominence due to their aggressive programs against the Shahbag Movement after several of its activists were believed to be an atheist in their faith who had written objectionable blogs about Islam's Prophet and his companions.

4 Hefazot-e-Islam came up with 13-Point demand that included imposing severe punishment on the atheists who wrote blasphemous blogs; stopping women from freely mixing with men and refrain from 'indecent and vulgar lifestyle'. Hefazot used these demands to mobilize students-teachers of the madrassas all over the country.

5 Source: *Daily Inqilab*, Dhaka, 7 April 2013.

no one fully understands but which is making its effects fall upon all of us.’<sup>6</sup> Global orders, through the package of globalization, has imparted unavoidable influence on nationalism in diversified fronts. This has created a more interesting situation causing a constant struggle between global and local traditions—which has eventually given birth to this concept of ‘glocalization’.<sup>7</sup> It implies the restoration of local socio-cultural flavor in global commodities, services, traditions etc. It is in this context that this paper attempts to examine the identity crisis of the people of Bangladesh with regard to these moot queries: how far has the overarching impact of globalization regarding both secularism and religiosity generated identity-struggle in Bangladeshi Muslim psyche and consequently, how far have secularism and Islamic fundamentalism reshaped themselves as glocal and local elements in Bangladeshi society. Thinking otherwise, the queries that may be raised: Is this entire gamut of confusion inseparably linked with post-globalization economic and political scenario? And more precisely, has the global upsurge of what we term as ‘political Islam’ (and consequently, Muslim fundamentalism) affected the mindset and local traditions of Bangladeshi society? More importantly, has the Bangladeshi society localized the radical Islam in its own terms which has been manipulating the identity crises of Bangladeshi Muslims? And, has secularism failed or compromised with this complex socio-psychological fabric in Bangladesh—demanding a glocalized version to become a stringent counterforce? This paper will therefore make an attempt to critically examine the status of nationhood in Bangladesh in terms of these queries.

#### **Religion in nationalism: a historical overview**

Discussions on nationhood, by and large, whirl round the discussion of nations. Nations are understood as real entities and communities, and hence their existence is taken for granted. The main dispute lies in how nations exist, and how they came to form nation-states. Let us have a brief overview of these issues.

Bengal has historically contained multiple ethnicities with religious and linguistic variations. And also, Bengal was always under the rule of foreign forces. The influx of Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic saints, thinkers, rulers, along with their features, philosophies and customs—and consequently their

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6 Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World*, Profile Books, London, 1999.

7 This term was first coined by Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Anchor Books, New York, 2000.

amalgamation with local and grass roots traditions, values and ideologies—has always played pivotal roles in shaping and reshaping the civilization of this area. So, despite the reality that people were not allied by any shared linguistic, religious or political system, religion has contributed to the concept of social collectivity—etymologically meaning to strive and move forward in a united manner. This union meant the alliance of caste, classes and trans-regional groups. So, during the pre-colonial period in Bengal, religion actually referred to righteous lifestyle, positive codes of conduct and sets of duties to communities and nation. Religion thus meant connectivity between soul with God as well as man with man, and as such provided moral and social bondages. Religion was not just a misty consciousness. Trajectories of religious-political thoughts and actions emanated from religiosity. This religiosity was both sacred and secular in form, opening up space to include groups within and beyond Bengal. This non-sectarian patriotic religiosity was different from religious extremism. Religion was used in politics for harmonious social order that didn't evoke politicized inculcation of religious and cultural norms.

However, the penetration of colonialism demolished this particular socio-religious fabric in Bengal. The spiritual and moral values underlying in the Bangalee ideas of nationhood and political freedom was vastly different from the European definitions. The British colonizers carried automated globalization machinery with them; this globalization would not match with its present operational structure for obvious reasons, but the underlying ethos and fabric cannot be differentiated much. The British arrived in the sub-continent as business people, started marketing and selling products and eventually inflicted colonization as masters. This is what globalization of today, transformed into glocalization, meticulously does. Let us see how the British imperialists put their globalization approach as a counterpart of the harmonious social order of this region.

Globalization has taught us that when people go to the market, they do not remain human beings; metaphorically they get transformed into consumers and salespersons, commodities and service items. In this sense, consumerism turns people into isolated identities, instead of unifying them.<sup>8</sup> This concept is evident in the nationhood framework as well. Bengal was once directly a colony, and after two successive independence in 1947 and 1971 (from Bangladesh

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8 Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Bichchinnatar Satya-Mithya* (Truth and Lies of Separation), Anyaprokash, Dhaka, 2006.

perspective), it has gone under imperialism. And this is the point where globalization allows 'localism' to gain footing. Bruno Latour shows how different cultural traditions are invented within the state, how religious affiliations in diversified forms arise and work, and consequently become even more entrenched than before. 'It is as if the metaphor of "roots" had been turned upside down: the more "uprooted" by the forces of modernization, the farther down identities are attaching themselves.'<sup>9</sup> Hence the word glocal appears as a successful terminology which signifies that labels can no longer be safely positioned along the former scale, stretching from the most local to the most universal. Instead of subtracting one another, conflicting identities keep being added. And yet they remain in conflict and thus have to be sorted out, since no one can belong to all of them at once. Currently in Bangladesh, the existence and co-existence of Gono Jagoron Moncho<sup>10</sup> and Hefazot-e-Islam, vis-à-vis the ongoing political platforms, can be related to this fact. Anyway, the British were the first force to activate and encourage conflicting identities, particularly in Bengal, that paved the way for unsolvable problems for the inhabitants of this region.

#### **Partition of Bengal and the division of the minds**

It is almost trite to mention that separate nationhood—grown out of 'Two-nation Theory'—was the basis for the division of this sub-continent into two separate states. Religion was the guiding factor for such nationhood. A closer look at the history of Pakistan Movement reveals that Bangalees were also largely influenced by this factor, ironically by a person no less than Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was known as an un-religious secularist in his lifestyle and ideology.

If one goes back to the Partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905, one would find the massive upsurge of anti-imperialist movement in Bengal against this partition. Irrespective of class, religion and occupation, Bangalees were united for stopping this imperial design. An air of nationalistic awakening swept all over Bengal upon which Curzon had sarcastically commented that Bangalees started thinking themselves as a nation; it should be an emergency duty of the

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9 Bruno Latour, *On the Difficulty of Being Glocal*. Art-e-fact ([http://artefact.mi2.hr/\\_a04/lang\\_en/theory\\_latour\\_en.htm](http://artefact.mi2.hr/_a04/lang_en/theory_latour_en.htm)), 27 May 2013.

10 Refers to the dais set in the center of Shahbag on which leaders and activists of Shahbag Movement would stand and deliver speeches. *Gono* mean 'mass', *jagoron* means 'rise' and *moncho* means 'stage'. This name later became synonymous with the movement itself.

British bureaucracy to thwart this attempt of Bangalees' nationhood.<sup>11</sup> In 1911, the British government was compelled to halt this partition which apparently may mean the victory of a unified Bangalee nationhood but in a deeper thought, flaunted division between Hindus and Muslims. Serajul Islam Chowdhur, a noted Bengali writer and critic, rightly asserted that this very attempt of preventing Bengal's partition actually destroyed the possibility of forming a nation and consequently, implanted the seed of division among them. So, despite the prevention of partition in 1911, the Bangalees actually got themselves divided into Hindus and Muslims—in a crude form.<sup>12</sup> This division accelerated in future with the cunning support of the British. The British went on to encouraging the creation of Muslim League in 1906 by some prominent members of the Muslim community; they also patronized further division by accepting the Muslim demand of separate electorate. Then came communal riots much to the pleasure of the colonizers. Historian Amalesh Tripathy cited a comment from records of top level bureaucracy that, 'Hindus and Mussalmans hate each other so much that they have not much time to hate us.'<sup>13</sup> Therefore, religious sentiment overshadowed the linguistic impact on nationhood. However, middle class Hindus and Muslims judged their respective demand for freedom in terms of their self interests where both wanted their socio-economic development. Thus, Pakistan was created and the subsequent events led to the creation of Bangladesh, proving that the creation of Pakistan on the basis of Muslim nationhood was not an enduring proposition.

Such sentiment based on religion cannot, and thus did not, last long. The economic disparity between the two wings of Pakistan resulted in the development of Bangalee nationalism which proved that religion as a bond of unity failed to serve its purposes. The language movement launched to establish Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan marked the original basis of Bangalee nationalism. The attempt by the West Pakistani authorities to impose Urdu as the only state language of Pakistan was deemed by the Bangalees not only as an intrusion into their cultural life but also a far-reaching conspiracy of prolonged socio-economic colonization. The creation of Bangladesh on the basis of Bangalee nationalism proves that, although religion can work as a bond

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11 Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Bichchinnatar Satya-Mithya*, (Truth and Lies of Separation), Dhaka: Anyaprokash, 2006.

12 Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Bichchinnatar Satya-Mithya*.

13 Mentioned in Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Bichchinnatar Satya-Mithya*.

of unity, the impact of language on culture and national identity formation is profound.

The creation of Bangladesh on the basis of Bengali nationalism was characterized by changes in their socio-economic and cultural activities, affecting their day-to-day life. It is necessary to make reconciliation between the religious and cultural values of the masses before resolving the question of 'identity'. Such reconciliation depends on to what extent culture is likely to be influenced by religion, language, customs, usages and traditions. It is a misconception that language and other associated factors, which are considered an integral part of our culture, should be the sole basis for its development. The role of religion towards such development is equally important as we have seen in the pre-colonial Bengal society. We will see below that this was not adequately considered by the politicians and intellectuals of sovereign Bangladesh right after independence in 1971.

Bangladesh consists of 68 thousand villages inhabited mostly by semi-literate and illiterate people who constitute about 70 per cent of the total population. Religious sentiments, not radical fundamentalism, are strong among these masses. The urban literate population, broadly divided into traditional and westernized elites, does not possess the same religious views. Despite the fact that the traditional elites are trying to adjust themselves to the new challenges of science and technology, they have strong views on religion. The ultra-modern westernized groups on the other hand have adapted themselves to the newly acquired values, regardless of its adverse effect on religion. Such changes affecting the socio-cultural lives of the people of Bangladesh could not make much impact on the traditional elites and have been altogether rejected by the rural masses.

Several ultra-modern elite groups, who used to maintain pro-power stance during the Pakistan regime but drastically reaped the benefits of creation of Bangladesh, have innovated some new cultural practices to serve their own interests.<sup>14</sup> The adoption of such practices by the well-to-do may be considered as a symbolic gesture of their class structure. The practice of such customs and rituals has no religious or cultural significance. Majority of the people of Bangladesh have been treating such values as alien.

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14 Ahmed Sofa, *Nirbachito Rajnoitik Probondho*, (Selected Political Essays). Khan Brothers & Company, Dhaka, 2011.

The traditional elite groups possess effective power and influence, which they can use to mould public opinion. It is true that their views on religion are not as progressive as the westernized elite, but at the same time they would not be happy to see the revival of any extreme ideologies pertaining to Muslim nationhood. This group would, at best, be part of the ‘political Islam’ doctrine for their self interests—though that is harmful enough to create intellectual and cultural havoc (discussed later).

### **The dichotomy of *Khoda Hafez* and *Allah Hafez***

This is probably the most crucially interesting issue that will give a clear indication of how a very usual practice of religiosity has undergone politicization and subsequently engulfed the Bangladeshi Muslim psyche—eventually creating a demarcation line between ‘being secular’ and ‘being religious’.

Like Muslims of different parts of Indian sub-continent, Bangladeshi Muslims in general used to utter *Khoda Hafez* in order to bid farewell or good-bye to fellow Muslims. The nuance of this term became so normally widespread that even the non-Muslims used it frequently. However, suddenly during the ‘90s, *Allah Hafez* replaced it in the government-run TV and radio broadcast—resulting its gradual spread among the educated masses. Even the signboards on the roads, particularly at the boundaries of local administrative districts, switched to *Allah Hafez* to wish good-bye to exiting passengers. The massive wave of *Allah Hafez* has swept *Khoda Hafez* not merely off roadside signs and hoardings but from its niches of every description. So much so has been the shift that a *Khoda Hafez* from one to some colleague or friend is normally returned with a defiant *Allah Hafez*. The moot query is, why was this change?

The general perception is, saying *Khoda Hafez* is a sin, as God Almighty has only one name to address, i.e. Allah. One can hardly fight this perception by highlighting the basic fact that our Supreme Creator looks at the genuineness of our intentions, not our utterance. And according to Islamic theology, it is entirely permissible to call the Supreme Being by any of His names (‘Allah’, ‘Rahman’, ‘Khoda’ or any of His 99 given names) so long as it is profane and it is beautiful. Now coming to the word *Khoda*, it has been strongly intertwined with Bangalee Muslim culture for centuries. In terms of its usage in everyday life, it is at least as common as ‘Allah’. The folklore of Bengal is strewn with

it.<sup>15</sup> One finds numerous invocations of *Khoda* in the poems and lyrical literature of this region. Many Islamic songs composed by Kazi Nazrul Islam<sup>16</sup> invoke *Khoda*; some of his songs contain both *Khoda* and *Allah*. All these are parts of Bangalee's cultural heritage. It may be also appropriate to recall how prominent place the word *Khoda* occupies in Persia, the land of its origin. From *Diwan*, composed by Persian mystic poet and scholar Mulla Nurud-Din Jami, a line goes as such: 'O Jami, the road of guidance to *Khoda* is naught but love.'<sup>17</sup> It need to be mentioned that Jami was an orthodox Muslim and hardly endorsed the pre-Islamic Persian culture. Yet that did not prevent him from using *Khoda* in his writings. Similarly, one finds this line from legendary mystic philosopher Jalaluddin Rumi: 'That *Khoda* who on Creation's Primal Day/ The first foundation of thy soul did lay...'

Therefore, *Khoda* is never profane as it never belittles the Supreme Being. And as per Islamic scholars, *Khoda* is unambiguously a beautiful name of the Creator. In this regard, let us also analyze the ungrammatical nature of *Allah Hafez*. The two-word *Khoda Hafez* is an idiomatic Persian phrase. It may have the Arabic rooted word *Hafiz* meaning 'safekeeping' in it, but it is what linguists call a Perso-Arabic word, or a Persianized Arabic word. The inherent grammatical structure of the phrase is Persian. So simply replacing *Khoda* with *Allah* does not make sense in the language of any man's natural speech. Therefore uttering *Allah Hafez* to an Arab from Middle East while bidding farewell will draw nothing but a blank look; it is completely incomprehensible to Arabic speakers who usually bid goodbye by saying *Ma'ssalameh*.<sup>18</sup>

So why was this forcible switch to *Allah Hafez* all on a sudden? The propagators of *Allah Hafez* are probably aggrieved by the fact that *Khoda* is a Persian word, not Arabic. A noted Pakistani academic Dr. Kalim Irfani confirmed that it was invented by the General Zia-ul-Huq's crusade of Islamization of Pakistan in the mid 1970's.<sup>19</sup> Since the post-1975 era of military

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15 Mahmudur Rahman, *Khoda Hafez vs. Allah Hafez and Other Critical Essays*, University Publishers Limited, Dhaka, 2007.

16 Bengal's most prominent revolutionary poet, lyricist and music composer in British India—famous for his compositions on Hindu-Muslim unity. He was awarded the status of National Poet of Bangladesh after independence in 1971.

17 Edward G. Browne, *A literary History of Persia*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976.

18 From a personal interview with Farida Majid on 19 April 2006.

19 Farida Majid.

regimes in Bangladesh were deliberately prone to Pakistani ideals in the name of imparting Islamization on the society, *Khoda Hafez* consequentially became a secular utterance that needed to be replaced by *Allah Hafez* with which both the orthodox Islamists and the political Islamists have found a common bondage.

**Folk lyrical tradition of Muslim Bengal:  
Glocalization of Arab Muslim heroes**

Another very interesting area to dwell upon this issue of the Bangalee Muslim's mindset is the traditional rural lyrical poetry known as *Pünthi*. Presently defunct, *pünthi* was one of the most popular folk literary items where the *pünthi*-reader used to recite the verses with musical vocal intonations in a dramatic manner for the masses to enjoy. The subject matters of the *pünthis* were usually based on mythological or historic characters and narrations of their activities; the inherent theme was of course to highlight the essence of religion.

Sofa vividly described how the Bangalee Muslim *pünthi* writers imposed unbelievably reckless heroism on the characters taken from Arabic, Persian and Turkish sources for countering the local Hindu heroes in the Hindu mythological texts. And in order to do that, they unhesitatingly transformed those Arabic-Persian characters like, Hazrat Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Hussain, Abu Hanifa, Ameer Hamza, Hatem Tai, Rustam, Sohrab et al into local Bangalee heroes who represented the Muslim glory. Interestingly, all these Muslim heroes resembled the Hindu mythological figures like Ramchandra, Laxman, Arjun, Hanuman, Vishma, Radhika, Draupadi et al in characteristics and activities.<sup>20</sup>

Sofa mentioned a famous *pünthi* named 'Janganama' where Ameer Hamza, known as the 'Mahaveer Hamza', is a super powerful, invincible hero who keeps travelling across continents and defeating the *kafir* (anti-truth) and *be-deen* (anti-religious) kings and warriors—eventually marrying the beautiful women of those lands one after another. By dint of his herculean power, Ameer Hamza effortlessly kills all the devil giants by going to their kingdom *Kokaaf* far above the sky. Similarly, *pünthis* named 'Shonabhan' and 'Jaigun Bibi' reveal the superhuman valor of Muhammad Hanifa, the imaginary son of Hazrat Ali, who has a super-horse called *Duldul* upon which he rides and conquers

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20 Ahmed Sofa, *Bangalee Musolmaner Mon*, (The Mind of Bangalee Muslims). Khan Brothers & Company, Dhaka. 2013.

every land that comes on his way. Interestingly, all these lands are ruled by unmarried Brahmin ladies who are stunningly gorgeous and excessively brave. All these women had earlier declared that they would marry only that man who could defeat them in sword-fight. Since obviously Muhammad Hanifa is that 'man', these women warriors get defeated by him to become his wives one after another by accepting Islam.

Sofa came up with some crucial analyses regarding the reasons for such narratives in the *pūnthi*. Firstly, the primary intention of the writers was to highlight the graciousness of Islam through mother tongue Bangla which they tried to portray by imposing all sorts of incredibly gallant activities on the Muslim heroes; they thought that this would appeal the rural masses more. Secondly, the period<sup>21</sup> when these *pūnthi* were written was a period of Bangalee Muslims' psycho-social conflicts; it was also the time when Muslims were experiencing conflicts of values and attitudes between its emerging and downtrodden classes. As a result of all these, the underprivileged Muslim class tried to find a kind of psychological comfort by materializing their aspirations through the fantasy of these *pūnthi* heroes. Thirdly, the ignorance of *pūnthi* writers about the origin of Islamic civilization and Arabic-Persian languages, and the subsequent spiritual and socio-cultural developments across historical and geographical boundaries, made them create such reckless hybrid narratives in *pūnthi*. And finally, most of the writers who were converted Muslims from backward Hindu castes and hence once subjugated by upper caste Hindus later took a sort of psychological revenge on the Brahmins by displaying their defeats at the hands of Muslim heroes.

These *pūnthi*-issues prove how Muslim mass psyche at that time has gradually infected a section of educated Bangalee Muslims over the years to maintain their fundamentalist, not radical, mindset.

#### **Global fundamentalism turned glocal**

Bangladesh, despite its remarkable socio-economic developments over the years, has been traumatized by precarious political turmoil resulting frequent non-functioning of its political system and lack of basic tenets of social security. Citizens of such states are more vulnerable to the propaganda and radical agenda of global terrorist agencies. Thus, extremists have the chance to gain popular support for the use of political violence during any tenuous

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21 Between 19th and early 20th centuries.

period.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the ordinary citizen can be persuaded to support political violence and engage in such an act as a way of attaining tangible economic and political goods that the state can no longer provide.<sup>23</sup>

This particular situation has been evident in Bangladesh since 2001 with the rapid growth of militant groups out of which Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh or JMB earned considerably shocking prominence. Operated by two Afghanistan-trained militant leaders Shayekh Abdur Rahman and ‘Bangla bhai’, this group infused brutally innovative terror all over the country by killing political opponents from secular parties. Despite the fact that JMB hardly enjoyed any mass support and was soon banned after the hanging of their two cult-leaders, global fundamentalism found its motivational infiltration in the mass psyche in a soft-core format. In a much refined, intellectual appearance, Hizbut Tahrir Bangladesh<sup>24</sup> started to gain momentum targeting the educated people, particularly teachers and students of public and private universities—as well as professionals like doctors, lawyers, engineers and very importantly, ICT experts. It propagated the ideas of value education, enlightened thinking, obedience to religious ethics, moral codes of conduct and so on which drew substantial dedicated followers. Gradually, the radical agendas of this forum became obvious and people became aware of its undercover acts.

Due to the successive secular government’s crackdown on Hizbut Tahrir’s masterminds and activists, this group eventually undertook a low profile but they kept operating in diversified fronts in different names—keeping active collaboration with pro-Islam political parties. In the backdrop of such gradually increasing, incessant activities of these groups, the most interesting phase has ultimately taken place, i.e. the global radical Islam has undergone glocalization process in Bangladesh through the emergence of Hefazot-e-Islam. Instead of following the footsteps of other radical Islamist groups, Hefazot leaders since their inception undertook a carefully planned strategy of highlighting ordinary religiosity as their motto, i.e. they have branded themselves as non-political, peaceful mouthpiece of Islam-loving common folks. And more interestingly,

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22 Tiffany Howard, “Moving beyond Radical Islam, Modernization, and Authoritarian Rule as the Root Causes of Terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa.” *ASPJ-Africa and Francophonie*. Vol. 4 (April-June), 2013, pp. 25-62.

23 Tiffany Howard, “*Moving beyond Radical Islam*”.

24 A sister concern of the international pan-Islamic political organization *Hizb at-Tahrir* or ‘Party of Liberation’.

this is a prime reason why Hefazot single-handedly enjoys sympathetic support among the grass-root Muslims who are otherwise hesitant to cope with the ‘political Islam’ of radical parties. However, outwardly they could not or did not maintain this image due to twofold reasons: firstly, many of their frontline leaders are actually former members of other radical political Islamist parties and therefore, secondly, their urge to activate themselves in politics—rather than religiosity—eventually became strong.

By selecting particular strands from religion, religious extremists in Bangladesh—in line with their global counterparts—have craft and empowered discourse on nationalism. Their very attempt of bringing the masses to the political stage shows how they have tried to mobilize the power of the people. The triadic notion of combination of faith, patriotism and politics has ultimately created contradictions in the ideology of Bangladeshi nationhood.

#### **Dilemma of secular forces: wedged between global and local formats**

Ideologically, the secular forces in Bangladeshi politics—be it individuals or groups or parties—have always been pro-liberation (in popular words, *pro-muktijuddho*). The 1971 was predominantly fought under the fabric of Bangalee nationalism which was secular in nature. This secularism evolved from the collective secular mindset that resulted from the Language Movement in 1952. In fact, the pre- and the post-1952 psyche of Bangalee Muslims displayed a remarkable contrast—the former being ‘Muslim identity’-oriented and the latter being ‘Bangalee identity’-oriented. West Pakistan’s cultural aggression manifested through their aggression against Bangla was the most blatant indication of their imperialism that was to gradually follow in the political, economic and cultural areas of East Pakistan. The bloody events of 21 February 1952 revived Bangalee cultural hegemonistic feeling—which for the first time united East Pakistani Bangalees under a secular umbrella. According to Shamsul Alam, the 1952 Language Movement in East Pakistan played the major role in developing a Bangalee nationalist discourse.<sup>25</sup> Thus the Language Movement forged a conscious link between various subaltern social groups enabling them to transcend existing barriers and transform them into formidable political actors. From the mid-1950s the dissatisfied and deprived masses found their greatest platform in Awami League under the sole leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In 1955, the renaming of Awami Muslim League to Awami

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25 S. M. Shamsul Alam, ‘Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952’, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1991.

League allowed it to appear as a secular party—open to all citizens regardless of cast, creed and religion. With grass roots support from both Muslims and Hindus, Awami League emerged as a mass political party—thus becoming the first political party in Pakistan to make a major breakthrough in regard to non-communal politics in the country.

Needless to say, the series of events in East Pakistan that followed were all indicators of suppression of Bangalees' all sorts of rights resulting massive disparity between Pakistan's two wings. What was more important, a devious imposition of Muslim identity on East Pakistani people was attempted by West Pakistani government as a pretense to conceal the Punjab-centric identity of the Pakistani state.<sup>26</sup> And consequently, the 'struggles for democracy, regional autonomy, social justice, secularism and nationalism therefore coalesced within the broader struggle for self-rule for East Pakistan.'<sup>27</sup>

It is in this backdrop that we need to judge how secularism started functioning in Bangladesh and eventually underwent a lack of balance between global format and localized format. Secularism, defined in plain terms, implies the reduction of the influence of primeval factors like religion, ethnicity, caste etc. within national identity construction—focusing on economic opportunities and freedom of rights of all citizens. As Maniruzzaman described, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman wanted to implement his own distinctive definition of secularism where he meant neither the absence of religion nor the denial of Islamic practices. He viewed this strategy as a protective measure against Islamic extremism. His aim was to build a society based on national and public welfare that would negate communalism as a political force. He also firmly believed that the religious ideology of Islam could be retained within the spirit of secularism. In order to publicize this, he re-instated the old practice of daily recitals from holy books of different religions on national radio and television. The idea was that Mujib's rule would be based on 'multitheocracy.'<sup>28</sup>

However, misinterpretation of this particular secular approach by both the secularists and the pro-Islamic forces soon created mayhem in the identity-

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26 Sanjay K. Bhardwaj, *Contesting Identities in Bangladesh: A Study of Secular and Religious Frontiers*, Asia Research Centre, London, 2010.

27 Sanjay K. Bhardwaj, *Contesting Identities in Bangladesh: A Study of Secular and Religious Frontiers*.

28 Talukder Maniruzzaman, 'Bangladesh Politics: Secular and Islamic Trends', in R. Ahmed (eds.) *Religion, Nationalism and Politics in Bangladesh*. South Asian Publishers, New Delhi.

debate. Secular politician and intellectuals, by and large, deemed the harmony between religiosity and secularism as an appeasement of Islamist forces. And consequently, they started promoting and practicing religion-free attitudes and atheistic views. As this created an unnecessarily wrong picture among the religious mass about secularism as a whole, the various religious ‘stakeholders’ instigated this sentiment to gain political mileage. They could successfully implant this theory in public psyche that secularism implies an anti-religion system which promotes atheism, and its eventual goal is to demolish Islam from Bangladeshi soil.

The problem was further complicated by the gradual dysfunction of democratic and economic systems, uncontrolled corruption and cronyism under the Mujib government which led to widespread disillusionment among people. Thus, the seeds of pro-Muslim mindset were replanted in that regime.<sup>29</sup> Huntington rightly described how anti-colonial nationalism provides only temporary coherence to identities in once-colonized countries which soon face multifarious problems of fragmentation in terms of ethnicity, religion and region. And with the disappearance of the colonial master, the thin covering of unity holding disparate communities together as nation soon starts giving way to more fragmentary tendencies.<sup>30</sup> Serajul Islam Chowdhury therefore justifiably remarked that after 1971, Bangladeshis had suffered from a collective complacency—forgetting the fact that social orders need to be changed and the fight for those changes is a never-ending one; cessation in this struggle results reintroduction of the old system.<sup>31</sup>

The secular forces could hardly come up with any effective grass roots activities to counter this planned propaganda except showering theoretical discourse in intellectual forums and media. The reasons are manifold.

First, the left secular parties were engaged in ideological battles much before 1971 in two broad lines—pro-Moscow and pro-Peking. And within these individual categories, there were numerous divisions along hardcore to softcore lines. Some of them compromised with General Ayub Khan and later

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29 Sanjay K. Bhardwaj, *Contesting Identities in Bangladesh: A Study of Secular and Religious Frontiers*.

30 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, London, 1997.

31 Serajul Islam Chowdhury, “Moulbad Theke Poritrane Upaye” (Ways to Get Relieved from Fundamentalism). *Amader Shomoy* (<http://www.amadershomoybd.com/content/2013/09/11/middle0611.htm>), 11 September 2013.

collaborated with communal forces while others got involved into bloody internal fighting. However, due to Sheikh Mujib's sole charisma as the *de facto* leader in political struggles, the left secular forces, brushing aside their ideological differences, were compelled to unite under him and participate in *Muktijuddho*. After independence, those forces naturally did not find Awami League as their ally and subsequently, they started their politics of blame-game (that included tagging others as 'Indian agents', 'Chinese agents', 'American agents' etc.), kidnapping, killing, frequently compromising with Awami League for political gain and so on. Amid this turmoil of cluelessness, the communal parties started gaining strength in an organized manner.

Second, the rapid expansion of Qaomi Madrassas (which has never been under governmental control) along with stringent religiosity that they propagate gradually engulfed the grass roots sectors. Due to their apparently non-functional socio-political infrastructure and subsequently their blind adherence to bourgeois political forces—mainly Awami League, secularists lost credibility among the mass.

Third, the failure of the secularist forces had also lot to do with the inherent limitations of secularism itself. In 19<sup>th</sup> century, when rationalism became a dogma, the rationalists and secularists almost began to worship 'reason' and dismissed religion with contempt. In fact the rationalists have been as contemptuous of religion as the believers have been of secularism. Like the religious fundamentalists, rational or secular fundamentalists developed little respect for believers whom they considered nothing less than 'superstitious'. This attitude came under challenge in post-modernism where religious pluralism rather than rejection of religion is accepted. Post-modernism recognizes the limitations of reason and accepts validity of religious ethos. That the progressive secular forces in Bangladesh got themselves trapped in the dilemma between postmodern secularism and religious pluralism evident from their failure to adjust with the ordinary religiosity of Bangladeshi Muslim mass. And consequently, their ideological battle for national improvement suffered a setback.

#### **The regimes of forced 'Pakistanization' leading to Islamization**

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's regime was quickly followed by the regimes under Khondoker Moshtaque Ahmed and General Ziaur Rahman respectively where the ruling elites consolidated state power by harping back to the issues of religion.

Immediately after the brutal assassination of Sheikh Mujib on 15 August 1975, his once-upon-a-time close associate Khondokar Moshtaque Ahmed took control of the country as President backed by the rebel Majors of Bangladesh Army. Constitutionally, he could not be given the role as a President because neither he was the Vice President nor he was the Speaker of the Parliament. It was an arbitrary but deliberate choice by the army officials. Moshtaque quickly formed his cabinet that comprised, ironically, ministers from Sheikh Mujib's cabinet as well as people who used to be close with Sheikh Mujib.

Moshtaque ruled Bangladesh for only 82 days. But this was the period that witnessed the re-establishment of pro-Pakistan administrative and political setup. Famed British journalist Antony Mascarenhas in his *Bangladesh: A legacy of blood* vividly narrated how Moshtaque—with direct assistance of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto—took massive attempts to make Bangladesh once again a part of Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Some sensational instances of civil and military administrative reforms can be cited here in brief.<sup>33</sup>

During 1971, the Chief Secretary of East Pakistan was Shafiul Azam who fled to Pakistan when Bangladesh was independent. Bringing him back from Pakistan, Moshtaque appointed him Cabinet Secretary. Similarly, Salahuddin, who was the Home Secretary in 1971, was brought back and awarded the same post. Former high official of Pakistan's detective unit Safdar was made chief of National Security Intelligence. Former official of Pakistan's Foreign Office Tabarak Hossain was appointed Foreign Secretary. And a prominent pro-Pakistani politician Pir Mohsin Ali Dudu Mia was sent to Pakistan as a special envoy of Moshtaque government with a proposal of 'creating a confederation between Bangladesh and Pakistan'. Bhutto on the other hand sent Mahmud Ali, who was a secular politician in the '50s, to discuss and negotiate matters with Moshtaque government. Meanwhile, Moshtaque appointed Ziaur Rahman as the army chief of staff under the direct influence of the rebel Majors but at the same time appointed Khalilur Rahman, a Pakistan-returned army officer, as Chief of Defense Staff (a post that was suddenly created). Ziaur Rahman appointed Huseyn Muhammad Ershad (later became President) as his Deputy who was at that time a Brigadier and was in New Delhi for training. Usually no army

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32 Anthony Mascarenhas, *Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood*. Arnold Overseas, London, 1986.

33 Golam Murshid, *Muktijuddha O Tarpur*, (War of Independence and Thereafter). Prothoma Publications, Dhaka, 2010.

officer receives promotion during training, but interestingly, Ershad was given double promotion and made Major General bypassing his senior officers in order to appoint him as the Deputy Chief of Army. Another former Pakistani Air Force officer Towab, who was an executive in a business organization in West Germany, was brought back and appointed as the Chief of Air Force. All such incidents clearly indicate how the post-Mujib regime spared no time to re-establish the pro-Pakistan spirit preceding 1971. The eventual goal was to impose Islamization and for that the next government under Ziaur Rahman played a vital role.

General Ziaur Rahman, in the process of strengthening his political powerbase, took various steps that methodically transformed Bangalee cultural and political mindset along further communal lines through Constitutional amendment. The word ‘secularism’ was replaced by a new provision ‘to place full Faith in Almighty Allah’ by amending article 8(1) of the Constitution. It also introduced the words ‘Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem’ at the top of the preamble of the Constitution. The ‘Struggle for National Liberation’ was replaced by ‘War for National Independence’. Socialism was redesigned to conform to the Islamic idea of social justice. A new clause was added to Article 25(2) relating to ‘Islamic solidarity’, which allowed the cultivation of fraternal relations among Muslim countries. These changes were aimed at downplaying the role of secular struggles of Independence. ‘The military regime therefore rejected linguistic nationalism in favor of a territorial Islamic nationalism’ as Bhardwaj (2010) puts it. This attempted to forge a new national identity for the people of Bangladesh by making a clearer distinction between the Bengalis of West Bengal, and those in Bangladesh. From this point, the citizens of Bangladesh were described as ‘Bangladeshis’ (Article 6). According to Bhardwaj, “This brand of Bangladeshi nationalism was also constructed by the regime primarily to divert attention from the government’s failure to deliver meaningful change. The process of Islamization served the purpose of trying to avert a legitimacy crisis in the face of a weakening economy and persistence of mass poverty. This eventually opened the floodgates for other leaders, such as General H. M. Ershad during the 1980s, to continue using religion as a tool for political purposes.”<sup>34</sup> General Ershad went a step ahead to declare Islam as the ‘state religion’—interestingly which was vehemently criticized by Bangladesh

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34 Golam Murshid, *Muktijuddha O Tarpot*.

Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jama'ate Islami, the parties that follow soft and hard Muslim-Bangladesh stance respectively.

Using Islam politically by these governments paved the way to a rebirth of 'political Islam' in Bangladesh, which we will see later. However, one of the direct impacts of politicizing Islam in Bangladesh was the resurrection of collaborators<sup>35</sup> of Pakistani army who were accused of war crimes in 1971. Several of them were directly involved in the killing of intellectuals and other civilians. And a majority of these *razakars* came from the religious political parties. So what happened was, under the silent patronization from the military governments, these forces began 'using every religious occasion to chastise Bangladesh's liberals and secularists for abandoning Islam and the Prophet and accepting Hindu Bangalee Rabindranath Tagore as a cultural figurehead. By invoking these slogans, the right-wing establishment succeeded in transferring its communalism into the Bangladeshi brand of nationalism. On the basis of an anti-Mujib ideology, BNP was founded in 1978.'<sup>36</sup>

The picture, in a nutshell, is quite lucid. After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, the defeated religious forces started to bounce back from oblivion where they found both President Ziaur Rahman and President Huseyn Muhammad Ershad as their greatest allies. Both these presidents, whose 'admiration' for Islam appears to be questionable, successfully followed the Machiavellian doctrine of using religion as a municipal tool rather than a moral one, i.e. as a controlling entity which a clever ruler would manipulate to his advantage. Machiavelli, who viewed faith as a device to exploit and control the masses, propounded why rulers need not be religious, but need to wear the gown of religion.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, in a relentlessly systematic order, the radical forces—regardless of their internal divisions out of vested interests—established themselves in Bangladeshi socio-political arena with solid political support from the governments. And with the financial aid from the global forces, they kept

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35 Notoriously known as 'razakars' since 1972. The name was derived from the 'Razakar force', i.e. volunteer force created by Pakistani army that used to recruit young people who would fight for the integration of Pakistan and thus help Pakistani army to locate the freedom fighters whom they termed 'Indian agents'.

36 Golam Murshid, *Muktijuddha O Tarpox*.

37 Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, (Trans. by W.K. Marriott), The Pennsylvania State University, 2001.

inventing newer strategies to overturn the psycho-cultural fabric of the country. Social Science text books in schools were re-written with distorted, fabricated and half-truth-half-lies histories which kept shaping the minds of the generations to come. Their imposition of the discourses in favor of Muslim identity over the natural Bangalee identity gathered so much momentum that ordinary Muslim mindset was permanently caught into an identity-trap from which it could never recuperate.

### **Impact of right-wing global politics: Political Islam's rebirth**

We need to keep in mind of the global political scenario during that period—with USA and its allies spearheading propaganda war against the Soviet Union instigating religious sentiments particularly in Muslim countries. The categorical approach was plain and simple: They are communists who believe in dialectic materialism, hold negative views about religion and hence, atheists.

This is a very crucial 'ideology' if we judge the difference of reactions of Muslim masses in case of Soviet-Afghan war and America-Iraq war. Generically in both cases, both religious and secular Muslims of Bangladeshi saw it as colonizers' aggression against the weaker nations who refused to abide by colonizers' designs. Therefore, the overwhelming sympathy was directed toward the Afghans and the Iraqis who symbolically epitomized the We-ness against the Other-ness. However, the Muslim minds were raged against the Soviets because they judged it as an 'aggression of anti-religious atheist forces' against the peace-loving Afghan Muslims and Islam. So, tens of thousands of radical Muslims deemed it as their sacred duty to participate in the Afghan Jihad against the 'atheist devils'. But in the Gulf war, the aggressive Americans were primarily seen as 'Zionist-Christian conspirators' against Islam; since they were not 'atheist-communists' and since they also enjoyed Saudi Arabian support, the Jihadist rage was absent.

The impact of the Afghan war gave birth to political Islam in Bangladesh—reshaping a new kind of fundamentalist discourse. Slogans like '*Amra shobai Taleban/ Bangla hobe Afghan!*' (We are all Talibans/ Bangladesh will soon become Afghanistan) used to be heard in the processions of several fundamentalist parties. It is in this very line of ideology that the blast of 500 bombs throughout the country at a time in August 2005 occurred as a clear message by the radicals that they had come to dominate the socio-cultural frame of Bangladesh. It is also under the same philosophy that the Burmese Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar had been trained to become armed who later played at the hands of political Islamists.

This political Islam witnesses an unprecedented amalgamation of right-left-moderate intelligentsia, more precisely, pro-Saudi, pro-Pakistani, pro-Iranian, pro-Chinese and anti-Indian political and intellectual stalwarts. Let us have a brief appraisal of the entire scenario.

The role of Madrassa education needs to be highlighted as the core proliferating force in this spectrum of political Islam's rise in Bangladesh. Let us mention this surprising reality that the number of Madrassa in Bangladesh in the first 25 years after independence was 2/3 times greater than the number during the 25 years of Pakistani rule.<sup>38</sup> At present, there is hardly any village where at least one Madrassa does not exist. And over the years, Madrassas have become a crucial element in the rural social structure—so much so that their support becomes essential for candidates who aspire to win in the Union *Parishad* elections. Two different types of occurrences have led to this position.

Firstly, the activities of the pro-Pakistani war criminals after 1971. Most of them who fled to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or other Middle East countries, utilized the post-1971 period (till 1975) for manipulating the Middle East governments and influential agencies in favor of their evil motives. Till then, the Middle East countries, including Saudi Arabia, did not recognize Bangladesh. However, these Middle East-based collaborators could successfully convince those governmental agencies that 'Islam had been under attack from India and pro-Indian secularists' and the only way to save Islam in Bangladesh was to establish more Madrassas which would nourish the fundamental tenets of Islam. The result was obvious. Unlimited flow of petro-dollars entered through their channels for establishing mosques, Madrassas and Islamic NGOs. Interestingly, the Middle East money had been used for establishing hospitals, clinics, banks, coaching centers, insurance companies, media etc. which in turn became massive fund-generating bodies for propagating 'political Islam'. This is a major reason why the radical Islamists have never had any problem of money for securing their vested interests, as well as maintaining their propaganda machines among the poor rural masses through Madrassas. And very justifiably, Hefazot-e-Islam's strongholds are the uncountable Qaomi Madrassas all over the country. Since the post-1990 governments (i.e. after the fall of the autocratic regime of President Ershad through a mass movement in December 1990) did not want to lose this opportunity of using Madrassas for their unique political mileage, no wonder these Madrassas received immeasurable amount of

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38 Ahmed Sofa, *Nirbachito Rajnoitik Probandho*.

government donation in the name of educational development from all successive governments. The supposed-to-be-secular regimes under Awami League government in 1996-2001 and 2009-till now have been no exception. That the Madrassas have unambiguously established themselves as the breeding grounds of political Islam is evident from a simple fact: barring a few exceptions, none of the children of the frontline Islamist leaders and Madrassa-based politicians have studied in the Madrassas; most of them have undergone either the mainstream education system or the English medium system.<sup>39</sup>

Due to this reality, the psycho-social fabric of Bangladesh has gradually undergone various categorical changes over the last 25-30 years. First, blatant anti-Indian politics has become a tool of maneuvering the mass psyche for some reasons or others and winning the elections; second, the abuse of public sentiment through anti-Indian politics has veered to anti-minority attitude where every word and action of the minority communities (basically Hindus) are subject to doubt and negatively assessed; third, anti-Indian feeling and anti-Hindu feeling have become synonymous under which Hindus are generically deemed as 'Indian agents'; and last, Hindus in particular have been suffering from political demoralization since long due to which they also are engulfed by fundamentalist and communal attitudes.<sup>40</sup>

These issues have collectively transformed into a prime national mindset of the Muslim masses called 'Muslim identity' in the disguise of Bangladeshi-ness. Apart from the radical Islamists, all other sets of political ideologies (blind followers of different global powers) have come under this identity-frame. This frame has allowed a pro-Chinese or a pro-British intellectual adhere to political Islam just like his pro-Saudi or pro-Iranian counterpart.

### **Conclusion**

A crucial observation hereby needs to be pondered. While East Pakistan was on the process of liberating herself from the clutch of Pakistani colonization, the politicians, intellectuals and middle-class masses had been proactive with some fundamental ideals and realizations pertaining to the 'life' after independence.

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39 This information has been published in different Bangladeshi newspapers several times over the years. However, an authentic account is also available in *Son's & Daughters of Bangladeshi Political Leaders* published on <http://www.parisvisionnews.com/articles/5732-sons-a-daughters-of-bangladeshi-political-leaders.html>, updated on 19 January 2013.

40 Ahmed Sofa, *Nirbachito Rajnoitik Probandho*.

But right after the independence, everyone found it extremely hard to implement those ideals and their realizations within the cultural framework of the sovereign country. The cultural frame that evolved from linguistic unity spearheaded the emergence of Bangladesh; when the challenge came in front to give a political shape to this cultural frame, the real crisis began. As mentioned in the beginning, the pre-colonial secular religiosity in Bengal comprised people from all categories; religion was used in politics for harmonious social order. But the sovereign Bangladesh failed to recapture and reorder that spirit. This is where colonialism, aided by globalization's socio-economic paradigms, affected the values of identity.

Political thinkers maintained that such a crisis would not have emerged if the 1971 war of Bangladesh were a long-drawn mass war instead of a 9-month war. In such case, people from all walks of ideologies had to compulsorily get involved in it and consequently, shrugging of their individual political attitudes they could have collectively transformed themselves into liberal, open-minded patriots. But since that kind of war did not take place, the quest for national identity became faulty and clueless, and the reordering of Bangladeshi nationhood remained an everlasting conflict of interests.<sup>41</sup>

In the words of Serajul Islam Chowdhury, 'We will be definitely depressed and sorry not because fundamentalism is progressing, but because alternative politics is unmoving.'<sup>42</sup> This immobility of alternative politics is anathema to the prevention of the robust globalization that has already taken shape through political, religious and cultural glocalizations. It is high time that an attempt is made to make a synthesis between the fundamental beliefs and cultural values of the Bangladeshi masses. Such compromise, if made, will ensure that people will retain their cultural identity as Bangalee and geographical identity as Bangladeshi—without being detrimental to each other. The inter-mixture of religiosity and culture will help to create an environment conducive to the creation of a multi-religious society where all can feel secure to live as loyal citizens of the state and enjoy their rights and liberties.

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41 Ahmed Sofa, *Nirbachito Rajnoitik Probandho*.

42 Serajul Islam Chowdhury, *Moulobad theke poretraner upaye*.

## **SOCIAL CHANGES IN CONTEMPORARY BANGLADESH\***

Monirul I. Khan\*\*

### **Introduction**

The issue of social change cannot be addressed without reflecting on the theoretical approaches of its analysis. Hence there is a need for a brief attention to theoretical issues. In this paper the first part will consist of a brief discussion on the theoretical and methodological issues relevant to the understanding of social change and the second part will deal with the major changes that may be considered positive evidences while the third part will document a few challenges in this regard. The last part will be conclusion of the paper.

### **How Can We Interpret Social Change**

There is a conceptual link between the notion of society and change. There are some theorists whose notion of social change presupposes understanding of their concepts of society. Marxian notion of social change is a relevant example. However, all approaches of social change do not necessarily derive from a concept of society. In order to focus on the uniqueness of each approach the following attempt for re-configuration is attempted.

- i. Holistic-deterministic
- ii. Holistic-functionalistic-cybernetics
- iii. Selective-specific
- iv. Post modernistic
- v. Change from resistance

*Holistic-deterministic*: In this respect the name of Marx and his approach would feature most prominently. Marx's famous theses XI on Feuerbach "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx 1976:65). Above remark reminds us how much emphasis was put on the need for change by Marx. He departed from the

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premise of Hegel who perceived history in idealistic terms as a site for change under the impact of dialectical process. Marx projected the notion of dialectic into society and identified the element of contradiction in the class structure. In a gradual process of historical development differential class structure emerged with a contradictory interest. Such class contradiction infused the dynamics of change in human society. Marx treated society in a structural manner in which he assigned determinacy to the materialistic base. Heuristically materialism is understood in terms of relations of production mediated through social classes. The contradiction of class interest is actually the divergence of material interest. The dynamics of social change originates here, and different classes in different periods play the pivotal role in bringing about change. In capitalistic mode of production the proletariat is seen as the main catalyst of social change. Marx in his theory treated the process of change as a manifestation of historical law with the element of inevitability although the revolutionary consciousness is significantly important. Apart from the determinism of the relations of production and class structure in the process of social change there is another facet of this determinism, it is the determination of base (conceived as relations of production) on the superstructure (politics and culture). Marx said in the famous book *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* the following thing: "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite form of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general." (Marx 1971).

From the above statement of Marx it is clear that there is a correspondence between technological development and social relationships. The main determinant of social relationship is the relationship that arise surrounding production activities, which corresponds to class position. In turn class position determines one's consciousness as well as attitudes in a broader sense. Production relation is related to mode of production.

*Holistic-functionalistic-cybernetics*: System theorist like Parsons also took a holistic position by incorporating culture, politics and personality into this configuration. Although he found in normative structure the integrating element of system it is not assigned a deterministic status as it is the case in materialistic

Marxism (Parsons 2005:22). Any society is also a repository of a value patterns and the members of that society subscribed to that. Such value pattern (eg the values of entrepreneurship and making of wealth) are gratifying to the constituting individuals when it does not take place disequilibrium starts to surface. Parsons deals with the issue of change taking recourse to the concept of differentiation which could be institution as well as role. By creating new institution and new role such disequilibrium may be controlled. Later Parsons has incorporated the notion of cybernetics in his formulation which refers to a process of information and energy transmission in a circulatory process, in other words it more encrypts the notion of system.<sup>1</sup>

*Selective-specific:* Development approach is selective in the analysis of change and progress. Economic progress generally receives more attention expressed in the indicator like GDP. However, development thinkers also paid attention to non-economic indicators like health and education. Nowadays women's empowerment or human rights are also associated. The discussion of change is based on such conceptual indicators. For example, the growths in GDP, literacy or longevity are a few relevant examples. This approach does not privilege one indicator over another.

*Post-modernistic:* In this approach there is a reservation against the application of meta-narrative like materialism or idealism in the understanding of social process. The name of Lyotard is well referred (Lyotard 1984) in this regard who saw in the acceptance of theories adherence to language games. It is observed that conformity with the main premise of a theory is a prerequisite for its approval, just like a game, which is meaningful when played out within the frame of its rules. Such arguments have restricted the application of theories in social science to a very wide context. Each theory deploys its own supposition, articulation and argument which resemble the structure of language game, it implies each language is constituted by its own set of rules, non-conformity with rules or not learning that rules would imply non-understanding or the incomplete understanding. Plurality of theories and understanding is a major argument of post-modernistic approach and the following comment on Derrida is indicative of it, "Derrida concludes...there is no *one* power...Similarly, there is no *one* knowledge. There are knowledges and there are powers." (Wolfreys 1998: 17).

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Trevino (2001) for a brief reflection on the notion of cybernetics in Parsonian approach.

*Change from resistance:* Another important source of change is resistance, the issue is not completely new but theorizing this position is rather recent. Foucault in his argument put forth the view that the whole literature of feminism is an outcome of resistance of the women against patriarchy (Mills 2007). Social movement may also result from resistance which in turn may catalyze social change.

### **Macro Perspective**

*Market economy and globalization:* Capitalism and market economy is the dominant feature of our economy. Social relations are accordingly shaped. Relations of trust, mutual support or moral obligation common in pre-capitalistic society gives in to contractual and profit oriented relations of a market economy when capitalistic development takes place it imparts significant changing influences on the entire body of the society.

Globalization is a much talked about phenomenon in contemporary time in relation to social change. It has created opportunities as well as threat in the economic realm. Opportunities are found in the establishment of new business which in turn created employment and subsequent reduction of poverty. Significant expansion of the readymade garment sector in Bangladesh is seen as the positive effect of globalization process Globalization speeded up capitalistic development in Bangladesh which started since the colonial time. It has integrated various economies, paved internationalization of production, distribution and marketing of goods (Harris 1993). Globalization presupposes structural readjustment spearheaded by the international financial organization like the World Bank. As a sequel to it public sector was squeezed and the private sector got expanded, it resulted in workers retrenchment, in Bangladesh the jute factories were common victims of such readjustment. Liberalizing of tariff structure also exposed the local products to competition from abroad. If the purchasing power of the Bangladeshi people keep rising the function of the corporate finance will also expand in Bangladesh. In some opinion globalization has increased the influence of the corporate capital in the Southern like Bangladesh. It sometimes poses threat to national sovereign power. However, globalization has not expanded in a smooth process. The case of Phulbari is an interesting example. Energy giant Asian Energy is keen to mine coal in Phulbari, Dinajpur and the local people is putting up successful resistance since such mining will destroy their agricultural basis.

*Modernization-westernization:* Another important macro feature of change is the initiative aiming modernization and westernization. In the 1960's in all over the developing countries modernization was important campaign. So called 'traditional' institutions were portrayed as inhibiting factor towards the journey of social progress. West was seen as 'modern' and replicating western institution and attitude became a strategy for societal progress. Westernization refers to cultural aspect which involved life style also. It was a wide ranging phenomena including food, dress, music and behavior. Western countries were symbolized as standard bearer of culture and a section of the people were eager to replicate that style. Westernization is still continuing in the country although modernization has faced criticism because of the fact that the replicated institutions could not operate well always.

*Democratization:* In the changing process of a society the function of politics is important because ultimately the mediating agent is politics. Societal autonomy is there but politics remains quite important. Oscillation between military rule and democratic governance has been there in the last four decades in Bangladesh. The implications of military rule in Bangladesh may be found in different aspects however changes in basic principles, namely secularism and Bengali nationhood took place. In the later phase of military rule Islam has been introduced as the state religion. Later on such changes have been subject to criticism with the observation that religion has been politicized. However the restoration of democracy has created another problem in relation to transfer of power between the successive regimes at the end of each five year. Consequent violence significantly affects the peaceful situation in society with a wide implication even reducing the effectiveness of democracy in public opinion. Despite the above pitfall the preset process of democratization has allowed the function of civil society and media which in turn contributed to the exercise of rights in society.

*Commoditization of culture:* Market principle has penetrated the field of culture also in contemporary Bangladesh. Commoditization of culture has rendered important influence in the sense that profit motive has become an important goal of cultural activity. If a cultural product could not gain commodity value it faces the risk of exclusion and sometimes the motive of profit encourages cultural production of the market type paying less attention to aesthetic standard. Mass production of culture is said to compromise with the aesthetic value of cultural creations like film, fiction and others.

*Cultural admixture and Resilient Bengali culture:* As a part of acculturation process cultural integration is an expected outcome. However, with the effect of globalization and religious politicization certain type of acculturation and cultural intrusion may be noted in Bangladesh. For example, the pressure of Hindi on local culture is portrayed as an effect of globalization. Similarly the syncretism in Bengali culture is pushed aside in favor of religious feeling. Interestingly such pressures did not function unilaterally and the relevant observation of an expatriate commentator has also voiced similar tone, it is said that there has been a continuous tension between secular and religious forces in Bangladesh (Lewis 2012: 3). On the other hand the site of culture has demonstrated its resilience by sticking to traditional Bengali practices, particularly in the observation of national festival in the fashion of Bengali culture (e.g., *pahela baishak*).

*Economic progress:* In the macro perspective of the society the economic institution is an important one since it helps create enabling condition. In the early 1970's immediately after the liberation the country's economic image was severely negative which has significantly changed over the course of years. It is expected that the country might attain a level of middle-income status in next few years. Country's economic progress can be easily identified from the reduction of the poverty level. For example 40% people was below poverty level in 2005 which reduced to 31.5% in 2010 (BBS 2011). The creation of enabling condition through economic progress has brought positive changes at other levels, such as health and education.

#### **Evidence of Positive Changes**

In this section attention is paid to a set of changes that may be considered as positive. These are related to class structure, attitudes as well as disadvantaged groups.

*Emerging entrepreneurship and economic drive:* Capitalistic mode of production is the premise of economic activity since long time ago. In the early 1970's several rural studies focused attention on the expansion of capitalist mode of production in rural areas. It was concluded that the process of Green Revolution has stepped up the expansion of capitalism in rural Bangladesh. A class of rich peasantry was emerging was the conclusion although the claim was qualified that it is not comparable with the capitalist farmers of other countries. It was also debated whether the agricultural working class could be considered

as a proletariat class. What was the type of capitalism is not the main issue in my opinion, what is more important is the emergence of strong entrepreneurship in both rural and urban areas. A peasant society is gradually becoming a capitalist one is the important issue here. Such change has got important implication: if a subsistence oriented society changes into a market oriented society changes at different levels follow. For example, modern agricultural technology (mechanical irrigation-HYV crops-fertilizer) has fast expanded, market production of crops, vegetable, poultry and fish is the predominant form. On the other hand exchange relationship between enterprising class and workers have also fast proceeded.

In urban areas industrial entrepreneurs are also emerging along with the market economy. The emergence of urban entrepreneur class is visible in the readymade garment, pharmaceuticals, ship breaking and other sectors. With the emergence of industrial entrepreneur class capitalistic relations of production has sharpened in the country and a new form of class contradiction has emerged particularly in the readymade garment sector. We are not elaborating the form of social violence that has emerged in the labour relation of readymade garment sector.

Economic drive has strongly motivated the young workers of rural areas to seek job abroad. There are a few villages in Bangladesh without family(s)' young member(s) not migrated abroad as workers. Widely acknowledged is the effect of remittance earned by the migrant workers in economy particularly in the payment of import bills. There has been feminization of migration also. Economic mobility is an effect of such migration although there are cases where indebtedness of the migrant families is also reported. Migration brings additional status in the village but for the migrant women workers it is not always the case.

*Changing gender relation & women's empowerment:* Patriarchal norms still shape the gender relations of the country to a significant extent. However, it has encountered challenges both in urban and rural areas. It may be said that in the post-independence Bangladesh the change in patriarchy based gender relation or creating a balance in the gender relation is a remarkable achievement of the society. The importance of such achievement can be understood further if we take into consideration half of the population are women. Reducing patriarchal influence in gender relation implies at least two consequences: social justice has been achieved, empowered women are contributing to national reconstruction.

How it has been possible and how could we identify it? In the last four decades NGOs have become important development catalyst in the country particularly in the rural areas. In different programs of the NGOs particularly micro-credit, social awareness and skill training the women have been integrated. It has created new opportunities for the women. For example, when micro-credit program first started in the country in early 1980's men were the recipients but gradually women were preferred because of their better credit worthiness. While in many cases the women themselves undertook income generating activities (particularly the widows and abandoned), they also shared the money with their husbands or adult sons. Then it became a household activity in which the women participated in different ways (e.g., planning a business, management of portfolio). Such participation allowed women to come out of the traditional role of exclusively housekeeping or child raising. Different commentators observed that NGO program increased the spatial mobility of the women and increased their capacity for decision making at the level of household (Kabeer 2001).

Another catalyst for women's empowerment is the employment of women in the RMG sector. Such employment changed the notion of women's conventional role. We know that about 4 million are RMG workers of which 80 percent are women. Leaving villages behind the RMG women workers have lived in the urban areas, sometimes with their families and sometimes independently. They acquired control over money, decision making role as well as spatial mobility. These women have got transformed from covert to overt being, if we notice their role in the protest movement against the RMG employers on different issues.

Third catalyst contributing to women's empowerment is feminization of migration in rural Bangladesh. In the last few years women have migrated from Bangladesh in an increasing number. In a relevant report it is shown quoting from the statistics of the Government of Bangladesh that female's proportion in the migrant population is increasing day by day. For example it was only 0.20% in the year 2000 and rose to 4.68% in 2009 which was more than twenty two thousands in that particular year (Migrant Forum Asia, undated). However, according to the estimate of the International Organization for Migration the percentage of female migrant workers was about 14% of the total migrant workers of 2010.

From different parts of the country women now take part in migration to foreign countries. It is a significant change in the traditional role of women. Through

such migration and subsequent work the women have become active in the places thousands miles away from their remote villages. It is also different from the migration within the country, it requires adjustment with a new culture, learning the skill to ensure own security and others. Many of migrant women also come back to own villages with some saving and contribution to the family's well-being. However some studies have reported that still the migrant image of the women is not positive in the villages, unlike men's foreign migration which enhances their social status. But many of the migrant women who have come back have tried to build network among themselves and fight back the so called social exclusion. In is observed by a relevant observer, "Thus female migrants who have returned have begun regionally to distribute information and loans to women who wish to migrate, and the first locally embedded networks of women are emerging. They are also buying land in their own name. They are also questioning the criticism made against them because of migration " (Dannecker 2011).

Enabling condition through educational program: Another significant change that has been taking place is the country's literacy situation. The rate of literacy has increased over the years, in 2010, more than 55% of the country's population who were more than 5 years old were reported to be literate who could write a letter for communication (GOB 2011). Poverty is an important impediment to the expansion of literacy in Bangladesh, however, with the decrease of poverty and intensification of NGO programs literacy has expanded in Bangladesh. Non-formal Primary Education or NFPE is an important institutional innovation that has contributed to the expansion of primary education program among the poor children in remote villages. Special features of NPFE approach include flexible class time, parental motivation to send their children to school, and provide effective class teaching. At present few hundred NGOs are engaged in providing primary education program to the poor children both in rural and urban locations (BEPS 2002). Education is an important element for the creation of enabling condition, no need to mention. However, educational program at the primary and secondary level is not progressing smoothly, dropping out of students in different classes is a major problem with which is related the quality of education. Because of the inadequate quality and other problems dropping out process cannot be eliminated completely.

#### **Evidence of Change with Mixed Implications**

In the identification of social changes in the post-independence Bangladesh we would also pay our attention to a few that manifests mixed implications. Such changes actually indicate the width and depth of the process. It has touched the production relations, cultural contour as well as psychological make-up. It is difficult to assign a definite label to it, however, registering the changes is required to understand the trend.

*Power structure in rural areas:* Traditional power structure in rural society consisted of *samaj*, *gushti* and *shalish*. While the concept *gushti* represents clan type social structure built around common lineage background the concept *samaj* represents the feeling of community bond. The third one *shalish* refers to village arbitration. In social conflict the role of *gushti* was important in the past particularly in the process of mobilization against the opponents. It means *gushti* as a feeling used to help build a cohesive group. It is believed that the cohesion of the entity *gushti* has weakened at present, although the causes are yet to be precisely pointed out which may include individualism, the incorporation of market principle or the intensification of social inequality. Similarly the notion of *samaj* has also weakened owing to class differentiation in rural society. On the other hand *shalish* institution is now controlled by the elected leaders of the local bodies instead of the traditional elders or *samaj* leaders (Lewis 2012). Clientilism is present both in traditional and formal power structure, however formalization of power structure significantly weakens the moral element of social relationship.

*Consumerism:* Both in rural and urban areas the spread of consumerism is significant. The economic progress in the last few years and the subsequent prosperity at different levels has promoted the culture of consumerism. It is perhaps the new goal of life. With the expansion of capitalism the culture of consumerism has spread. There is a positive correlation between consumerism and materialistic culture. The latter runs the risk of diminishing attraction and consequent psychological frustration.

*Satellite TV communication & internet:* Wide scale television network emerged through satellite and internet deserves attention in the analysis of social change. Exposure to multiple cultures is a major effect of satellite television network. In the process of acculturation the effect of television programs is commonly endorsed. Such effect is not age specific although the vulnerability of the children to cultural change through television is given attention. We would quote here the findings of micro-level study to understand the nature of such

effect. The behavioral aspects on which it reported effect include among others, becoming fashion aware, developing inclination for fast food, developing liking for foreign music and manner (Shamsar & Abdullah 2012). However the same study reported limited effect of internet on the users. But the effect of internet particularly the social network on social interaction and relationship is given much attention, however the nature of direction is yet to be clear. The exchange of information by virtue of internet has increased which has made contribution to the formation of public opinion particularly notable in the recent youth upsurge at Shahbag.

*English education & orientation:* In the last few years kindergarten based English education has spread fast. These schools follow British curricula. Kindergarten education has become symbol of status and necessity simultaneously. With globalization more and more children are aspiring to study abroad which becomes easier with kindergarten background, secondly the use of English has also increased with the expansion of corporate culture in the country. The students of this stream are found to follow Western manners, food and codes more authentically. English education is also increasing Westernization. For example, Bengali words are pronounced with English accent which has created new Anglicized section in society.

### **Challenges**

*Social inequality and slum development in urban areas:* Inequality has increased in urban areas. The average room numbers among the poorest were found 1.24 which was 3.40 among the richest (World Bank 2007:6). Average expenditure among the poor was found less than TK700, it was more than TK3000 among the rich. Most poor live in slums which are extremely deprived in terms of utility services. The urban poor are the victims of regular toll taken by the musclemen, besides the victims of drug and alcohol consumption. Illegal arms business, gambling, violence against women and children, murder and kidnapping also take place regularly in the slums. 35% crimes in the slums take place within the household. With the increase of slum child labour has increased in different hazardous job. These children are quickly getting exposed to risky behavior such as intravenous drug (World Bank 2007).

*Increasing divorce:* Industrial society are characterized by liquid relationship (Blackshaw 2007), which means normative basis of social relationships become fluid. Adherence also becomes loose. With the weakening of normative adherence social relationship and behavioral practices become volatile, it may

change and diverging within the same community. Different types of outcomes may take place with the increase of liquid relationship. It may be weakening of emotional bonds particularly at the level of family. Weakening of conjugal relationship is also taking place in Bangladesh, for example a recent study on divorce in Dhaka reported the increasing incidence of divorce in the following manner: "Divorce is currently increasing in Bangladesh. According to the officials of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), almost 26 divorces occur every day. The number of divorce filings with the DCC in 2007 was 5,324, which increased in 2008 to 7,065. The number was about 6,000 cases in 2009 and 2010." (Akhter & Begum 2012: 639).

*Fragile Democratic Governance:* The country emerged through a liberation war in 1971. Military coup was staged in 1975 against a government which was democratically elected and led the war of liberation. The change created a severe crisis in the country's governance system because in the early 1990's people again wanted to restore the parliamentary democracy and became eventually successful. Despite the disruption of parliamentary democracy by the military, people's aspiration for it did not exhaust at all. At present the major challenge is institutionalizing a permanent election procedure, intense conflict and violence surfaced on this issue, but the commitment for parliamentary democracy did not falter. Pressure from the rest of the society on the political parties is quite significant to reach a consensus on this point. Societal aspiration for democratic governance has also been expressed in the youth led recent movement against the perpetrators of the injustices during the war of liberation. Aspiration for democratic governance has acquired a social root although institutional mechanism for the transfer of power could not reach a consensual basis posing a challenge to the democratic process.

#### **Balance Sheet of Change and Labeling**

The evidence of change is distinct in the context of Bangladesh. Capitalism and market economy has gradually expanded along with industrialization. The country has also experienced economic progress manifested in the reduction of poverty level and consequent consumerism. Sociologists are interested in the understanding of structural changes particularly in the context of social relationships. Generally the relationships which survive the time and space constraints receive larger attention in the analysis of structural changes. From this point of view women's empowerment in Bangladesh is a major structural change, expansion of market based relationships at different levels also indicate

the evidence of structural change. The increase in the number of literate people also indicates change with structural implication. Apart from structural changes there are cases of changes at the level of practices entailing politics (e.g. democratization) and culture (entrepreneurship). This paper has discussed about different changes, holistically one need to draw a balance sheet to conclude about the outcome of changes. There are terminologies such as modernization, capitalization, industrialization or urbanization to assign a label to the change. Contemporary thinking on society has pointed out the limitation of labeling which is always selective, arbitrary and linear. Conceptually it may be useful practically not conclusive. Thus the paper is of the nature of diagnostic than prescriptive.

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**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE GOVERNANCE  
FRAMEWORK : BANGLADESH PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION AT FORTY\***

Mohammad Mohabbat Khan \*\*

**Introduction**

Public Administration (PA) in Bangladesh both as an academic discipline and as a practice continues to suffer from a number of deficiencies. These deficiencies have contributed to the failure of PA to meet the expectations of the people after even forty years of independence. The failure of PA as an academic discipline is reflected by its inability to occupy a pivotal place among social science disciplines. This is primarily because of the narrow orientation in understanding, evaluating and suggesting policy options to the government of the day in the areas pertaining to public administration in particular and public sector in general. The paper is an attempt to analyze from governance perspective what ails public administration in Bangladesh as an academic discipline as well as practice and what remedial measures that can be adopted to overcome the present deficiencies. It is believed that viewing PA from governance perspective will enable one to examine malaise afflicting PA and to recommend appropriate measures from a wider societal perspective.

Understanding the present trends in PA depends to a large extent on clear appreciation of its surrounding social, political, economic, and cultural environment. This is easier said than done. One of the recurring themes in PA in the literature has been making it broad-based and freeing it from Western-culture bias (Khan 2013). Present emphasis in PA research, practice and teaching is on building, promoting, and integrating cross-country and cross-culture studies. This is evident from increasing collaboration in teaching and research among scholars in developed countries like USA, Canada, UK, and

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Australia with countries like China, India, Japan, and South Korea. The objective of PA in the global context is “transcending division among cultures and national boundaries ... to build and test theories outside country-specific contexts to study global issues of public administration” (Hou et al. 2011: i50). The role of public administration in governance is a continuing topic of discussion and debate. The current worldwide reassessment of the functions of the state and of public officials both elected and appointed arises from two major sources: one is globalization and its impact on what governments must do to adapt and respond to rapidly changing international economic, social, political and technological trends; the other is increasing dissatisfaction among citizens in many countries with the functions of government and the services that public administrations provide (Rondinelli, 2007).

The challenge facing all governments in the 21st century is to create a system of governance that promotes and supports efficient economic interaction and that, at the same time, advances the health, safety, welfare, and security of their citizens. Public administration must be strengthened, especially in developing countries, if governments are to perform the functions required to promote socially equitable and sustainable economic growth, create enabling policies for participation in a globalizing economy, and combat poverty. Among the most important of those functions are: a) developing human resources; b) protecting human rights and political freedoms; c) protecting security, health, safety and welfare; d) building social capital by strengthening civil society; e) protecting the natural environment; f) mobilizing financial resources for development; g) creating partnerships and collaborations with the private sector and non-governmental organizations for service delivery; h) democratizing and decentralizing government; i) providing or facilitating the provision of physical and technological infrastructure; and j) enabling private sector development. Studies show that public administration is like a machine which has specific tasks to perform in achieving the goals of governance. This shows how that public administration can be fitted within the governance framework.

#### **Understanding Public Administration in the Governance Framework**

The concepts in public administration (PA) have changed over the past fifty years. One of the key concepts that is widely utilized to measure and evaluate the role of PA in providing services to the citizens is governance and its derivative good governance. Good governance (GG) is now conceived of by theorists and practitioners as well by citizens as a reliable framework to monitor

measure and evaluate the performance of public servants. The GG framework can be utilized to make public servants accountable and transparent. Good governance is based on a system of checks and balances among executive, legislative, and judicial branches (Cheema, 2007) . In addition to providing a wide variety of services, public administration in a system of democratic governance protects the rights of minorities and the disadvantaged, enhances access to justice, facilitates the engagement of civil society and the private sector, uses the power of information and communications technology to increase citizens' access and participation in development, and seeks partnerships to achieve public objectives. Development of ICT has shaped public administration to perform well in the governance framework in which civil servants are to serve the people efficiently and effectively. Scholars and practitioners have identified means of increasing transparency in government and linking public administration to citizens that is being adopted widely around the world. They point out the beneficial roles of e-government in helping public administrators to serve citizens.

Borderless PA is also emphasized upon. This view of PA fits in with network governance. One of the suggestions in this regard is dissolving all boundaries so that government, non-profit and private institutions all shares the goal of human flourishing (Eikenberry 2009). It is ambitious and idealistic goal that might fit in well with a critical democracy approach to PA. It is well-known that critical democracy emphasizes on issues of substantive democracy. It is expected that a critical democracy-driven PA would challenge economic and political system that impede democratic outcomes and civic participation (Eikenberry 2009).

The days of public administrators playing the role of neutral umpires are long over. Time is ripe for them to play a more assertive and pro-active role in governance for the voiceless and the marginalized. Box (2008) suggests six areas of actions for those public administrators who want to be “agents of social change” with small acts of “radicalness” within a constraining environment. The six areas of action for public administrators are: gather and analyze information about current conditions related to organizational mission, and broader knowledge of best practices, alternative futures, and trends in social and environmental change; modify operating procedures within the organization to serve the goal of social equity; formulate recommendations for change to the ultimate decision maker; provide information to people; provide meaningful access of citizens to policy process; and seek to protect private lives and strive for both equity and protection of personal liberties.

The issues of ethics and morality continue to remain relevant for public administration in the era of governance. Governance framework has been supportive of ethical and corruption-free public service and administration. Surveys after surveys globally show how public life has been vitiated regularly by gross acts of violation of public trust by public servants both elected and appointed. Corruption has become so endemic in many countries that it has adversely affected all spheres of life. The consequences are there for all to see. People are compelled to pay bribes to public servants; all aspects of a career public servant's life are affected by partisan politics; income disparity between the beneficiaries of corruption and majority of the population increases at a frightening rate; distribution of the benefits of economic growth, however marginal, goes mostly to the well-to-do segments of the society; and major reforms in administration are resisted and remain non-implemented.

From a practitioner's (Wolf, 2000) perspective there are at present six trends which are important to understand governance framework during the last two decades or so. These are global innovation, holistic mapping, flexible government, web and networks, citizen engagement, and human dimension. Many countries have been and continue to experiment with innovations. This has become a global trend. In the 1980s and 1990s there was fascination with New Public Management (NPM) that focused on deregulation, downsizing, and privatization especially in such countries as Australia, Canada New Zealand and UK. In the 1990s onwards there has been interest with civil service reform, decentralization, electronic tendering and procurement, electronic service delivery, restructuring of ministries, outsourcing and drastic reduction in the number of public sector employees and staff in such countries as Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Mexico, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong of PRC, South Korea and Japan to name a few. Holistic mapping denotes a shift from government to governance to facilitate interaction and cooperation between government, market, civil society and citizen. This has enabled many countries including Denmark to study and debate different ways of organizing and regulating the politico-administrative interface to identify the consequences for democracy for broader changes in the power structures in society (Wolf, 2000). Flexible government in many OECD countries has resulted in reduced management rigidity and rules, adjusting structure to tasks and individual capacities and deregulating civil service to meet increase demands for individually designed careers. Public administration has become a part of multiple networks: organizational, human and electronic networks that are

instrumental in producing policies, services, and knowledge. Building citizen trust through transparent process and accountability and democratic dialogue is vital and been accepted in many countries. In France and Norway there has been increased attention to clarify and reinforce citizens' legal rights. The citizen is finally back as the source of inspiration for new policy developments in many European and North American countries. Human dimension involves substantial investment on public servants mostly in the area of training. Along with training emphasis is on effective knowledge management and fast-track mobility for the best and the brightest in the public service

### **Bangladesh Public Administration at Forty**

#### *The Pioneers*

The development of Public Administration (PA) as an academic discipline is essentially the result of the work of one man, namely Professor Muzaffar Ahmed Chaudhury. He led the fight to establish a separate department of PA on his return from London University with a Ph.D. in 1960. As Professor and Chairman of the Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka in 1968-1969 he introduced MA in Public Administration (PA) Program within the Department of Political Science. Others who assisted Professor Chowdhury ably were Syed Maqsood Ali, Nur Mohamad Mian and Syed Giasuddin Ahmed all faculty members of Political Science Department, Dhaka University but taught courses in PA at the graduate level.

#### *Achievements*

Bangladesh public administration as a field of study has witnessed significant numbers of achievements. Numbers of Public Administration Departments have burgeoned in recent years. From a single Department in Dhaka University in 1972 the number of Public Administration Department in different public universities now stands at nine. There are now independent Departments of Public Administration in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Jahangirnagar and Sylhet Universities. In Islami University, Kushtia Public Administration co-exists with Politics Department. During last one year three public universities have opened Public Administration Department due to the initiatives taken by the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGCB). These are Barisal, Begum Rokeya (Rangpur) and Bangabandhu (Gopalganj) Universities. Two outcomes are noticeable as a result of this development. Many students are now getting opportunity to study this important discipline at the university –level. Also job opportunities for PA graduates are opening up. Public Administration graduates

have done well both in the academia and in different branches of civil service. Many among them teach in well-known universities in USA, Canada, England, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, UAE and other countries. They have also made significant contribution to the discipline of Public Administration through research and publications. In spite of limited opportunities, some scholars in Bangladesh continue to do academic research and publish in recognized and refereed professional journals and contribute to edited volumes published from abroad. A few of them have published quality works in Bangladesh and abroad. For some years now public administration journals are being published from Public Administration Departments in Sylhet and Jahangirnagar Universities. Journals are also published from Islami and Chittagong Universities from time to time. It needs to be added that the Center for Administrative Studies later renamed as Center for Public Affairs, located in the Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka, was the first organization to bring out a journal titled *Public Administration* in 1977. A few years later the journal was rechristened as Politics, Administration and Change (PA&C). Both journals had international as well local advisory boards to assist the editors. Unfortunately, PA&C ceased to publish about a decade ago because of shortage of fund and lack of professional support from local scholars. One healthy trend is the return of young and capable teachers to their respective PA departments at different universities after obtaining higher degrees from established universities abroad. This has enabled them not only to meaningfully contribute in the arena of teaching at undergraduate and graduate levels but also to open up new vistas in the area of research.

Public administration in Bangladesh as a tool of government to deliver services to the people and to achieve national development goals has been applauded in terms of its adaptation to changes in the social, economic, and political environment of the country. Having understood the changing role of public administration in the present time challenges facing public administration and governance the Government of Bangladesh has adopted Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for ensuring customer- friendly public service delivery and development policies. The Information & Communication Technology (ICT) has played a significant role in shaping the practice of public administration to be viewed in the governance framework. E-governance and network governance have been witnessed as ministries and service- oriented organizations are using online instruments to deliver services. Websites of public sector organizations have

been providing easier access to public services. A wide range of efforts have been experimented with to reform the civil service so that the public administration can be more accountable, efficient and transparent. These three key characteristics of governance framework are now being increasingly understood by key policy makers. Bangladesh public administration has so far coped reasonably well with the emergence of alternative service delivery providing organizations such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Voluntary Organizations (CVOs). Public administration operating within the governance framework has successfully collaborated with these organizations. Although many major administrative reform initiatives have failed but efforts to enhance the skills of public servants is considered as one of the important achievements in the first forty years of Bangladesh's existence as an independent country. Human resource training and development has been institutionalized. Many international donor agencies have become partners in programs targeted to increase the leadership capabilities of the civil servants and continuously improving the system of public sector human resource management. Local level public service delivery by both civil servants and functionaries of local government has improved through the involvement of many third sector organizations.

Global governance and network governance have made a significant impact upon the Bangladesh public administration as many agencies and organizations from many diverse areas come to work as collaborator of the public sector in improving the citizens' life and establishing their rights to be developed. Introduction of Citizens' Charter in the public sector organizations is one of the achievements in this regard. The pace of implementation of public-private partnership has been increased in recent years. Utilization of governance framework in recent years in different countries of the world has stressed that public administration needs to be more flexible and citizen- friendly. Bangladesh public administration is striving to place it in the governance framework by introducing many new ideas and mechanisms to ensure citizen oriented service delivery.

#### *Challenges*

Public Administration in Bangladesh is a nascent discipline. It is still evolving and learning from relevant environment. Public Administration (PA) as a discipline and practice also faces a number of challenges. Some of these challenges can retard the development of PA unless appropriate remedial actions are taken soon.

In Bangladesh, governance has consistently been a central concern for government, civil society, and the donor communities (Al-Samarrai, 2009). A local think tank, the Centre for Governance Studies (2006, p. 6), briefly summarized widely held views regarding the quality of governance: political turmoil and violence, the politicization of public administration and concerns that corruption obstructs private sector investment and public service delivery are key elements of what is widely deemed “crisis of governance.” The situation in Bangladesh represents a distinct case where corruption has found a remarkably safe space in which to proliferate, despite the vigilance of control mechanisms. Corruption is so pervasive that it has evoked widespread condemnation, both inside and outside the country (Zafarullah & Siddique, 2001). Consequently, Bangladesh has been consistently ranked by Transparency International as one of the most venal among the researched countries (Khan, 2013). Along with corruption lack of political commitment, bureaucratic resistance, factionalism in public sector, ineffective public management processes and biased civil service management have provided challenges in diverse forms to the Bangladesh public administration to fit into the present governance framework (Sarker, 2004). Considering the culture of public administration in Bangladesh challenges can be difficult in the present governance framework. Administrative culture in Bangladesh portrays concentration of power at the top of the hierarchy and delay in giving decisions on important matters. Red tape is a regular phenomenon in Bangladesh public service. Communication flows usually downward. Rarely subordinates can give meaningful feedback to superiors. To keep the superiors in good humor and to facilitate their career path many subordinates indulge in sycophancy. This adversely affects development and maintenance of healthy working relation between officials at different levels in the hierarchy and encourages and perpetuates authoritarian tendencies within public sector. Removal of top heavy administration and vertical line of control are one of the major challenges in present era of network, citizen- based governance. Citizens are usually treated as subjects rather than customers. Transparent and accountable administration is yet to be achieved in the public sector. This implies that citizen- friendly, goal-oriented, transparent and accountable administration is badly needed to cope with the changes in governance framework. After forty years Bangladesh Public Administration has to consider these challenges to fit in with the rapidly changing governance scenario. In most cases Bangladesh Civil Service finds itself in a position where the important aspects of recruitment, promotion,

transfer and training are dealt on the basis of political motif. The conspicuousness of colonial bureaucracies and significant social and cultural status of the members of civil services, it is argued, has created an unhealthy imbalance in institutional development. This has resulted in premature growth of political agencies. Others argue that political rulers of developing countries are adequately in command of political power. The colonial and paternalistic socio-cultural legacy which exists in Bangladesh Civil Service is obstructing the policies and strategies to place more women in public organizations. This has been one of the prime concerns raised by many scholars of public administration in recent times as they urge for women empowerment in every sphere of the society. Another important trend found in the Bangladesh Civil Service is the number of people working in different positions. Downsizing has been proposed by many national and international agencies to make the civil service management efficient that will enhance the quality of the services delivered by bureaucrats in this modern globalized era. BCS (Administration) cadre officials occupy key positions within the civil service system and shape the policies and practices within the entire civil service. This unequal position and power of BCS (Administration) Cadre officials vis-à-vis other cadre officials creates tension among the cadres. Representation of this particular cadre in every decision making or higher position in the bureaucratic hierarchy diminishes the chances of empowering other cadre's officials and mitigating inter-cadre conflict. To achieve diversity in the civil service through the placement of officials according to their specialization and competency and introduction of cluster proposals was made by international donor sponsored administrative reform bodies but unfortunately these proposals were not implemented.

Further challenges to Bangladesh public administration can be sorted out based on the style of managing the civil service. Bangladesh public administration has to deal with politicization of civil service, elitist nature of the civil servants and conflict between specialist-generalist cadre officers.

#### *Way Forward*

Public Administration is a dynamic discipline. It is growing lips and bound in many developed and developing countries. This growth has taken many shapes and directions but in most cases Public Administration's core focus has remained the same, i.e. devising theories and models to understand the public sector and its linkages with private and third sectors to serve the citizens better.

If Public Administration as a discipline and as a practice has to move forward then the following measures needs to be implemented on a priority basis.

First, we need an apex forum of Public Administration in Bangladesh to discuss, deliberate, and evaluate the status of the discipline and the progress we have made so far. More importantly, we need to devise ways and means to lead the discipline to a greater height in coming decades. This forum can be in the shape of a new national organization styled as Bangladesh Society of Public Administration (BSPA). All heads of departments of Public Administration (PA) of public universities, selected senior civil servants having academic background and interest in PA need to be inducted as office bearers of BSPA. All individuals having academic degrees in Public Administration will be eligible for membership of BSPA. Distinguished individuals who have made significant contribution to the discipline and practice of Public Administration may be conferred honorary membership of the Society. Second, civil service management should be conducted on the basis of rules, regulations and neutrality. Third, clear cut governance agendas on the basis of people's demand and needs have to be formulated to guide the entire public service. During the last one decade or so MDGs have been adopted as one of the core guidelines to provide direction to the civil servants so that they can strive for and achieve national development. Fourth, institutionalization of democracy as a system of governance within the polity is essential to enable public administration to work without political interference in the daily work of administration. Political accountability of civil service should be strengthened. Fifth, policy formulation and implementation are two different sets of work. Public administration has to be responsible only for implementation rather involving itself into the policy formulation process unless specifically asked for by political leaderships in the government.

Sixth, partnership with third sector organizations and private organizations has to be appraised regularly so that civil servants can be accessed by people through partner organizations.

Seventh, accountability mechanisms and measures along with increasing transparency in public dealing as suggested earlier will facilitate the ushering in of an honest and clean public service. Horizontal accountability should be institutionalized.

Eighth, the training institutions should introduce a mandatory course or theme on public service ethics and standards so that the newly appointed officers get the proper understanding about the ethical practices of service delivery.

Finally, the Ministry of Public Administration should have more authority and responsibility in maintaining discipline within the administration. This ministry has to be manned both by the specialist and generalist civil servants so that it can work to deal with each and every cadre of Bangladesh Civil Service.

### **Conclusion**

Bangladesh public administration after first forty years of its inception revolves around diverse issues of civil service management. Apart from the development of public administration as an academic discipline its role as an applied field tasked with national development and welfare is also crucial. Bangladesh Civil Service, managed by recruited civil servants, has always been a constant concern for the government and state. Civil service has been managed, over the years, based on political considerations and political ideology where the politicians try to manipulate the managerial practices of civil service and subsequently the bureaucrats turned them as the client to their political master (Zafarullah and Khan, 2001). The characteristics of civil bureaucracy look similar to that of bureaucracy of the colonial days. Very little has changed during last forty years of civil bureaucracy's structural arrangements buttressed by a rigid hierarchical system, close supervision, centralization in decision-making and emphasis on seniority for promotion and placement and in the values and norms of civil servants (Khan, 2012). Major administrative reform efforts intended to overhaul the bureaucratic system and its attendant norms and values were staunchly resisted and failed. Only minor adjustments have been made in the bureaucratic system to conduct the day-to-day administrative business. The result is there for all to see. Lack of political will for reform, political interference in administration, lack of professionalism among bureaucrats and prevalence of wide-spread corruption have all contributed in different degrees to the sustenance of an inefficient, ineffective, unresponsive and corrupt civil service.

Public administration in Bangladesh continues to be affected by many deficiencies and these have significantly contributed to the retardation of its healthy growth. These deficiencies need to be redressed soon in order to cope with the need of the 21<sup>st</sup> century turning it into a right kind of instrument to implement the Nation's policy of development including vision 2021.

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**URBAN GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH:  
THE POST INDEPENDENCE SCENARIO\***

Nazrul Islam \*\*

**I. Introduction**

Urbanization worldwide has been found to be an effective engine of economic growth and socio-cultural development. In pure economic terms, urbanization contributes significantly to the national economy. Although the developing world is less than 40 percent urban, its urban sector contributes to more than 65 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Even in Bangladesh (with less than 28 percent of population urban), this sector contributed to more than 60 percent of the GDP in 2009 (Choe and Roberts, 2011, p. 120). This has grown from as low as 25 percent in 1972-73. This obviously may lead one to conclude that urbanization on a macro-scale would be beneficial to the economy of Bangladesh. Urbanization also causes social development in terms of higher literacy rate, improvement in the quality of education, and better health indicators. With greater urbanization, there are also benefits in cultural and political development. Just as urbanization brings along economic and social benefits, it also has some negative effects especially when it takes place at a pace as rapid as in Bangladesh. The negative consequences are manifested in physical environmental degradation, social inequities, persisting poverty, inadequate provision of basic utilities, educational and health services, and increasing incidence of crime and violence. While technical and financial resources are strong factor determining the sustainability of cities, the more critical factor is considered to be the nature and quality of governance. The paper discusses the nature of urban governance in the post independence period with special reference to a number of key elements of governance.

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## **II. Urbanization and Municipalization: A Brief Historical Background**

Although the level of urbanization in Bangladesh remained very low throughout the British period (1757-1947), growth of some individual cities and towns was of considerable significance. The British had felt the need for introducing some sort of municipal local governance even in the early 1820s, but a formal beginning was made with the establishment of one of the first municipalities in the present day Bangladesh region in Dhaka in 1864, through the Bengal Municipal Act 1864. The municipal council was however predominantly composed of officials. Dhaka then had a population about 50,000 and was still the largest urban centre of the region.

The 1932 Bengal Municipal Act was a landmark development as it provided for greater participation of elected representatives in the municipal bodies and also in widening the powers and functions of municipal bodies. The system continued well into the first decade of the Pakistan period, but following the imposition of Martial Law by General Ayub Khan in 1958, and his introduction of Basic Democracy, municipal governance also took a similar twist. Instead of direct election to the posts of Municipal Councilors, indirect system, step wise (such as through Ward Committee and Union Committee) representations, was introduced. Subsequent changes came after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, alternatively giving more importance to members of the National Parliament, then to Government Officials and again to elected local representatives between 1972 and 1976.

The governance of the Capital City Dhaka underwent several changes since liberation. The Act of 1974 (Act 56), designated Dhaka as the Dhaka Municipal Corporation. But in 1983, it was raised to the status of a City Corporation. Chittagong City Corporation was, however, formed in 1982. Four other cities (Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal) were also given City Corporation status between 1984 and 2001. Smaller cities and towns are known as Pourashavas (or municipalities). Prior to 1994, the City Corporations were managed by Mayors appointed by the government. In case of Dhaka often the Minister in charge of Local Government was given the additional responsibility of the Mayor.

Bangladesh was governed by military regimes during 1975-1990. Parliamentary democracy was restored in 1991 after long political struggle. The democratic process of electing the Mayor and Ward Commissioners through direct voting came into practice only in 1994 in Dhaka, when Mohammad Hanif was elected Mayor through the Local/ Government Act 1993. Similar development took

place in the other City Corporations and Pourashavas. Further progress in the democratization process was achieved in 1999 when direct election of Women Commissioners for reserved seats was introduced. In 2008, all Pourashava Chairmen came to be known as Mayors like City Corporation Mayors and Ward Commissioners as Councilors.

Urbanization in Bangladesh today has become a very strong political, economic, social and cultural force. The population of some of the major city corporations or municipalities is very large, even larger than any district population. The population of an electoral constituency to a seat of the Parliament is many times smaller than the constituency of the Mayor of Dhaka or Chittagong or the other city corporations. The Mayors of these large city corporations have great political significance.

A basic element in a democratic process is the election of representatives to lead and govern the citizens. The people of Bangladesh in general participate in all elections with huge enthusiasm, voter's turnout being almost always over 50 percent and in many cases even over 85 percent. Municipal elections are equally popular and participatory. Municipal (or local government), elections have been held on a non-party basis, while the elections to the Parliament are held on party identity. However, most candidates in municipal (or other local government units) have party identity and are indirectly supported by one or the other established political party. In fact, the election to the position of the Mayors of such cities as Dhaka or Chittagong, are very much dominated by party affiliation and in turn exert huge influence on the elections of the Parliamentary seats. The candidature of the city Mayor is therefore a very critical issue in major political parties. So far the candidates chosen for the mayoral elections specially in the larger cities have been party stalwarts. The Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation enjoys the status of a Cabinet Minister. While the other city Mayors have a State Minister's status.

Recently (2011-2012) a number of Pourashavas (single or in combination of two or three) have been upgraded to the status of city corporations. These include Narayanganj (with Siddirgonj and Kadam Rasul Pourashavas amalgamated), Comilla, Gazipur (with Tongi Pourashava amalgamated) and Rangpur. Elections to the Narayanganj City Corporation, Comilla City Corporation and Rangpur City Corporation have already been held. The election to these City Corporation have been positive developments in municipalisation. That the democratic process in Bangladesh has achieved a reasonable level of

maturity is evident from the fact that all local government elections held since 2009 have been considered free, fair and credible by both neutral observers and the people.

Although municipal governance in Bangladesh is based on direct vote, the urban local governments (City Corporations and Pourashavas) do not enjoy adequate power, authority or autonomy. These are also heavily dependent on the central government for funds and personnel. Their functional jurisdiction is also very limited. This is more true for the large City Corporations such as Dhaka and Chittagong, since such functions as town planning and urban development, water supply and electricity supply services have been taken away from them and given to separate autonomous but unelected authorities under the central government.

However, despite the truncated functional power, the Mayors do enjoy enormous power within their own municipal administration. Decision making within the organization is highly centralized in the hands of the Mayor although there is a system of decisions to be processed upward to the Mayor through a number of subject based Standing Committees chaired by Ward Commissioners. Almost all financial authority is vested in the Mayor.

Geographical or area based decentralization is very limited. All City Corporations and Municipalities are composed of Wards but the Wards do not enjoy any worthwhile financial power. They seriously lack in personnel. The Ward Commissioners have to address demands of a large constituency (sometimes of over 100,000 people in Dhaka) almost single handed. He does not have a committee to advise him.

Municipal elections have been held more or less regularly since the 1990s, except for Dhaka, where the last Mayor (Sadek Hossain Khoka) elected for a period of 5 years, was in fact well into his 10<sup>th</sup> year of office before he was removed through amendment in the Corporation's legal status in November 2011. A similar situation occurred during the regime of the previous Mayor (Mohammad Hanif) who stayed in office for nearly 8 years in place of 5 years.

There has also been some change in the structure of Pourashavas as incorporated in the Pourashava Act of 2009 (GOB, 2009). Of particular significance is the formation of the Ward Committees each comprising 10 members of which 40% would have to be women. The committee would be chaired by the Councilor of the Ward. This has enhanced greater participation

of citizens in municipal management. In addition, a practice of instituting Town Level Coordination Committee (TLCC), with civil society representatives, have also been introduced in the Pourashava.

### **III. Urban Governance in Bangladesh: Reflections on some Indicators**

Municipal Governance is not merely the function of the Municipality or City Corporation alone, rather it is the function of a complex combination of many organizations - government, autonomous, semi-government bodies as well as private sector, civil society, community and also now-a-days increasingly development partners and international agencies. All these different types of organizations and institutions have their roles to play in establishing functional, efficient and progressive urban governance system. The prime role of course should remain with the municipal administration or the office of the Mayor and his/her leadership.

Good urban governance demands attention to a number of **key indicators**, such as participation, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, authority, rule of law, decentralization, coordination, efficiency, and leadership. In the following sections of the present paper, some discussion is made on **participation, transparency and accountability, leadership, coordination and roles of the key stakeholders in urban governance.**

With greater participation of the citizenry and people of different walks of life, greater degree of transparency, accountability and responsiveness may be achieved. However, the degree and quality of participation will in turn depend on the charisma and commitment of the leadership as well as on the legal mandates of the municipality. Participation also depends on decentralization and devolution of power and authority. In urban governance it implies decentralization from Central government to the city level, and also from the city level to the ward or community level. Participation of all stakeholders specially the citizens in urban development planning, financial management and service delivery is important.

#### **Participation**

##### *Participation in Urban Development Planning*

We have seen that urbanization, urban growth and urban expansion are taking place in Bangladesh at rapid rates. For sustainability, these require proper planning, which implies preparing technically sound urban plans (Master Plans, Details Area Plans etc), with adequate participation of the citizens and

stakeholders. Such plans are being prepared in Bangladesh for cities and towns of all sizes from the Capital or Megacity Dhaka to a small Pourashava. In the four large cities (Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi) urban plans are prepared by City Development Authorities (like RAJUK, CDA, KDA and RDA) with some degree of participation. In case of Dhaka, civil society groups and professional bodies have compelled RAJUK to allow greater participation in plan preparation. The government at one stage respected the opinions of such bodies and passed necessary administrative decision such as the Detail Area Plans (in 2009), but subsequently yielded to pressure exerted by powerful real-estate groups. This illustrates the complexity of participatory governance in urban planning. Level of participation in urban planning is considerably lower in other cities, specially in Pourashava, where plans are prepared under supervision of central government agencies like the Urban Development Directorate or the Local Government Engineering Department. However, exceptions are also there. The Master Plan for Cox's Bazar is being finalized after adequate participation of all concerned people.

Ideally, the responsibility of preparing the plan or any other development plan of a city should rest with the local urban authority, such as the city corporation or the Pourashava. These bodies are also legally mandated to perform the planning function. But in the early fifties, Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT) was created to take exclusive responsibility of developing Dhaka, then Capital of East Pakistan, in a planned manner and with this the planning function of Dhaka Municipality was suspended. Similar development took place in the other three large cities at that time. Dhaka Municipal Corporation, however, got a full-fledged Urban Planning Department in 1990, but without the authority of preparing a Master Plan. Instead, the Department could only undertake small scale site plans, like shopping centres, or parks. It could however maintain liaison with Rajuk in its Master Planning or Detail Area Planning exercises. No other city corporation or Pourashava had their own Urban Planning Department or unit until about the year 2000. Such units have been established gradually in all A Category Pourashavas, basically as obligatory conditions under Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP) supported by the Asian Development Bank. This and other externally funded projects, have indeed brought back some essential functions to the Pourashavas, but not yet to the large city corporations. The projects like UGIIP, also inspire greater participation of people in the planning process.

*Participation in Urban Financial Management*

Urban local authorities, both city corporations and Pourashavas, are themselves responsible for the preparation of their respective annual budgets. By law they are required to solicit participation of the citizens in the budget preparation process. Normally, the people in the authority's finance or accounts department prepare the draft budget which is then presented to the Mayor and the Council. Generally the budget is prepared along a set structure with some nominal adjustments such as a certain percentage change in each approved head. In recent time, the City Corporations and Pourashavas have invited greater participation of the people. Members of the TLCC also take part in discussions on the budget, but basically there remains little scope for major change.

The urban local bodies are seriously weak in financial strength. Most of the authorities can not raise enough property or holding taxes. Few of them ever try to reassess or enhance property rates for fear of losing popular support. They are also incapable of innovating new sources of revenue earning. However, many of the urban local bodies receive one or more development funds from the central government or development partners and in which citizens have scope for participation.

*Participation in Urban Infrastructure Development*

Major infrastructural projects are prepared and implemented in urban areas by the central government agencies or even by city authorities without much of people's participation. Such projects normally have financial and technical support of foreign development agencies. These often lack transparency in the process of planning and implementation. Only when a powerful government agency or civil society group raises objection, compromises are made in plans. Opposition by civil society groups may cause delay in implementation of projects even when these projects are legitimate (a good case in point is the plan for the first metro line in Dhaka). Citizens in general show little interest, for or against, even for such mega projects. Political parties, interestingly, remain conspicuously silent on such issues. Major and expensive environmental improvement projects may be taken up, initially on pressure from the civil society, but during implementation hardly any participation of the citizens are solicited, rather more involvement of the army has been ensured. Case in point is the Hatirjheel Lake Development project, Dhanmondi or Gulshan Lake development projects in Dhaka. Green city movement is not a political force yet. In one exceptional case of health and environmental improvement, had the

former Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation, Sadeq Hossain Khoka, sought and received participation of the civil society. This is in the fight against a mosquito responsible for dengue fever. The former Mayor of Chittagong, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, had also undertaken some dynamic programmes of greening the city with citizen's participation.

### **Transparency and Accountability in Urban Governance**

Transparency and accountability in the administration of local urban authorities are essential to good governance. The Pourashava Act 2009 makes it obligatory for the Pourashavas these days to exhibit Citizen's Charter openly so that people are better aware of developments in their local authorities. The Commission for Right to Information further empowers people to demand information from their local leadership and authorities. Moreover, the election process in the local bodies and the formation of the Town Level Coordination Committee with participation of representatives of the civil society is another step forward. The various Standing Committees are expected to process municipal decision making. The existence of a comparatively free and vibrant print and electronic media and the watchful eyes of the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) further improves possibility of greater transparency. Despite all these checks and balances, allegations of corruption in urban local bodies is rather common. Mayors of large cities are often charged with serious cases of irregularities. Lack of transparency in development projects and partisanship in appointments to municipal jobs is a common allegation.

### **Leadership in Urban Governance**

Leadership is one of the most significant factors in good urban governance, as well as is in any other sectors of development. Local urban governance depends greatly on the quality of local urban leadership, meaning the elected mayor and his/her council. Visionary, dynamic, innovative, committed and honest leadership can make a city more efficient and liveable. In general, city corporations and Pourashavas in Bangladesh are lacking in such leadership. At least Dhaka was not fortunate in this respect. Chittagong's former Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury was certainly quite dynamic and innovative and got elected three times, but later he committed some serious mistakes and lost the popular support. The immediate past Mayor of Tongi, Advocate Ajmatullah Khan has been elected in four consecutive terms. He understands the urban dynamics, however does not seem to be effective in making the city liveable. It is indeed not an easy task either, given the character of this industrial city.

The Mayor of the newly constituted Narayangong City Corporation, Dr. Selina Hyat Ivy, was a successful Mayor when it was a Pourashava. She has charisma and commitment. The larger municipal entity will be quite a challenge for her. The former Mayor of Barisal City Corporation, Shwkat Hossain Hiran left his mark in improving the physical appearance of the city. He had been able to win people's participation in his development initiatives. The Mayor of Feni has also shown dynamism. Such are some examples of good urban governance. There is also greater participation of elected women councilors in Pourashavas although they themselves are not satisfied with their status and privileges.

It may be noted that projects like UGIIP, MDF or UPPR have played some role in improving the governance style of urban local bodies, particularly through the emphasis on citizen's participation in local decision making. Intelligent local urban leaders have exploited the positive elements of such projects effectively.

#### **Coordination in Urban Governance**

A key concept in good urban governance is that of coordination, particularly among the governmental and para-state institutions that are involved. In case of Dhaka city, for example, as many as 40 different governmental or autonomous organizations are known to have such involvement, many of which are directly so on a day-to-day basis. There is serious problem of coordination among such agencies resulting in wastage of resources and time, and ultimately causing sufferings to the people (Islam *et.al*, 2000).

Occasional attempts were made to solve the problem of coordination in Dhaka City. One attempt was made in the mid 1990s, when Mohammad Hanif was the city Mayor. He in fact demanded the formation of a City Government with the implication that all relevant governmental service delivery and controlling agencies be brought under the single authority of the City Mayor (or Governor, if such a title might be more acceptable). The Government of the time (led by Awami League, Hanif's own party) only allowed a Coordination Committee to be chaired by the Minister for Local Government and co-chaired by the Mayor. The arrangement became dysfunctional in no time. A similar situation arose during the regime of his successor, Sadeq Hossain Khoka, when a high powered Coordination Committee was established under the Chairmanship of the Mayor who enjoyed a Cabinet Minister's status. It was during the BNP regime that Khoka was the President of Dhaka Mohanagar BNP. It was formed with over 30 agency chiefs and 5 civil society representatives. The Committee, like the

previous one, could not work properly and at the request of the Mayor, the committee's responsibility was shifted to the Prime Minister's office with the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister acting as the Chief Coordinator on behalf of the elected Mayor. It worked for sometime, but as it was not constitutionally established, the system discontinued with the change of government, and coordination remains a very critical issue in governance in Dhaka City. It is also a serious problem in other major cities. Attempt has, however, been made to improve Coordination of agencies in Pourashavas through the Town Level Coordination Committee (TLCC) formed under UGIIP. Civil society representatives also sit in the TLCC.

### **Role of Various Stakeholders in Urban Development and Governance**

#### *Role of Civil Society Organizations*

Civil society organizations, which include NGOs, CBOs, and professional groups, among others, have significant roles to play in urban development and governance. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the *Panchayets* (neighborhood level social/ community institutions) used to contribute significantly to the maintenance of social order in Dhaka. There are now new and different types of social groups performing some such functions. Among these, neighborhood level environmental activist groups in middle or upper class areas or the slum dwellers associations, as well as city or national level civil society groups are parts of the new democratic dynamics of urban development and urban governance (Islam and Mahjabeen 2000). The national level civil society groups such as Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA), Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) etc. are now important civil society organizations which raise their voice on urban issues. BAPA, for example, has a Task Force on urbanization and offers both analytical discussions and agenda for action. BELA goes for legal action against public or private projects harming the urban environment. Civil society's urban awareness is much stronger today than ever before, but still not strong enough to stop all kinds of bad projects.

#### *Role of the Private Sector*

Dhaka, the megacity with about 14 million people (in an area of 1350 sq.kms, including DCC, Narayanganj City Corporation and other Pourashavas), is becoming distinctive as an unequal city with hardly any evidence of planned effort in reducing the pattern. The private corporate sector plays a strong role in accentuating the inequality. During the past two decades particularly, the

private land and housing development companies have primarily invested in luxury residential development rapidly pushing the lower income groups out of the housing market, and to marginal locations of degraded physical environment.

Critical issues in urban governance sometimes arise due to motivated actions of the private sector. In the area of industrial development, the private sector sets up factories which produce chemical effluents which harm the environment. The governmental agencies responsible for maintaining environmental standard are either incapable of controlling the unacceptable activities of the industries or are in alliance with them. The real estate companies, particularly those involved in land development, are mostly uncontrollable and almost ungovernable. They now have strong lobby in the Parliament as well as friends in the administration. The victim is the environment, particularly the water bodies and rivers in and around Dhaka and other urban areas. The private sector real estate developers are also responsible for illegal hill cutting in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. Weak governance is held responsible for such activities. The Government has enacted a number of relevant acts and rules to safeguard the urban environment but poor implementation results in negative development.

*Role of Development Partners and International Agencies in Urban Governance*

The roles of development partners, which include foreign country specific aid agencies and also international financial and development organizations, have become increasingly significant in urban development and urban governance in Bangladesh since its recent times. UN bodies like UNDP, UN Habitat, UNCDF and UNICEF have played an active role in helping build physical infrastructure and provide social support in urban areas, particularly in sanitation, drainage, water supply, waste disposal and income generating activities. The role of foreign development agencies like JICA, Danida, DFID, GTZ have also been significant. Similarly projects like UGIIP of ADB or Municipal Development Fund of the World Bank have also made impact both on the urban structure and the urban governance system in Bangladesh. The development partners have now their own lobby and insist on participation in the decision making process related to urbanization and urban governance in Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh has recognized their role and ensured their participation in the newly formed the Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF). They have also participated in the formulation of the National Urban Sector Policy, now awaiting

government approval. In other words, many of the major urban development decisions will be taken with participation of foreign and international development partners.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

Bangladesh has a very large population which continues to grow rapidly and is likely to cross 200 million by 2050. This is a matter of great concern in view of the limitation of land and natural resources. Amount of arable land per capita is decreasing fast; many people are turning homeless and they tend to move to cities. Bangladesh used to be a low urbanized country, which however, is experiencing rapid urban growth in recent decades. Population may become 50% urban by 2040, or even earlier due mainly to rural-urban migration and change of status of current market towns or rural areas. Urbanization in Bangladesh is mostly spontaneous with indirect impact of government policy on investments and some decentralization of administration, industry, education and health services.

Bangladesh has been enjoying a western-style democratic system in national governance as well as in local urban governance for the last two decades. Democratic urban governance has a much longer tradition. However, much remains to be seen in the improvement of quality of governance. Local urban authorities suffer from inadequate power and autonomy and financial capacity. Level of participation of the citizens also is not satisfactory. However, there are now more stakeholders in urban development and governance than before. Coordination among agencies working in urban areas is still a critical problem.

International experience indicates that the key ingredient to realizing the goal of sustainable urban development is good governance, specially through the local urban governments. Therefore steps should be taken to devolve authority and power from the centre to the city corporation and Pourashava level and strengthen the capacity and capability of these local bodies to interact effectively with citizens and meet their needs. Good urban governance demands effective leadership of the elected representatives of City Corporations and Pourashavas with participation of the municipal officials, the central government agencies at the local level, the private sector, NGOs, civil society and, finally, the people.

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## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DHAKA NORTH: 1971-2011\***

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Farzana Ahmed Mohuya<sup>b</sup>

### **Introduction**

In 2011 the Government of Bangladesh amended the Local Government City (City Corporation) Act 2009, and divided the Dhaka City Corporation into two namely, *Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC)* and *Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC)*. This divided the old capital city of Dhaka administratively into two broad areas and gave birth to the capital city of Dhaka North. This article will deal with the Dhaka North City Corporation as an administrative and urban area and call it in short *Dhaka North*. Although Dhaka North is very much a part and parcel of the Megacity Dhaka, it has however, some characteristics of its own, and now it has its own administration. Hence, it deserves a separate study to understand its urbanisation process and its social, economical, cultural and educational growth and developments. This may also be called *Recent Dhaka*. Indeed the phrase *New Dhaka* has been in circulation for quite some time since the development of the New Capital of Dhaka in the Ramna area in 1905. This New Dhaka though received a setback with the annulment of Partition of Bengal in 1911, began to grow steadily and serenely till 1947, specially after the establishment the University of Dhaka in 1921. Further expansion of Dhaka North took place during the Pakistan period and gradually extended up to the areas in a very mild form which now constitutes the DNCC. The extraordinary development of the DNCC took place since the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

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This article focuses on the growth and development pattern of Dhaka North from 1971 to 2011. The major aspects of the subject matter include urbanisation, physical growth (land use/cover changes), economy, society, culture, educational development, commercial shops and bazaars, transport, environment, health sectors, etc. In order to analyze the growth and development pattern of Recent Dhaka, in this research mainly secondary data (articles, maps, etc.) have been used like different previous and present studies, scholarly articles, books, newspapers and internet articles, DNCC website, and from other research organisations. On the other hand, for preparing the map of Dhaka North City Corporation (Fig. 1), data have been collected from the DNCC office through the Bangladesh Gazette (5 December 2011) on DNCC area. Hence, GIS technology (ArcGIS, Version- 10 software) is used for producing the map. As this article is the first attempt to assess the development of Dhaka North after the recent abolitions of DCC, hence it is mainly based on secondary data rather than the primary.

#### Area

Dhaka North is situated within Longitude 90°20' to 98°28' and Latitude within 23°44' to 23° 54'. Its total area covers 82.638 sq. kms which consists of five zones including 36 Wards.<sup>1</sup> (See Fig. 1). It has all the positive and negative characteristics of a Megacity like large population, economic boom, employment opportunities, various service opportunities, slums, homelessness, traffic congestion, urban sprawl, gentrification, air pollution etc. The major zones and areas of DNCC are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Major Zones and Areas of Dhaka North City Corporation**

Zone	Area Name
Zone-1 (Uttara)	Uttara Model Town, Kuril, Khilkhet, Nikunjo
Zone-2 (Mirpur-Pallabi)	Mirpur section-12, Mirpur Ceramic, Mirpur section-10, Mirpur section-14, Byshteki, Mirpur section-11, Bawneabad Area, Mirpur section-6 & 7, Pallabi, Mirpur section-2, Rupnagar, Govt. housing Estate, Mirpur section-1, Box Nagar, Zoo and Botanical Garden, Vasantek, Maticata, Manikdey, Barentek.
Zone-3 (Gulshan)	Baridhara, Shahjadpur, Gulshan, Banani, Mahakhali, Niketan, Badda, East Rampura, Ulon, West Haji Para, Khilgaon B Zone, Purbo Haji Para, Chowdhury Para, Tajgaon I/A, Kunipara,

	Azrat Para, Rasul bag, Tejgaon, Boro Maghbazar, Eskaton. Neyatola
Zone-4 (Mirpur- Kazi Para, Gabtoli)	Golartek, Bagbari, Gabtoli Bus Terminal, Gabtoli, Mirpur Colony, Darus Salam, Paikpara, Ahmed Nagar, Monipur, Parer Bagh, Kazipara, Sawrapara, Senpara-parbata, Ibrahimipur, Kafrul.
Zone-5 (Kawranbazar)	Kawranbazar, Tegturipara, Tejkunipara, Razabazar, Monipuripara, Indira Road, Agargaon, Taltola Staff Quarter, Mohammadpur, Shamoli Ring Road, Adabor, Shakertek, Mohammadpur Azam Road, Jakir Hossain Road, Nazrul Islam Road, Lalmatia, Asad Gate, Khilji Road, Babar Road, Iqbal Road, Arongajeb Road, PC Culture, Basila, Katasur, Mohammadia Housing, Basbari, Jafrabad, Sultanganj, Rayer Bazar, Bibir Bazar, Madhu Bazar

Source: <http://www.dncc.gov.bd/dncc-setup/chronological-development-of-dncc.html>  
(Accessed in March 2013).

### History and Urbanisation

It is said that during the Mughal times (1608-1765), Capital Dhaka stretched in south-north direction from the River Buriganga to the Tongi Bridge or Tongi River. The present day Dhaka North city thus comes within the Mughal capital city of Dhaka. But how much of this area was actually inhabited and urbanised cannot be definitely said for lack of source materials. It is however asserted that all parts of this vast northern area were not urbanised or largely populated. However, we have definite information about settlements and use of certain areas of this area. Kawranbazar which is now an important commercial cum office area of Dhaka North was also an important trading area during the Mughal time. It was an important node in the internal trade of *Bengal Subah* or Bengal Province and number of caravans used to come here from distant places for business and trade. Indeed the name of Kawranbazar has originated from *Kawran* which means caravan. A bazaar was permanently established here, and the building of the famous mosque of Khwaja Amber indicates the settlement of permanent population on the bank of the Eskatan Khal or Canal, formerly a branch of Balu River. The place continued to be inhabited by modest population, and grew into some sort of urban area.

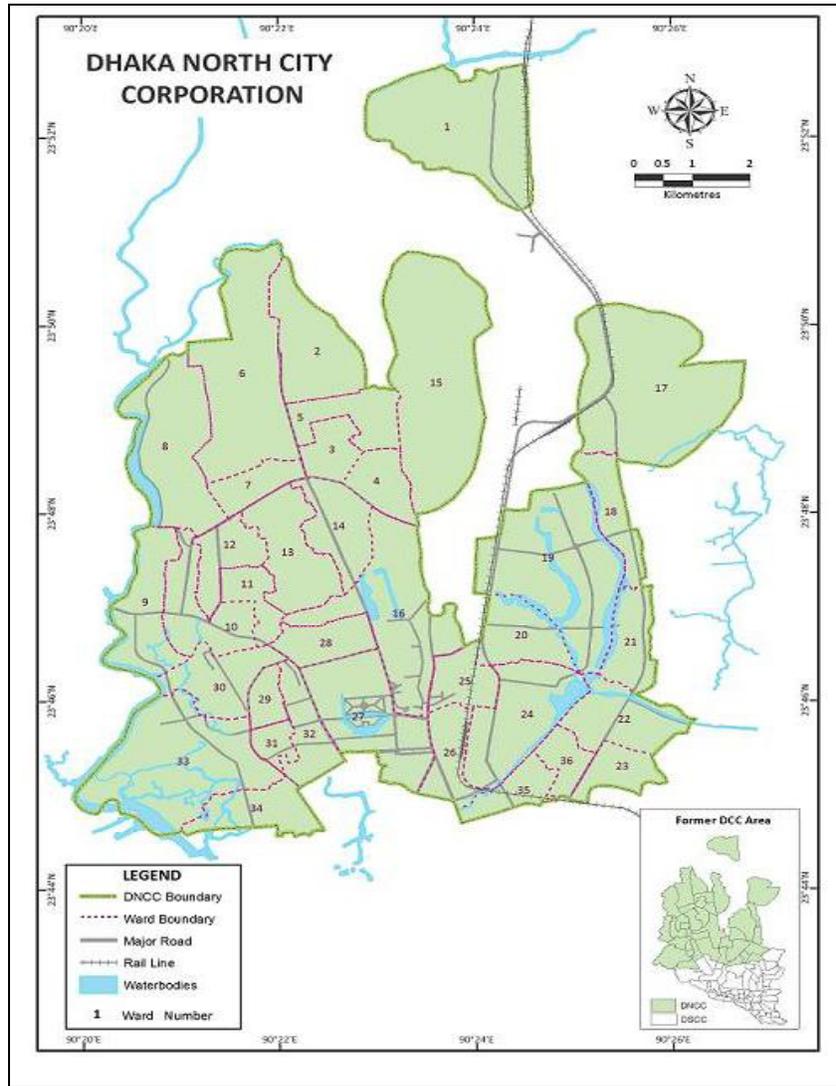


Fig. 1 Map of the Distribution of the New Ward of Dhaka North City Corporation.\*

\* The map is prepared by the authors from the base map of M. A. Hossain, Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), 2011.

Further north to Kawranbazar is Tejgaon, which was used by the European traders as centres of their factories and vegetable gardens during the Mughal period to be precise from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These European traders were mainly the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French. Although the Factory Houses were later moved to the main centre of the city in the south, the area continued to be used as vegetable gardens, and there was also a sizable settlement of local population in the area. With the end of the Mughal rule this area lost much of its population and importance owing to the decline of city subsequently caused by the harmful policies adopted by the British.

With the departure of the British in 1947 this area for that matter the whole of present day Dhaka North began to be settled by the new population who migrated to Dhaka for various reasons. Many of the vacant areas or cultivated lands were bought and settled by the migrants. The government also acquired land and developed areas for settlement. The task of creating urban settlement in the whole area of Dhaka City fell upon the newly established Dhaka Improvement Trust– DIT. The DIT came into being in August 1956 under the Town Improvement Act of 1953. The function of the Trust was to carry out the development of the city in general; and this primarily meant improvement of old areas including slum areas, widening of the roads and creation of new areas for residential, commercial, industrial and other purposes. The Trust was also responsible for planning the development of the area within its jurisdiction which extended from south of Narayanganj to the north of Tongi with the Sitalakhya and the Balu Rivers in the East and the Dhaleswari and the Tongi Rivers in the South and West covering an area of 150 square miles. It exercised control over construction of buildings, lay outs of roads and usage of lands in various zones according to a Master Plan. This led to a more or less planned extension of the city. In the period between 1950s and the mid 1980s Mohammadpur, Banani, Gulshan, Baridhara and Uttara slowly developed. The built-up development was limited to the highlands available and the low lying areas and water-bodies were very profitably used, which no doubt added to the beauty of the areas as upper class residential enclaves.<sup>2</sup> Then came the ‘growth rush’. Between 1990s and 2000s the new Dhaka North expanded to its present boundaries and is still expanding. The important areas which grew and expanded during these periods are Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Tejgaon, Banani, Gulshan, Baridhara and Uttara.

Historically, the growth and development of Dhaka can be categorized into six periods, such as- i) the Pre-Mughal Period (1205-1610), ii) the Mughal Period (1620-1757), iii) the East India Company Period (1758-1857), iv) the British

Colonial Period (1858-1947), v) the Pakistan Period (1947-1971) and vi) the Bangladesh Period (since 1971). However, since the Pre-Mughal Period, Dhaka City started to expand from its southern part which is the present “Old Town” of the city. Over time the city gradually moved towards West and North during the Mughal and British Period respectively. If we look back from historical perspective for the growth of the City, the growth of the Dhaka City could be well termed as slow and rapid during the 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

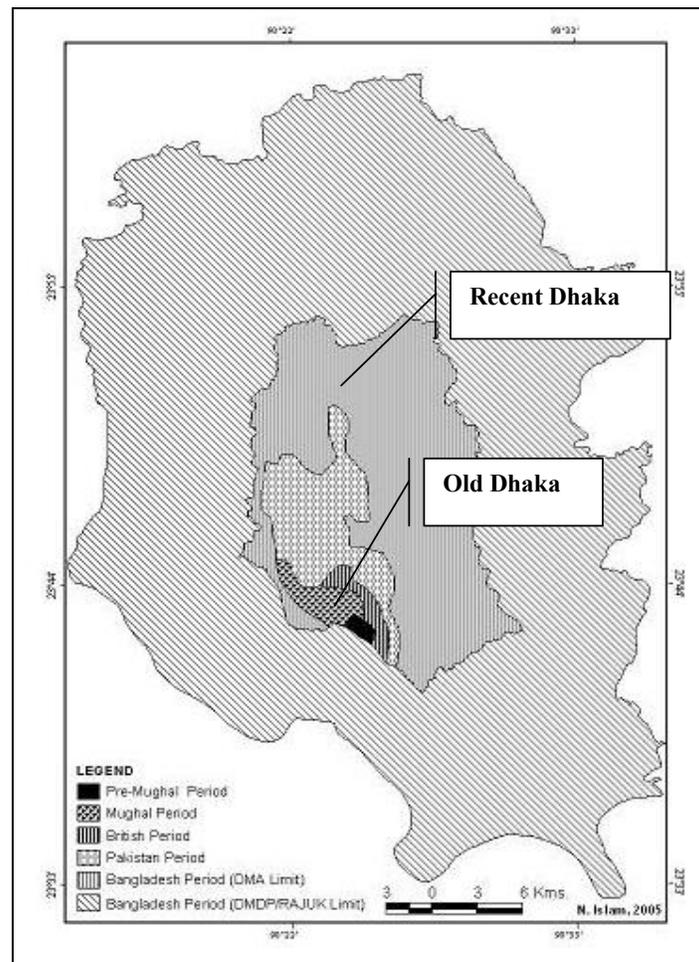


Fig. 2 Historical Growth of Dhaka towards the Northern Part. (Source: Islam, 2005.<sup>4</sup>)

On the other hand, during the 1960s the growth picked up and since 1971 onwards the growth had been phenomenal. Fig. 2 depicts the growth of Dhaka City towards the northern part from “Old Dhaka (Dhaka South)” to “Recent Dhaka (Dhaka North)” over historical time period.

During the Pakistan period the growth of the city mainly focused towards the North and from 1980s onwards the growth of Dhaka City continued rapidly towards the boundary of Tongi, Savar and Gazipur in the North in an unplanned way. So, during the last forty years the city has undergone a rapid radical change not only in its physical form but also in terms of internal physical transformations where plots and open spaces, rural agricultural spaces, low lands, water bodies, parks have been transformed into building areas, places for commercial structures, built-up lands, etc. A clear picture of these types of transformation can be vividly seen in the Tejgaon, Uttara Model Town, Kurmitola and Bashundhara Residential Area. However, from the 1980s to the present, the expanding population of Dhaka City began to occupy all the vacant spaces of the city including low lands, water bodies, even forest lands. No serious efforts have been undertaken to create a planned city and Dhaka has now been growing by its own demand.<sup>5</sup>

The physical expansion of Dhaka City over the last few decades was mainly due to rapid population growth; the highest rate of population growth and physical expansion took place during 1981–1991 when population was doubled.<sup>6</sup> However, since 2000s, the territorial configuration of Dhaka City had been classified into four different connotations. First, in 2005, Dhaka City Corporation had an area of 290 sq. kms. (120 sq. miles). The second concept of Dhaka City is the Dhaka Metropolitan Area (or more precisely the Dhaka Metropolitan Police or DMP Area) which is commonly referred to as DMA. Up to 2005, DMA or DMP was about 360 sq. km. (or 139 sq. miles) and this area was somewhat larger than DCC. The third connotation of Dhaka is the Dhaka Statistical Metropolitan Area or DSMA. In 1981, DSMA covered an area of 797 sq. kms. (307 sq. miles). The area of the DSMA region, however, was increased to 1353 sq. kms. (522 sq. miles) during the year 1991. The fourth concept of Dhaka is known as Capital Development Authority or Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakhya (RAJUK) area, which is mainly a planning region and also larger than DSMA. During 1959, RAJUK had a planning area of about 829 sq. kms. (320 sq. miles). However, up to 2005, the planning area of RAJUK spread to nearly 1528 sq. kms. (590 sq. miles). This planning area is known as the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Planning Area or DMDP area.<sup>7</sup> The extension of Dhaka City according to its above mentioned four connotations is shown in Fig. 3.

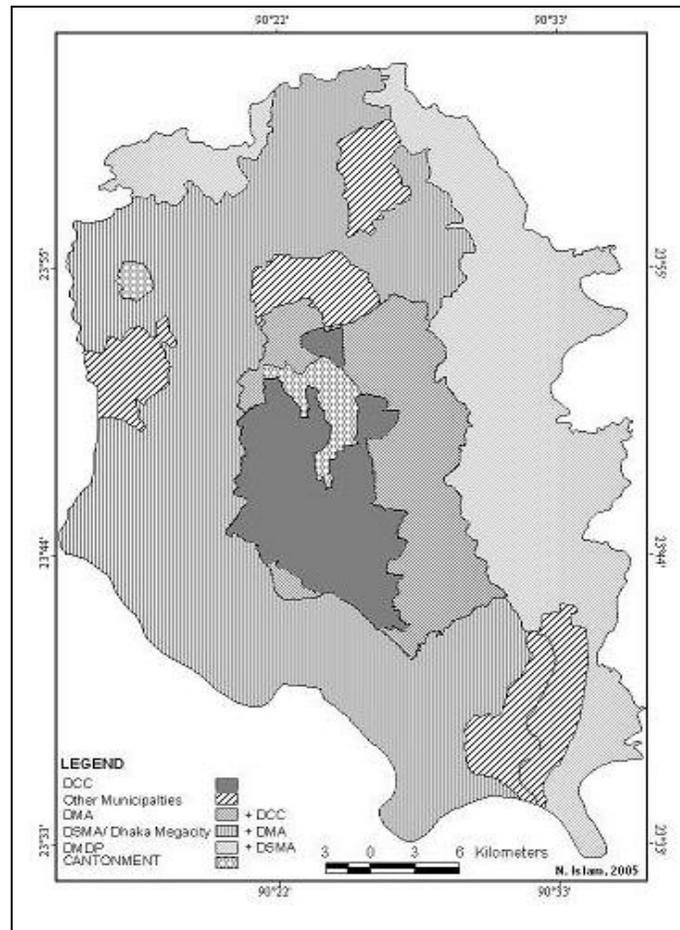


Fig. 3 Territorial Configuration of Dhaka City. (Source: Islam, 2005.<sup>8</sup>)

On the other hand, mixed use, combining shops with residences, increased considerably and the area of land used exclusively for shopping facilities were also increased. Besides, use of land for factories increased due to the growth of the garment industries. Moreover, use of land for offices increased due to the increase of government, NGO and private activities in the city over time. Furthermore, the percentage of agricultural land within the city limits decreased rapidly.<sup>9</sup> However, it is also applicable till today in terms of Dhaka North.<sup>10</sup> The land use/land cover pattern of Dhaka City up to 2011 is shown in Fig. 4 respectively.

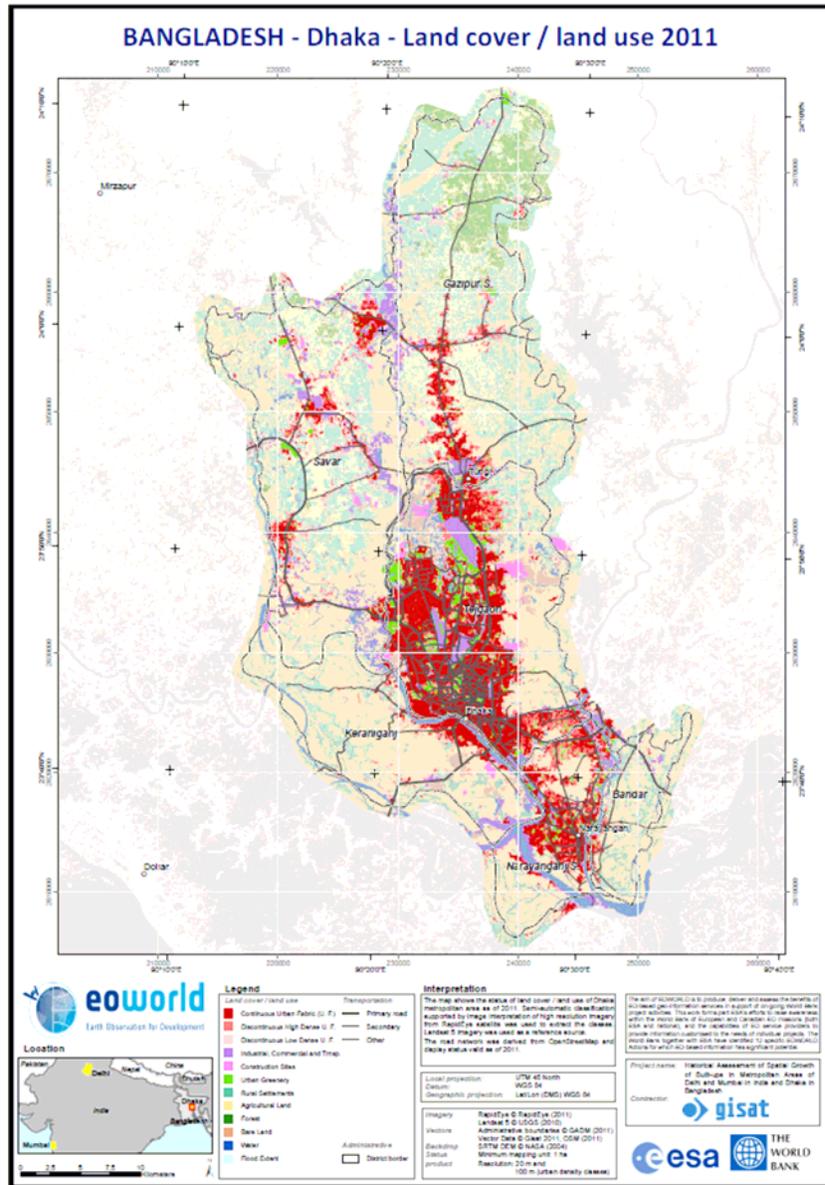


Fig. 4 Changing Land use Pattern of Dhaka City. (Source: <http://web.worldbank.org><sup>11</sup>)

Over the last forty years various researchers worked on the physical growth of Dhaka City. In this connection, it is evident that the city of Dhaka has physically extended with extensive internal classification as well as linking corridors.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, due to newer link roads from South to North the integration core has a northward pull. However, the physical extension of integration core corresponds to the development of polycentric functional centres.

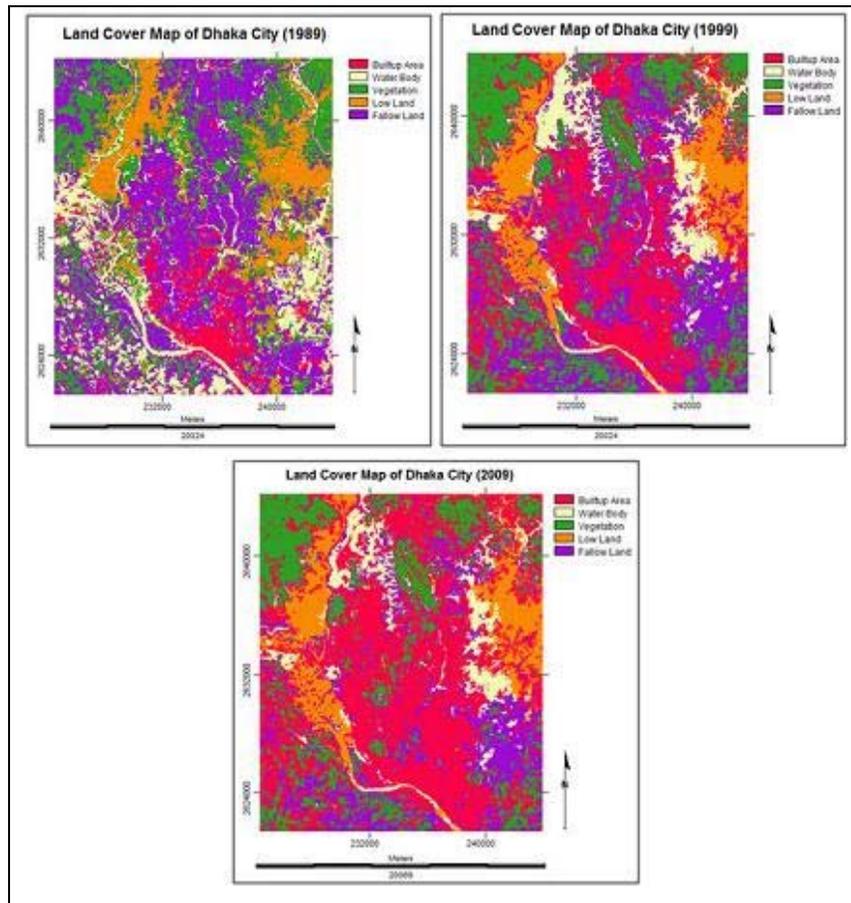


Fig. 5 Growth of Dhaka City through Land Cover Changes. (Source: Ahmed, 2013.)

### ***Land Cover Changes***

Dewan and Yamaguchi studied the land use/cover changes of Dhaka City through topographic maps and multi-temporal remotely sensed data. They found that from 1960 to 2005 built-up areas of Dhaka City increased approximately 15,924 hectares, while agricultural land decreased 7,614 hectares, vegetation decreased 2,336 hectares, wetland/lowland decreased 6,385 hectares, and water bodies decreased about 864 hectares. Besides, the amount of urban land increased from 11% (in 1960) to 344% in 2005. Simultaneously, the growth of landfill/bare soils category was about 256% during the same period.<sup>13</sup> Ahmed also studied the land cover changes of Dhaka City through a period of three decades by applying RS (Remote Sensing) technology.<sup>14</sup> He found that over the years (1989 to 2009) built-up area has increased in huge percentage (from 8.4% to 46%). On the other hand, it was also noteworthy that fallow land has decreased at a good rate (from 38% to 17%). However, the other land cover types (water bodies, vegetation and low land) have decreased in a very small amount (See Fig. 5) It is clear from the Fig. 6 that over the last three decades, built-up area has been increasing rapidly and Dhaka City has extended towards the North along with the built-up area where urbanisation also flourished at the same pace.

### ***Gains and Losses of Land Cover Types***

Ahmed also mentioned that between 1989 and 2009, in terms of built-up area, the core southern part of Dhaka City has remained the same. On the other hand, the northern part of Dhaka City has gained water body followed by a massive decrease in the south-east and south-west parts. However, no particular pattern of gains or losses is found for vegetation.<sup>15</sup> For the cases of low land the changes are evident in eastern and western parts and the losses are clear in north-western and mid parts of the city (See Fig. 6).

The study of Nilufar and Ahmed revealed that over the last forty years the growth of urbanisation of Dhaka City was not achieved in a systematic way due to the absence of proper town or city planning.<sup>16</sup>

Ashraf mentioned about the “Liquid Landscape” for the whole Dhaka City where he emphasized on the “edge concept” rather than the “centre concept” for the future development of the city in which hydrological and aquatic landscape frames the city.<sup>17</sup> However, in recent times the encroachment upon rivers and other factors have virtually diminished the utilities of the three rivers of the city, namely Balu, Shitalakhya and Turag; so that Dhaka’s water provision and water communication have been threatened. Even then the expansion of Dhaka North will definitely take place towards the north in future as it has been seen during the last forty years.

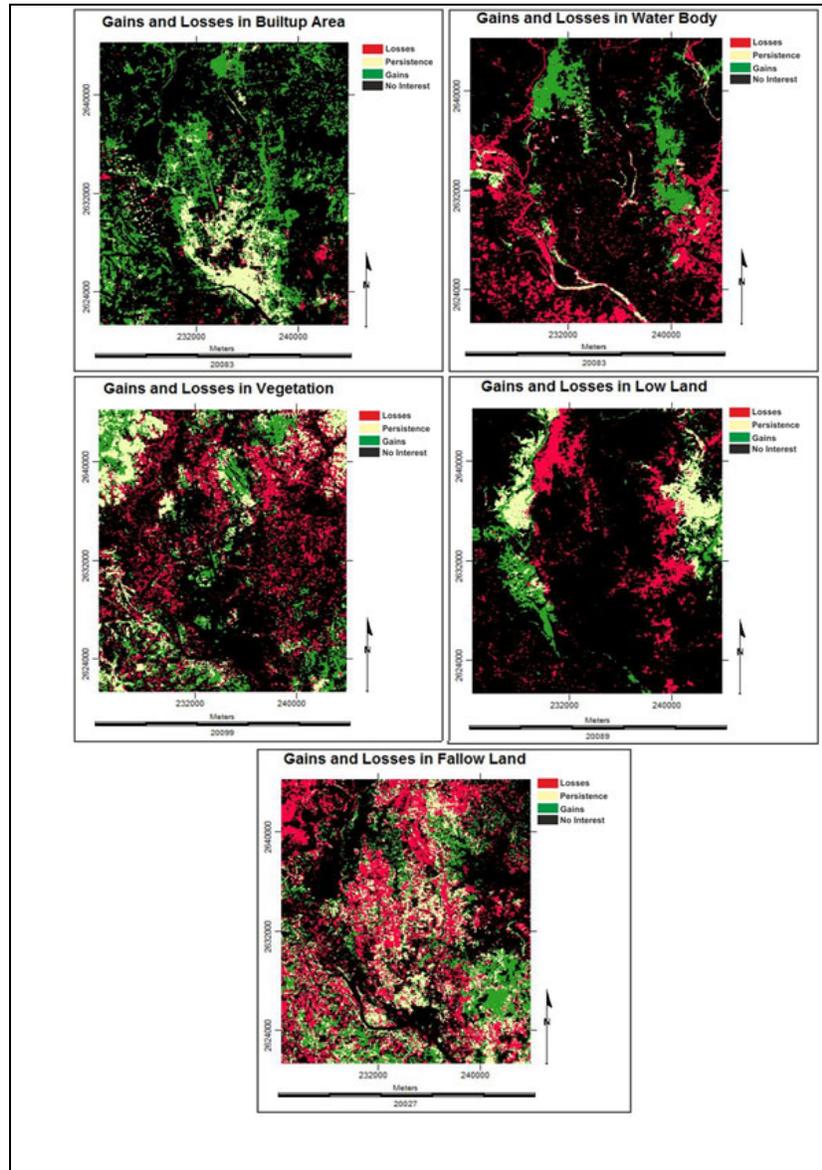


Fig. 6 Gains and Losses of Land Cover Types. (Source: Ahmed, 2013.)

**Economy**

The economic development of Dhaka North since 1971 has been most impressive. It has a rich and growing upper middle class population driving the market for modern consumer and luxury goods. It has also seen the growth of varieties of industries and many economic institutions. Trade and commerce of the area are growing by leaps and bounds.

Though there is no separate statistics of economic and monetary developments at present, we may safely say that Dhaka North shares a large portion of all Dhaka's economic growth. As of 2009, Dhaka's Gross Municipal Product (GMP) is registered at 85 billion dollars. With an annual growth rate of 6.2 percent, the GMP is projected to rise to 215 billion dollars by 2025. The annual per capita income of Dhaka is estimated at USD 1350.<sup>18</sup> Separately the per capita income in Dhaka North would be higher.

The main commercial areas of Dhaka North include Mahakhali, Gulshan, Kawranbazar, Farmgate, and Uttara. Besides, Bashundhara-Baridhara area is a fast developing economic area that includes high-tech industries, corporations and a large shopping precinct.

Growth has been especially strong in finance, banking, manufacturing, telecommunications and service sectors, while tourism, hotels and restaurants continue as important elements in the economy of Dhaka North. Most of the public and private banks of the country have their branches in Dhaka North; some of them have most modern facilities. These banks provide capitals to industrialists, businessmen and property developers. Foreign banks such as City Bank NA, HSBC and Standard Chartered also have branches here while HSBC and Standard Chartered have ATM booths all over the area. The mobile phone companies have their offices in the area providing services and employing large numbers of technical persons. There are also large numbers of buying houses of garments, which are playing a major role in the export trade of the country.

**Construction Industries**

During the last twenty years, urban developments sparked off a widespread construction boom in the Dhaka North area. Very recently new high-rise buildings and skyscrapers have changed the Dhaka North landscape. These developments have created a booming construction industry. Different construction firms of the conglomerate business groups of Bangladesh have erected various high-rise apartment buildings either by purchasing lands from the owners or demolishing the existing one or two-storied buildings and constructing over them multi-storied apartments some of them up to ten to

fourteen stories. The agglomeration of these newly emerged concrete structures has invaded the tranquility and greenery of Dhaka North like the 'Dragon's flame'.<sup>19</sup> However, shortage of electricity and gas has made these newly constructed multi-storied apartment buildings difficult of living. The situation is worsening day by day as the supply of essentials could not be provided. The unorganized planning of urban settlement has also become a threat to its dwellers if a sudden disaster like earthquake hits the city.

The Dhaka North city houses large construction companies like the Concord Group, Rangs Group, Beximco Group, Summit Group, Navana Group, Rahim Afroz etc. Most of these groups have their corporate offices located in Tejgaon, Mahakhali, Banani and Gulshan.

#### **Development of Commercial Shops and Bazaars**

The main commercial areas of the DNCC include Gulshan and Mahakhali, while Tejgaon is the major industrial area. With the rapid infrastructural development during the decades of 1990s, Mohammadpur, Kawranbazar, Gulshan, and Uttara areas have acquired a new outlook of multi-storied shopping plazas and commercial chain shops with modern escalators, elevators, central air conditioning and underground shopping facilities and car parking. Alternatively, Baridhara is developing as a new economic area that will include high-tech industries, corporations and a large shopping precinct in about five years. There are many shopping malls in DNCC area. Among them the most notable ones are Bashundhara City at Panthapath near Kawranbazar, Pink City Shopping Complex at Gulshan, Maskat Plaza at Uttara, etc. Besides, in the last 10-15 years the establishment of super shops like Meena Bazaar, Almas, Agora, etc. competes with the traditional bazaar system and serves a great majority of the people not only of Dhaka North but also of Dhaka South as well.

Bashundhara City is twenty-one storied tall shopping complex. The mall has space for 2,500 retail stores and cafeterias and also possesses a large underground gymnasium, a multiplex styled movie theater and top floor food court along with an indoor theme park. The fully air-conditioned shopping mall with rooftop gardens is considered as a symbol of the emerging modern city of Dhaka. It is also one of the biggest shopping malls in South Asia.

However, the most renowned brand shopping mall of Bangladesh, namely "Aarong" has its several branches in different places such as, Asadgate, Gulshan, MaghBazar and Uttra of the DNCC area. In recent years the trend of emerging shopping mall in Dhaka City is increasing rapidly in context of both the Dhaka North and Dhaka South City Corporation areas.

### **Food Industries**

Dhaka is traditionally famous for its food. The old Dhaka or the Mughal Dhaka became famous for its *Mughlai* or Persianised dishes, namely Biriani, Kabab, Kofta etc. The indigenous food also made great strides with fish preparations creating an important place of its own.

This famous tradition of Dhaka's food is also repeated in the Recent Dhaka (New Dhaka). Moreover, new additions have made it more cosmopolitan. This Recent Dhaka was more exposed to wider world since the partition of India in 1947. During the Pakistan days it came under serious western influence especially American influence. The so-called 'Fast-food' and soft drink especially 'Coca Cola' became the symbols of Recent Dhaka. The trend set up in the Pakistani days continued, and received tremendous fillip after the Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 as the country became more exposed to western influence and free market economy.

Informal food of the inhabitants also became varied as migrants from different districts settled down in the Recent Dhaka with their regional characteristics. Fish still dominates the general menu. However, formal food is served with Mughlai dishes with some Pakistani additions.

However, major changes have been noticed recently in the food habit of the people especially of the youngsters with the arrival of western as well as far eastern foods. These new kinds of food are served in the large numbers of newly established restaurants. Most important among them are however, American style fast food followed by Italian Pizza and Chinese dishes. Soft drinks, both foreign and locally produced, have become extremely popular. The following are some of the most popular food shops in the DNCC area: KFC, Pizza Hut, Khazana, Marine Restaurant, Park Town, Yan-ji Chinese Restaurant, Cine Bistro, Aromaz at Hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon, Dominous Pizza and Salt Grill Restaurant in Bashundhara City.

Dhaka North has established new food industries for different types of food like organic food, fast food etc. The food industries of DNCC supply foods to consumer shops, retail shops, chain food shops etc. They are mostly located in the Tejgaon, Mirpur and Uttara areas. These food industries are generally operated through owner-basis. The people who work in these food industries are migrants from different districts of Bangladesh.

### **Society**

The society which is developing in Dhaka North is a mixed society with groups of people with no particular roots or tradition. On the one hand, we see in Gulshan a concentration of very rich people with a westernized way of life, and on the other hand, in the Mirpur-Mohammadpur areas the people are more or less middle income and lower income groups with the Bangladeshi culture dominating the scene. This is also largely the case in Uttara though the number of well off people is larger there. The people who now live in Dhaka North have come from all parts of Bangladesh.

The vast majority of the people are Muslims of Sunni sects who are generally very pious and moderate in their outlook. Orthodox, conservative attitude does not prevail and people are more liberal in their behavior and beliefs. They however, perform their religious duties faithfully.

The families are predominantly nucleus though quite often elderly parents live with their children. But joint-family system practically does not exist. Child marriage is virtually absent. Household maids are however distinct features in the families.

There are also a large group of foreign people living in Dhaka North as merchants and industrialists. There are also substantial numbers of foreign technical and professional people living in the area. Then there are the diplomatic enclaves. All the foreign missions are situated in Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara areas, and the diplomats and international professional people also live in these areas. The diplomats have their own ways of life which have given the area a cosmopolitan look. Some of these diplomats have schools of their own where their children and others study. Some of them also have their own clubs and other recreational facilities.

### **Culture and Heritage**

The old part of Dhaka City has a strong cultural background in terms of food, religion, cultural programmes, different type of festivals, like the festival of *kite flying* during spring, traditional *Iftaree Bazaar* during Ramadan, *Kasseda Song* during the Sehree times, *rituals of wedding ceremonies*, *Puja festivals* in the temples, *Hal Khata* systems during the Pohela Boishakh (first day of the Bengali month 'Boishakh') and so on. Following these the new part particularly the northern part of the city also celebrate the Boishakhi festivals, Puja festivals in different places of Gulshan, Banani, and Uttara. However, the residents of Gulshan, Banani, and Baridhara particularly celebrate the New Year Eve festival gorgeously in different clubs, restaurants, cafés of these areas. Moreover, since 2000s these parts of Dhaka North regularly arranged different arts, photography

and fashion exhibitions, and workshops through different art galleries, centres established in different places of Gulshan, Banani, Mahakhali and Uttara areas. Some notable galleries of these areas are Bengal Art Lounge, Saju's Art Gallery, Gallery Kaya, Kosmos, etc. These places have now created a new cultural hub for artists, art enthusiasts, photographers, etc. Moreover, some of the private universities of Dhaka North established their own photographic and art societies and they also have opened up new arenas regarding the field of art, crafts and heritage to the younger generation of the Dhaka North. So, the traditional culture and heritage of Old Dhaka are also slowly entering in Dhaka North with new dimension and becoming a mixture of Western and Bengali culture.

### **Educational Development**

The education system of Bangladesh is mainly divided into three traditional stages, primary, secondary and tertiary or higher education. However, besides there are technical or vocational education and non-stream education system practiced all over the country. The Government of Bangladesh is proud that its education programs have dramatically improved since the independence in 1971 and in the 1990s, particularly during the later half of the decade of 1990s. A large part of this renewed commitment was a direct result of the *1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA)*, which encouraged all participating nations to expand their vision to meet goals in the education sector, especially the goal of making primary education universal. Following this conference, donors in Bangladesh invested much more heavily in the education sector and NGOs increased their involvement in assisting the Bangladesh government in meeting its primary education goals.

In Dhaka North, education is carried through the Bangla and English Medium Schools, and also there is a Madrasah education system as well. During the decades of 1990s the educational development took a new shape with the establishment of different private universities in this major part of Dhaka City. There are also some public universities as well.

#### *Bangla and English Medium School and College*

Many eminent public and private institutions of Dhaka City are located in its northern part including the zones of Uttara, Mirpur-Pallabi, Gulshan, Mirpur-Kazipara, Gabtoli, Kawranbazar. The area is also the place of many notable primary and secondary Bangla Medium Schools like RAJUK Uttara Model School and College in Uttara, Dhaka Residential Model School and College in Mohammadpur, Saint Joseph Higher Secondary School, Asadgate (Mohammadpur), Monipur High School in Mirpur, B.F. Shaheen School and

College in Mohakhali, Khilgaon Government High School in Khilgaon, Holy Cross College in Farmgate, Tejgaon Government High School in Tejgaon, Shaheed Bir Uttam Lt. Anwar Girls' College in Cantonment, etc. Among these schools, RAJUK Uttara Model School and College has been the topmost school in Dhaka City in the last few years. On the other hand, renowned English medium schools like Scholastica (three branches in Mirpur, Gulshan and Uttara), St Francis Xavier's Green Herald International School in Mohammadpur, Academia in Lalmatia (Mohammadpur), Green Herald School in Mohammadpur, Sir John Wilson School in Gulshan, Canadian Trillinium School in Gulshan, American International School of Dhaka in Baridhara, Bangladesh International School (BIS) in Mahakhali are also situated in the DNCC area.

#### *Madrasah Education*

In the subcontinent the Sultanat and Mughal governments liberally supported Madrasahs by way of making '*lakhraj*' or rent free land grants. Such grants were known as '*maadat-e-maash*'. The early Muqtub or Furqania madrasahs in India were established in Delhi, Lucknow, Madras (Chennai) and Dhaka, and a few largely Muslim populated areas. In imparting education, Madrasahs of Bengal followed the *Darse Nizami System* and it continued till early 1970s. The curricula included the *Unani method of medicine*, *Cottage industry* and *Technical training*. At present, there are three systems of Madrasah Education in Bangladesh. These are: i) The Old Darse Nizami System; ii) The Revised and Modified Nizami System and iii) The Alia Nisab (Higher Syllabus) System. Among these three categories the first two are popularly called 'Quawmi' or non-government madrasahs. To co-ordinate these madrasahs a government body called Non-government Education Board was established in 1978. However, up to 1998, 2,043 Madrasahs were registered with the Quawmi Madrasah Education Board under Rifaqul Madaris throughout the country. Over 10 thousand *Quawmi Madrasahs* have been established in Bangladesh up to 2008. This board controlled seven standards of education system.<sup>20</sup> At present madrasah education is an integral part of national education system. Now Bangla, English and Science have been introduced in most government aided madrasahs. Students having recognized diplomas from madrasahs are also entitled to obtain transfer for themselves from the madrasahs to colleges and universities. Some of the notable madrasahs in the Dhaka North are- Jamiah Rahmania Arabia in Mohammadpur, Islamic Research Center in Bashundhara, Jamia Madania Baridhara in Gulshan, Al-Madrasatul Arabia Baitussalam in Uttara, etc.

*Public Universities*

The arrival of Lord Curzon as a Viceroy in the Indian sub continent opened up the vision of the existing education system and university education went ahead to a new arena of education. Curzon instituted the Indian Universities Commission in 1902 with a view to improving the state of higher education in the country. The University of Dhaka (Dacca) was established in 1921 under the Dacca University Act 1920 of the Indian Legislative Council, and it was a part of expansion programme (It was also the first public university of Bangladesh). It marked the democratization of the administrative bodies of older universities by a substantial increase in the number of elected members. However, in the recent years some important public universities have been established in the northern part of Dhaka City, like- Shere-e-Bangla Agricultural University in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) in Mirpur, and Bangladesh Textile University in Tejgaon. At present BUP is involved to run all educational institutions of the army, navy and air force and facilitate professional degrees for armed forces personnel and civilians through its affiliated institutions currently nine.<sup>21</sup>

*Private Universities*

In Bangladesh the Private Universities Act was passed in 1992. As soon as this Act was passed in the Parliament, many educationists, intellectuals and guardians welcomed it as an expansion of education at the private level, which could create opportunities for many students at the tertiary level and at the same time it could function to complement the long established public system of education in the country. However, the Private Universities Act of 1992 opened up a new vista in the history of the country's university education. A section of the citizenry who could afford to send their children abroad for higher education got an option to consider their cases whether they should send their children abroad any more for higher education or admit them in the private universities within the country.

The first private university that started functioning in Bangladesh is the North South University (NSU). It was established by the North South University Foundation in 1992. Some of the best private universities in Bangladesh like the North South University (NSU), East West University, Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB), BRAC University, and American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB), etc. are situated in the northern part of the Dhaka City. So Dhaka North City now exhibits a new educational characteristic since 1971.

The growth of private universities in Bangladesh has taken a phenomenal shape in the recent years. The private universities have undoubtedly opened up new avenues of higher education in the country but higher education must be ensured in terms of quality education (although the quality of some private universities is reasonably high). University Grants Commission (UGC) considers that it has a greater role to play in this connection. To control the commercial motive and at the same time, to ensure quality education are indeed a difficult job. It is unlikely that all private universities of Bangladesh will be of the same nature and academic standard. There must be some kind of variation in the areas of course offering, financial positions and quality of education. What is needed most is the cumulative impact of these universities in the growth of higher education in the country. However, in spite of these plausible shortcomings, private universities also have a positive side; after nearly a decade of their operation, the private universities can claim to have made an impact on the main stream universities. One solid example is the switch over to four-year degree course that the public universities have already adopted, following the example of private universities.

*Engineering and Technological Education  
in the Private Universities of Dhaka North*

As mentioned earlier, during the decade of 1990, various private universities have been established in the northern part of Dhaka. Most of these universities provide general education but some of them only provide engineering and technological education. Among these most notable universities in the Dhaka North area are- Ahasanullah University of Science and Technology (situated in Tejgaon), Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology (main campus situated in Banani and the other campuses are situated in Uttara, Panthapath, Mirpur, etc.), Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (situated in Mirpur), etc.

*Medical Facilities/Health Facilities: Government Hospitals/  
Private Hospitals*

Dhaka has been famous for providing medical facilities for a long time. Though in the old days, for lack of proper medicine many people lost their lives from deadly diseases. In Mughal period, Ayurvedic and Hekimi treatment provided succor to many. The first important western medical institution, the Mitford Hospital was established in 1858. This institution brought about a revolutionary change in the state of the health of the citizens of Dhaka. *The Dhaka Medical College and Hospital* was established in 1946 and *Sir Salimullah Medical College* in 1963. Though during the Pakistan period western medical system developed substantially, the growth of western medical facilities in Dhaka after

the birth of Bangladesh has been phenomenon. A number of hospitals, medical institutions, clinics, diagnostic centres etc. have been established both on public and private initiatives some of them are of world class standard. The name of BIRDEM, Lab Aid, Square, United are just a few examples. However, the numbers of these medical institutions are found inadequate when considered the huge population of the city as well as those who come from outside the city to seek medical help. Nevertheless it may be said that the health care situation in Dhaka North is more than satisfactory.

There are many medical research centres in the Dhaka North among which the most famous is the ICDDR,B situated in Mahakhali. The ICDDR,B or the *International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh* is an international health research centre. It is dedicated to saving lives through research and treatment. It addresses some of the most critical health concerns facing the world today, ranging from improving neonatal survival to HIV/AIDS. The Centre is credited, among other accomplishments, with the discovery of Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) for the treatment of diarrhoea and cholera. In collaboration with academics and research institutions all over the world, it conducts research, training and extension activities as well as programme-based activities to develop and share knowledge for global life saving solutions.

Institute of Disease and Chest Hospital (IDCH) is another notable government hospital in Mahakhali area. This institute is mainly a postgraduate teaching and training centre for treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation of wide range of medical and surgical chest diseases. Moreover, Mahakhali is also a place of another important hospital in the Dhaka North namely, National Institute for Cancer Research & Hospital (NICR&H). It was established in 1982 and it is also a teaching institute and training centre for postgraduate studies and research on cancer.

In Dhaka North, Apollo Hospital also provides the latest medical care facilities as well as the Emergency Air Ambulance service to outside which is the first of its kind in Bangladesh. On the other hand, being located in the heart of Dhaka, Square Hospital Limited also serves a greater part of both Dhaka North and Dhaka South. It is an affiliated partner of Methodist Healthcare, Memphis Tennessee, USA.<sup>22</sup>

### **Transport and Traffic**

It is a common phenomenon that most part of Dhaka City is badly affected by tremendous traffic jam over the last forty years and the traffic systems have still not improved properly. Probably Dhaka is a notable example among the world

cities in this regard. Faulty traffic signaling systems, inadequate manpower, narrow road spaces and overtaking tendency of drivers create prolonged traffic congestions. Besides, too many rickshaws, narrow and winding roads of the city, considerable speed difference between rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles (for example, push carts and cycle vans) and motorised vehicles, holding of public meetings at street corners (due to lack of any public venue for such meetings), lack of knowledge and an inadequate and corrupt traffic administration were some of the factors contributing to the horrendous traffic jams. Albeit the roads and lanes in the northern part of Dhaka are comparatively wide than the southern part but due to the increase of private cars, buses, overtaking tendency, increased number of private schools, colleges and universities and also corporate offices in this part of the city, create tremendous transport pressure here which also results into traffic jam. Besides, most of the important roads of the northern part of the city termed as VIP Road, where frequent VVIP movement and political processions are observed regularly, which cause further traffic congestions. Moreover, most of the important roads of this part of the city also used for hawking and storage of construction materials e.g. in Farmgate, Mahakhali, Tejgaon, etc. These have naturally severely aggravated the traffic situation in Dhaka North.

Moreover, due to traffic jam a substantial portion of working hours are wasted on roads which indirectly put adverse impact on economy. On the other hand, regarding the environmental problems, it causes serious air pollution and noise pollution and thus worsens the overall environmental condition. Different researches have been done on reducing the traffic jam scenario of Dhaka City emphasizing on construction of roads through east-west connection of Dhaka City, construction of circular embankment-cum-road along the periphery of Dhaka City, grade separated road network system, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, Metro-Rail system, etc. Among these recommendations some initiatives have already been taken and some are in the process. Most recent example of this type of improvements in the transport sector is the Kuril Flyover (3.1 km), which was opened for the public on 4 August 2013. It is constructed under the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) of the government to build up a modern Dhaka. The flyover comprises four sections providing uninterrupted road connections between Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Nikunja, Banani, Rampura and Purbachal areas.<sup>23</sup> However, number of transport vehicles especially the CNG auto-rickshaw is not adequate enough considering the demand of people and the

high price charge asking by the drivers of CNG also make the system complex to the city dwellers. Most of the drivers do not follow the meter systems for running the auto-rickshaws. So, there is a need to carry out a monitoring system to run this mode of transport system systematically. By reducing traffic jam, both the DNCC and DSSC of Dhaka City can play a very important role by ensuring healthy environment and sustainable ecosystem.

### **Environment**

The most significant development in the recent global history relates to the changes in its environment, both through natural causes and by human actions. It goes without saying that plants, gardens, wildlife and balanced environmental conditions are integral parts of a healthy urban centre. In 2010, the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh published a research book on the Environmental Changes of Capital Dhaka over the last four hundred years. Experts, researchers, scholars from various disciplines jointly worked there. The research findings of the book titled *Environment of Capital Dhaka* particularly in the field of the environmental and ecological issues of Dhaka City since 1971 highlighted many important issues in connection with the environment of Dhaka City. In this context, it is observed that initiatives have been taken to set up Social Forestry Programme as well as Strip Garden Formation along the roadsides of Dhaka City.<sup>24</sup> Besides, establishment of Chandrima Uddyan in 1980s was also a remarkable garden in the DNCC area dominated by tree species.<sup>25</sup> However, during 1977, about 18 open spaces (about 396 acres of land) were identified in Dhaka.<sup>26</sup> In 1990, 115 parks and playgrounds (617.01 acres of land) were identified in the city.<sup>27</sup> Of these, 591.01 acres were located in the Recent Dhaka, i. e. in Dhaka North. In the 1990s, the stock of open space was reduced to 92 including 71 parks and 21 playgrounds of 229.461 acres and 39.66 acres of land respectively. In 2004, the area of open spaces was around 221.92 acres according to the draft Detailed Area Plan of Dhaka City.<sup>28</sup>

In terms of health issue, the air quality of Dhaka City shows an ups and downs trend. The citizens of metropolitan Dhaka were being slow-poisoned by air pollution in the 1990s. Hence, the commercial areas of Dhaka North, such as Farmgate, Mahakhali, Gulshan Post Box, Asadgate (Mohammadpur) areas, the situation was worsening. The air pollution survey of 1990 found that the major industrial areas like Tejgaon in Dhaka were not the main source of air pollution. The main sources of air pollution in the city were the vehicles and brick fields

built around the outskirts of the capital.<sup>29</sup> However, in recent times though the levels of pollutants are considerably lower than the 1990s but the number of patients suffering from various diseases, especially the respiratory diseases are still increasing.<sup>30</sup>

Khals (ditches) and detention storages have been the most important elements of the storm water drainage system in Dhaka. Experts and writers mention that there were about forty Khals in Dhaka. However, in 1987, JICA identified three major Khal systems in Greater Dhaka City- first, Degun-Ibrahimpur-Kallyanpur Khal system draining into the Buriganga and Turag Rivers, second, the Gulshan-Banani-Begunbari-Dhanmondi Khal system draining into the Balu River, and third the Dholai-Gerani-Segunbagicha Khal system draining into the Buriganga and Balu Rivers. Among these Khal systems, the Begunbari Khal flowed as an open channel between Airport Road and DIT Road through Hateer Jheel, which is the largest stormwater detention area in the Dhaka City. However, in more recent years, domestic waste water discharge into the storm sewers of the city has led to deterioration in the quality of storm sewers which in turn pollute the receiving water bodies.<sup>31</sup> Present physical extension and the dense catchments area of two important Lakes (Banani Lake and Gulshan-Baridhara Lake) of Dhaka North are shown in Fig. 7.

***Success Story: Hatirjheel-Begunbari Project***

Around four years ago, RAJUK in association with Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), took up the project to recover the 304 acres of land and the city's largest water retention basin – Hatirjheel and Begunbari Canals. The design of the construction work has been laid out by Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) while the “16 Engineering Construction Battalion (ECB)” of the Bangladesh Army monitored the project. The total costing of the project was over Tk. 1971 crore and the project was inaugurated and opened for the public on 2 January 2013. The total project sites stretch between Airport Road and Rampura along Tejgaon, Gulshan, Modhubagh, Maghbazar, Badda and Ulan. The project area included 46 acres of Rajuk's land, 34 acres of other government agencies, 81 acres of Court of Wards and 141 acres of private land. It is assumed that the project will help ease the traffic situation in Maghbazar, Modhubagh, Ulan, Mohanagar, Daserpara, Rampura, Merul Badda, Gulshan, Tejgaon and Begunbari.

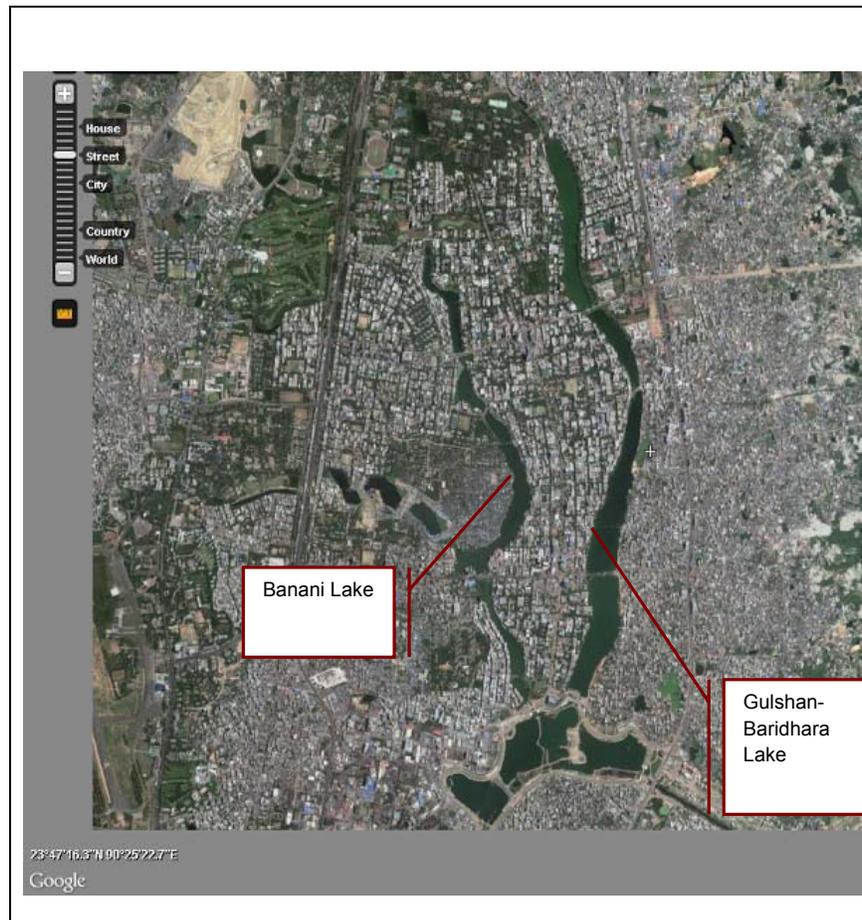


Fig. 7 Physical Extension and Catchments of Two Important Lakes (Banani Lake and Gulshan Lake) of North Dhaka Shown through Satellite Image [Google Image, 2013].

(Source: Wikimapia, 2013.<sup>32</sup>)

However, the most notable public facilities of this project includes a 9 kms east-west connecting express road, 8 kms service roads, 477 metre bridges, 9 kms footpath, 10 kms lakeside walkway, 260 metres viaduct, forty metres overpass, an integrated drainage management connecting Begunbari canal with the Gulshan-Banani Lakes, a sewer network, an aesthetic public space, and waterfronts. The scheme is also designed to help ground water percolation. Besides, the three bridges (each of them is more than 15 feet high) have been

built across the Hateerjheel Lake along with three viaducts along the peripheral road and four overpasses on the road.<sup>33</sup> However, the scheme's service roads now help the commuters of Rampura, Badda, Ulan, Modhubagh, Maghbazar, Gulshan, and Tejgaon area an easy movement in these areas.

### **Slums/Squatters**

Expansion of urban areas also creates unplanned informal settlements as the sole option for newcomers. Informal settlements, squatters, and slums are also notable characteristics of Dhaka City since the independence as the Capital city. Most of the slums in Dhaka City are agglomerated with rural-urban migrants from different regions of Bangladesh. In general there are about 9048 slums in the six divisional cities of where about 15.45 million people live. However, for the case of Dhaka City, there are approximately 4966 slums and about 3.4 million people live in those slums which are equivalent to nearly 40% of the total population of Dhaka City. Besides, the population density of the slums of Dhaka City is 2,20,246 persons per sq. km. On the other hand, the non-slums population is 19,677 persons per sq. km.<sup>34</sup> However, over the last forty years these settlements have grown in numbers and in spatial forms with the increase of the urban poor and their exclusion from formal housing sectors. The northern part of Dhaka also possesses some slums and squatters along with the posh residential area of Gulshan and Banani. "The Korail Slum of Gulshan" area is a remarkable example of this.

Dhaka's sprawling slums are testament to its struggle to accommodate millions of new residents. Land in the city is scarce and people have filled in water bodies and low lands to make space for new housing. Mass evictions are on the rise as landowners clear out slums to make way for more profitable building projects. Along with conditions of urban poverty, informal economy, and challenged urban management systems, these settlements and their residents have become increasingly susceptible to vulnerabilities like fire and natural disasters.

### ***Challenges: Infrastructure Black hole- Korail Slum***

The Korail Slum in Dhaka spreads out over 170 acres of government land owned by the state-owned Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited, the Public Works Department and the Ministry of Information and Communication. It is the largest slum in Dhaka North and shares its borders with two wealthy neighborhoods, Banani and Gulshan. Korail came into existence about twenty five years back and today has a population of 78,000. In the one-room, 100-200

sq. ft. dwellings, families with an average of five members, have created a life for themselves. However, when it comes to basic amenities, the 16,000 families of Korail are struggling. Not only these, they are also grappling with severe sanitation and water problems. They do not have any access to government-run health or educational institutions either. In April 2012, the Dhaka district administration began to demolish almost 2,000 homes in Korail without advance notice, leaving 4,500 people homeless. Despite the threat of eviction, Korail residents have not left the slum.<sup>35</sup> Existence of Slums (up to 2005) in Dhaka Metropolitan (DMP) area is shown in fig. 8.

According to a community leader, Abdul Mannan,

The problem is that we are considered illegal residents and, therefore, we are not entitled to any government facilities like health, education, water, sanitation, and so on.<sup>36</sup> Simultaneously, a resident of the slum Jahan Ara said- “Just because we are poor it does not mean that we do not deserve a life of dignity. We also need potable water and proper toilets. Even my children deserve a decent education and something as basic as a playground.”<sup>37</sup>

According to a study by the Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), the Public Works Department’s plans to develop apartments for forty thousands officials and media personnel on 43 acres of the land Korail sits on. There does not seem to be any assistance or rehabilitation plans for current Korail slum-dwellers.<sup>38</sup>

### **Technology: Booming in the ICT Sector**

Technological solutions not only make urban service delivery economically viable, but also ensure environmental sustainability and social inclusiveness. After the emergence of Bangladesh, in the recent years a dramatic technological boom has taken place in the ICT sector of Dhaka City. Various electronics markets have flourished in Dhaka City over the last forty years. The largest computer market of Bangladesh “BCS Computer City” has been built at Agargaon, which belongs to the northern part of the City. However, in the last 10-12 years, different mobile operating companies, such as City Cell, Grameen Phone, Banglalink, Robi (previously Aktel), Airtel (Previously Warid) have set up their offices in different areas of Dhaka City particularly most of them have their head offices in Gulshan, Banani, and Uttara which belong to Dhaka North area.

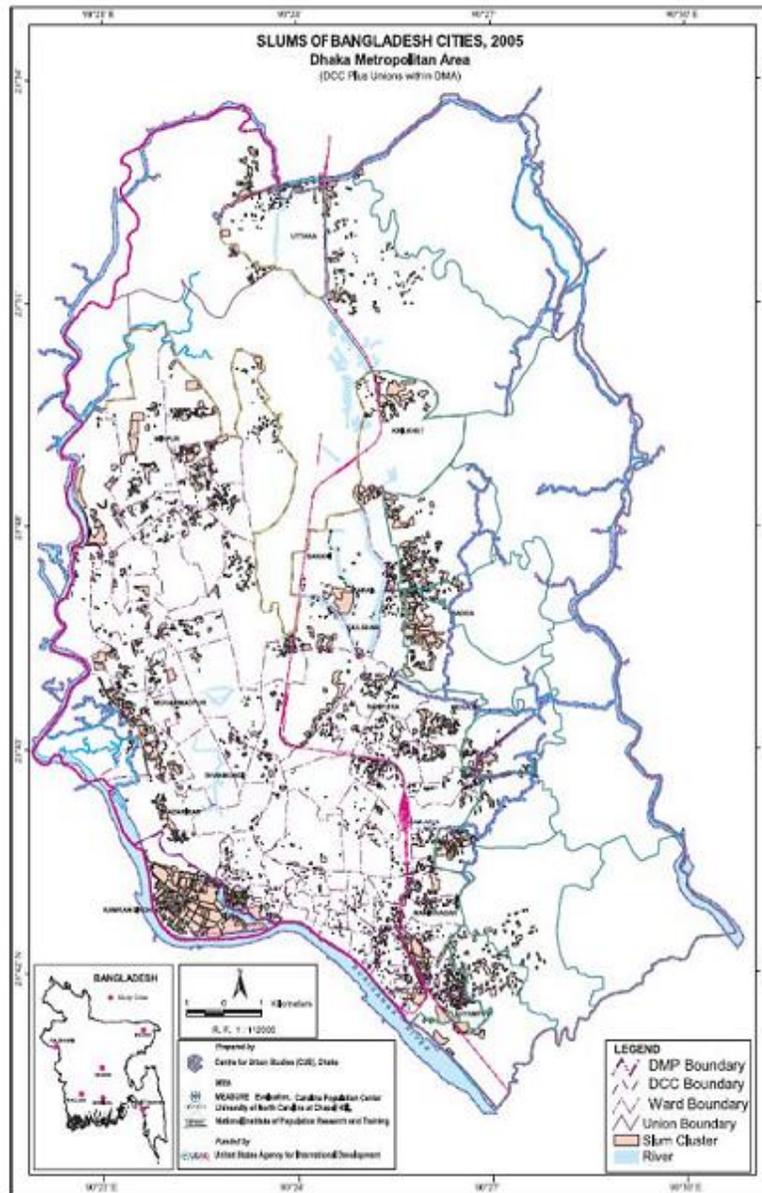


Fig. 8 Slums Map of Dhaka City up to 2005. (Source: CUS, 2005.<sup>39</sup>)

On the other hand, the holding of ICT fair at different times of the year makes people aware about the latest model of electronic products in terms of laptop, tablet, mobile phone, LCD TV, etc. The young generation of the city uses the technology profusely for communication purposes. Besides, nowadays, job searching processes also depend on technology where different job searching websites, (e.g. <http://www.bdjobs.com>, <http://www.protho-alojobs.com>) etc. plays key role in this context. Moreover, the new trends of *outsourcing* also have created job facilities among the students and jobless people. However, in recent times, people even participate in different workshops or training regarding *outsourcing*. One of the renowned global freelance market company named oDesk (A USA) based Company; website: <https://www.oDesk.com>) arranged such type of event at Gulshan, Dhaka in May 2012. Another most important dimension in terms of communication technology is the use of different social networking sites like facebook, google+, twitter, blogs, etc. These are the common platform of modern communication system where people particularly the young generation share their views, ideas, and works with people around the world whom they are connected with through these social networking systems; and the people of Megacity Dhaka as well as Dhaka North are not lagging behind from these facilities.

The technological advancement has also made things possible like mobile banking, money exchange procedure through *B-kash*, *Moneygram* and other networking systems. The establishment of different electronics media, TV channels, and Radio stations are also the effects of this growing technological demand.

### **Conclusion**

The growth and development of Dhaka North during the last forty years have been most impressive and in some cases extraordinary. The urban area has expanded, many houses and residential areas have been built and economic and industrial activities are booming. However, it is too early to talk about the future of Dhaka North. Nevertheless, it can be definitely said that the urban area of Dhaka North would certainly be extended at the cost of open spaces and water bodies. The expansion will also be mostly unplanned. Albeit on many occasions the authorities talk of planned growth of Dhaka City but in reality these are not being followed. Dhaka North will definitely be a place of well off people as most of the inhabitants are landlords, high government officials, business people and other professional people. Given the nature of population its commerce would be booming and the people will be served by expensive goods and materials. There will also be top class commercial centres and expensive hotels and restaurants.

However, because of large numbers of population and unplanned growth, the traffic problem would be a serious matter and overcrowding of roads would be a common feature. However, recently measures have been taken to ease the traffic jams by building diverse roads and flyovers. If these are more successfully carried out, road transport would be much easier.

Dhaka North would be inhabited highly by educated and professional people. Hence, it could be a truly urban area. Barring the disaster Dhaka North would be a prosperous city. Its educational development with the presence of many excellent private and public universities, colleges and schools, it would be a great hub of educational activities. Culturally it would be more of a cosmopolitan nature than purely Bangladeshi culture. Its future would be secured if political situation of the country remains stable and people are given opportunities to participate in nation-building.

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## **FOUR DECADES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH: AN ASSESSMENT\***

Mohammed Helal\*\* and Md. Amzad Hossain\*\*\*

### **1. Introduction**

There has been a huge economic progress in Bangladesh since its independence. None can dare to call it a “bottomless basket” anymore. Rather many countries in the world borrow from this basket. Nonetheless, it could have achieved much more had it utilized its labor force efficiently. Lack of energy infrastructure and skill in our labor force may hold us flourishing at the pace we desire. To accelerate economic growth and to sustain our economic progress, we need to control our population growth, add skill to our labor force, conserve cultivable land, and mitigate environmental pollution. To ensure improvements in these counts, good governance is essential.

Bangladesh has become independent in 1971 from Pakistan at the expense of 3 million lives in a bloody war of liberation. The war almost completely destroyed the physical infrastructure of the country. Bangladesh is endowed with limited mineral resources, if considered in the context of her large population. Bangladesh had in essence two endowments- land and labor. Capitalizing these two endowments Bangladesh has come a long way since its birth when U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger had disparagingly called it a “bottomless basket”. Bangladesh is now an emerging economy in South Asia, with her annual exports of some \$25 billion mainly from Knitwear and garment products, remittances equivalent to \$14 billion in 2012 and a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of over 6.0 percent despite its confrontational politics and global economic slowdown over the last few years.<sup>1</sup> The outside world has to borrow from Bangladesh as reflected by the fact that export earning and remittance earning together account for more than one-third of her GDP. Our dependency on foreign aid for the development project has reduced from 88% in 1972 to

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1 Bangladesh Bank, “Monthly Economic Trends: March 2013”, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 3, 2013.

only 2% in 2010.<sup>2</sup> PPP adjusted per capita GDP stood at 1909 US dollar in 2011. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has ranked Bangladesh as the 43rd largest economy in the world in PPP terms. Goldman Sachs has included Bangladesh among the next eleven (N-11) emerging economies of the 21st century after Brazil, Russia, India and China.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the country has made a commendable progress since independence.

However, it could have done much better if we had political stability and required infrastructure to foster economic growth. It could have registered growth of 8% or more, like neighboring India, had it not lacked good governance. Bangladesh is one of the leading manpower exporting countries in the world. Most of the Bangladeshi workers employed overseas are unskilled and they are engaged in low-paid derogatory works. We could have raised our overseas earnings substantially with an adequate investment on human resource development. Bangladesh could not realize the benefits she was expected to achieve from the huge growth in her young labor force which is known as “demographic dividend”. This failure was due to her inability to absorb and employ the extra workers productively.

This paper aims at exploring what the country has achieved over the last forty years since independence and what she missed. The paper uses data from different secondary sources such as World Bank, United Nations, Bangladesh bank, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and so on. The organization of the paper is as follows: First, introduction; second, highlights of some of the major achievements in the economy; third, citation of some progress in social development indicators those likely to have fostered the growth of the macroeconomic variables and reduced poverty and inequality; fourth, identification of some unexplored potential; fifth, raising of challenges in regard to realization of the potential; Finally, conclusion.

## **2. Achievement in major macroeconomic fronts**

Bangladesh is a country with an area of 147,570 square kilometers accommodating a population over 160 million. She is the 8th<sup>4</sup> largest in the

2 BBS, “Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2010”, Dhaka, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

3 [http://www.dailysun.com/index.php?view=details&archiev=yes&arch\\_date=26-03-2012&type=daily-sun](http://www.dailysun.com/index.php?view=details&archiev=yes&arch_date=26-03-2012&type=daily-sun)  
[news&pub\\_no=96&menu\\_id=43&news\\_type\\_id=1&news\\_id=18931](http://www.dailysun.com/index.php?view=details&archiev=yes&arch_date=26-03-2012&type=daily-sun)

4 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_population](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population) [accessed February 24,2013]

world in terms of population whereas it ranks 94th<sup>5</sup> in terms of the size of the area. The population density of over 1000 people per square kilometer implies an extreme pressure on our scarce land in Bangladesh. The burgeoning population is creating further pressure on the land. Besides, Bangladesh is not endowed with a huge amount of natural resources to supplement the land scarcity. The main natural resource of Bangladesh is natural gas. Even in terms of proven gas reserve, Bangladesh ranks 47th in the world.<sup>6</sup> The perception that “Bangladesh is floating on gas” has been proved wrong in the recent decades. Different prediction suggests that unmet demand for gas may kick in 2020 and the gas reserve of Bangladesh may exhaust by 2025/30. Table 1 shows the population density and reserve of natural gas and petroleum oil per capita in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and China. Table 1 reveals the scarcity of land and natural resources compared to some neighboring states.

**Table 1: Per capita natural gas/oil reserve and population density**

Countries	Natural Gas reserve per capita (cubic meter)	Oil reserve per capita (in barrels)	Population density (per square km)
Bangladesh	1281.16	0.18	1034
India	888.29	0.26	382
Pakistan	4601.49	49.53	229
China	2289.44	15.03	141

Obviously, Bangladesh is abundant in labor. The success story of Bangladesh since independence can therefore be attributed to the labor force. Relatively large population as perceived before in Bangladesh, is no longer a burden. Bangladesh is now one of the biggest exporters of manpower in the world. Capitalizing on its abundant labor force Bangladesh has made a considerable progress in economic growth and development.

### 2.1 Maintaining an outstanding economic growth rate

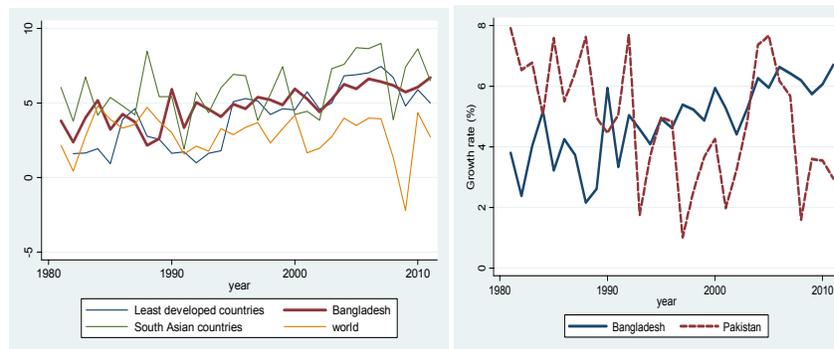
There has been a radical change in GDP since independence. GDP per capita increased from US dollar 200 in the 1970s to around US dollar 1900 in 2011 in

5 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_and\\_dependencies\\_by\\_area](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area) [accessed February 24,2013]

6 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_natural\\_gas\\_proven\\_reserves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_natural_gas_proven_reserves) [accessed February 24,2013]

purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. This has been possible due to the sharp increase in GDP over the period. Average GDP growth rate was 2-3 percent in the 1970s which rose to around 3.5 percent during the 1980s. Along with maintaining economic stabilization with a significantly reduced and declining dependence on foreign aid, the economy appeared to begin a transition from stabilization to growth in the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> GDP growth rate accelerated to 4.5 per cent in the first half of the 1990s and to 5 per cent in the second half of that decade. It hovered around 6 percent over the first decade of 21st century. Since our population growth rate was below 1.5 percent per annum during this decade, over a 4.5 percent growth in per capita GDP was very commendable. Bangladesh is now progressing towards attending a growth rate of 7-8 percent per annum which will graduate Bangladesh towards a middle income country very soon.

**Figure 1: Trend of GDP Growth rate**



Source: World Bank Dataset.

Bangladesh has performed reasonably well in terms of economic growth in comparison with other countries. The GDP growth rate of Bangladesh crossed that of world average in the last half of 1980s and remained so since then (Figure 1). Although the growth of South Asian countries remained higher for most of the period, the same was subject to much less fluctuation in Bangladesh. Lately, the growth in South Asia is declining but Bangladesh retains an upward growth trend. The GDP growth of Bangladesh has also been more stable than the average growth rate of the least developed countries.

<sup>7</sup> W. Mahmud, "Bangladesh: Development Outcomes and Challenges in the Context of Globalization", Paper presented at the conference on *The Future of Globalization: Explorations in Light of Recent Turbulence* co-sponsored by the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization and the World Bank, October 10-11, 2003, Yale University.

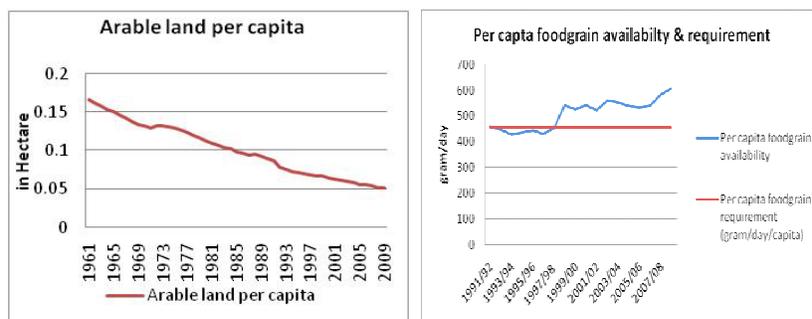
Interestingly, Bangladesh is also performing well in comparison to Pakistan from which it achieved independence in 1971. Just after the independence Pakistan achieved a much higher growth rate than that of Bangladesh. However things started to change in the 1990s when the growth rate of Bangladesh exceeded that of Pakistan. Since then the growth rate of Bangladesh has been continually higher than that of Pakistan except for a brief stint from 2004 to 2006. More importantly, the growth rate of Bangladesh economy has less volatility than that of Pakistan.

## 2.2 Achieving Self-sufficiency in food grain production

In Bangladesh every year almost 0.20 million people are adding to the total population whereas the estimated annual reduction of agricultural land is about 0.08 million hectares due to constructions of houses, offices, roads, mills, factories etc. The amount of cultivable land decreased from around 9 million hectares in the 1970s to around 7.6 million hectare in 2009 (FAO, 2012). On the other hand, population has almost doubled since independence rising to 150 million in 2012 from 67 million in 1971. Accordingly per capita arable land declined from .13 hectare to 0.05 hectare in 2012 raising concern over food security.

Despite the pressure on limited amount of arable land, the recent trend in food grain production has been quite satisfactory. Since the rice production has increased at a higher rate than the rate of population growth during the last decade, and that there are both public and private imports each year though at a limited amount, the daily per capita food availability of food grains in Bangladesh has reached the standard food grain requirement or target consumption level of 454 gram in 1997-98 and it is always above the threshold level afterwards.

**Fig. 2: Trend in arable land, food grain availability & requirement (per capita)**

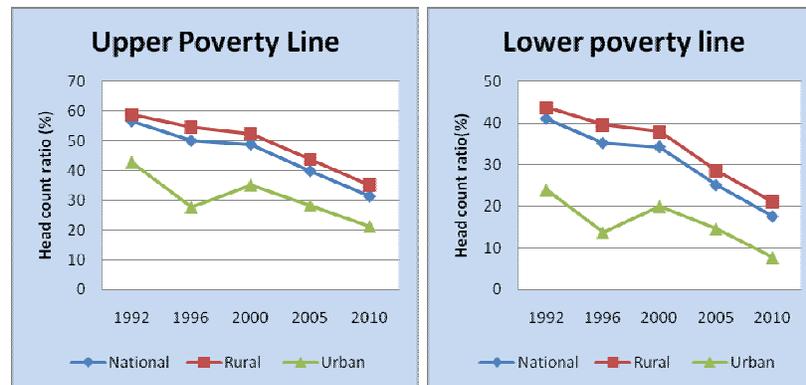


Source: World Bank and authors' estimation from BBS 2010.

### 2.3 Significant reduction in poverty

Bangladesh experienced a significant reduction in poverty since independence. The official figure for the estimated level of poverty of the country stood as high as 82.9 percent in 1973–74.<sup>8</sup> Poverty began to decline during the second half of the 1970s and the trend continued in the 1980s. There was a radical change in the measurement of poverty in the 1990s - a shift from static to dynamic analysis of poverty. Poverty headcount rates based on both upper and lower poverty lines using the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) method showed that the proportion of poor in the population had declined considerably between 1991 and 2010. Trends in other measures of poverty such as poverty gap and squared poverty gap indicate that the improvements were not limited to reductions in the size of the poor population relative to the total population, but also in the depth of poverty. The extent of poverty reduction in Bangladesh since 2000 was no less than what was experienced in other South Asian countries over the same period. This reduction can be attributed to GDP growth rates of Bangladesh that compared well with the region coupled with no appreciable increase in consumption inequality during this period.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 3: Headcount ratio of poverty**



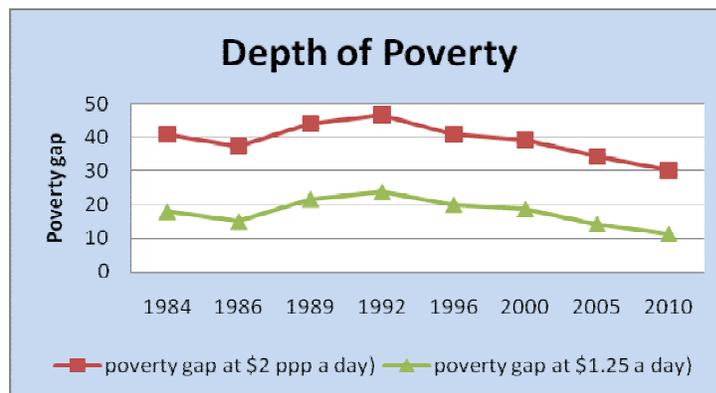
Source: HIES, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.perspectivebd.com/poverty-trend-in-bangladesh-since-independence>

<sup>9</sup> A. Narayan, N. Yoshida & H. Zaman, (2007), "Trend and pattern of poverty in Bangladesh in recent years" draft, A background paper for Bangladesh poverty assessment, South Asia Region, Bangladesh.

The proportion of population living below the upper poverty line declined by 44 percent between 1991 and 2010. The decline in headcount ratio (HCR), the percentage value of poverty incidence, was rapid since 2000. HCR fell by 17 percent between 2000 and 2005 and a further 21 percent between 2005 and 2010. The proportion of population below the lower poverty line, the threshold for extreme poverty, declined by 57 percent between 1991 and 2010. The number of extreme poor (per capita consumption below the lower poverty line) came down to 17.6 percent of the population in 2010 from 41.1 percent in 1991/92. Altogether, Bangladesh is well on track on achieving the goal of reducing poverty below 29 percent by 2015 (MDG 1A).

**Figure 4: Depth of poverty**



Source: World Bank dataset.

The depth and severity of poverty has been measured by poverty gap and squared poverty gap, respectively. The HCR of poverty gives only the percentage value of poverty incidence, but it does not measure the distance of the poor households from the poverty line. Figure 4 shows poverty gap by two different measures. The figure also suggests that depth of poverty decreased significantly from that of 1980's. Table (2) reveals that both depth and severity of poverty (with respect to the upper poverty line) have declined significantly since 1991. The substantial fall in poverty gap and squared poverty gap indicates that consumption of those below the (upper) poverty line improved considerably. A fall in the poverty gap measure indicates that the average "distance" of the poor from the poverty line has fallen whereas a decline in squared poverty gap

indicates that the distribution of consumption among the poor has become more equitable.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 2: Depth and severity of poverty**

Year	Poverty gap			Squared Poverty gap		
	National	Urban	Rural	National	Urban	Rural
2000	12.8	9	13.7	4.6	3.3	4.9
2005	9	6.5	9.8	2.9	2.1	3.1

Source: HIES report 2010.

#### 2.4 Restraining the increase in inequality

Although there has been a tendency of inequality to rise after independence, the inequality has stagnated after 2000, in fact declining. For this reason absolute poverty and depth and severity of poverty declined significantly since 2000. Table 3 shows the estimates of consumption inequality and income inequality for the HIES years. Consumption GINI increased from 0.26 in 1983/84 to a peak of 0.33 in 1996. It then stagnated and fell to 0.32 in 2010. On the other hand, income GINI rose to a peak of 0.47 in 2005 and then declined to 0.46 in 2010.

**Table 3: Consumption and income GINI**

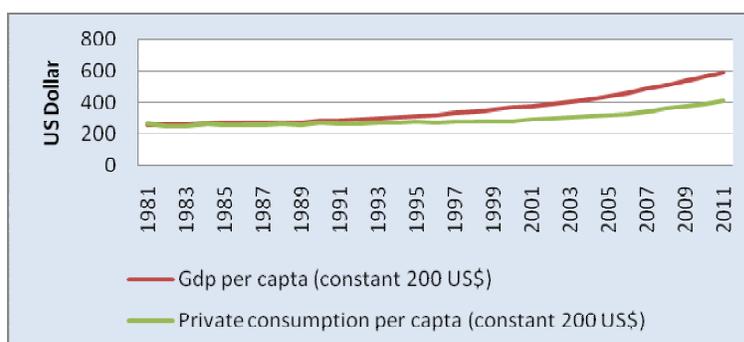
Year	Consumption GINI	Income GINI
1984	0.26	0.37
1986	0.27	0.37
1989	0.29	0.38
1992	0.28	0.39
1996	0.33	0.44
2000	0.33	0.45
2005	0.33	0.47
2010	0.32	0.46

Source: World Bank data.

10 Narayan, A., Yoshida, N. & Zaman, H. (2007), "Trend and pattern of poverty in Bangladesh in recent years" draft, A background paper for Bangladesh poverty assessment, South Asia Region, Bangladesh

Table 3 also indicates that inequality in consumption is lower than inequality in income, a finding that is consistent with the established relationship between the two. The differences between these two types of inequality can also be explained by examining the trend of GDP per capita and consumption per capita. Figure 5 shows that GDP per capita grew at a faster rate than private consumption per capita. This is not surprising since as income increases people consume a fraction of the increase in income. Consequently income inequality is much higher than consumption inequality.

**Figure 5: Trend in GDP and Private consumption per capita**



Source: World Bank data

According to World Bank statistics, Bangladesh is one of the countries with lower degree of income inequality. A comparison of income inequality of Bangladesh with China and India reveals that inequality is much severe in China compared to Bangladesh. In comparison with India we can see that while inequality rose in Bangladesh sharply during the 1990s, the degree of inequality of the two countries converged in the recent years. Income inequality in Bangladesh is also lower than that of USA (a gini index of 0.45 against 0.32 of Bangladesh).<sup>11</sup>

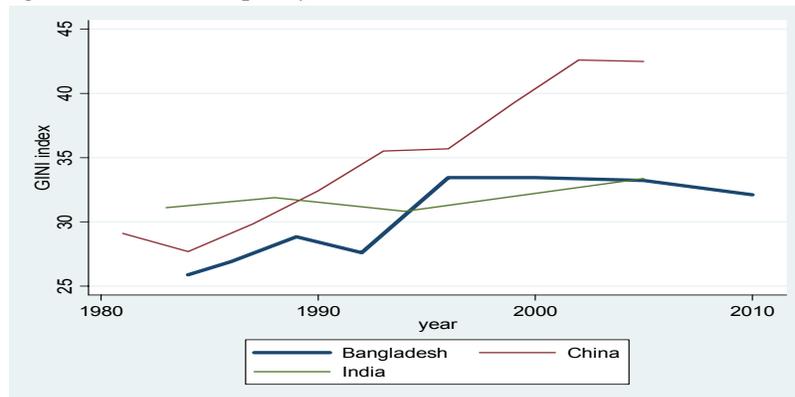
### 2.5 Increase in national savings and investment

One of the main factors behind the sustained growth of GDP has been increased investment financed by increased savings. Gross saving as percentage of GDP increased from 15 percent in 1981 to more than 30 percent in 2011 (World

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_income\\_equality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_income_equality)

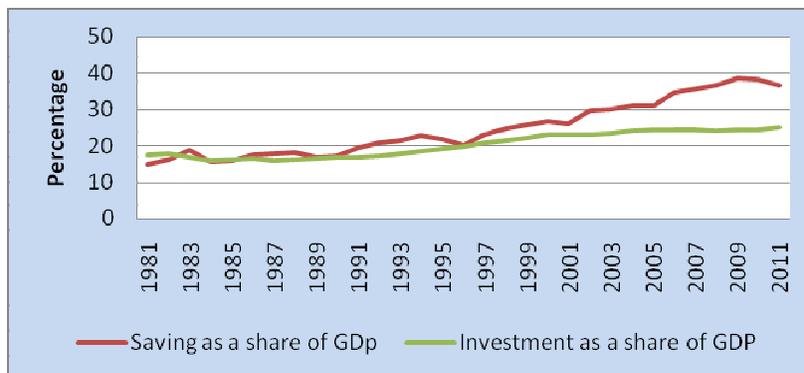
Bank). Accordingly, investment increased from 17 percent of GDP in 1981 to around 26 percent of GDP In 2011. The increased investment increased the share of investment value added to GDP.

**Figure 6: Trend of inequality in different countries**



Source: World Bank data

**Figure 7: Saving and Investment as a percentage of GDP**



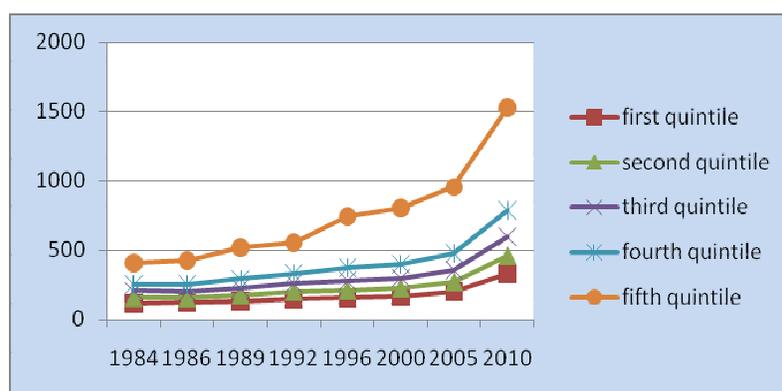
Source: World Bank

### 3. Factors behind the reduction of poverty and inequality

Analysis thus far indicates that there has been a great improvement in the living standards of the poorer section of the population over the last 42 years as revealed by a substantial decline in the depth and severity of poverty. This is also reflected in the growth of per capita income of the bottom quintile groups. Thus

while it is evident that income inequality rose during this period, the per capita income of the bottom quintile groups increased which resulted in a decline in depth and severity of poverty (Figure 8). The income of the bottom 20 percent increased twofold, from around 109 US dollar in 1984 to around 327 US dollar in 2010.

**Figure 8: Trend in per capita income by income quintile**



Source: Calculated from World Bank data

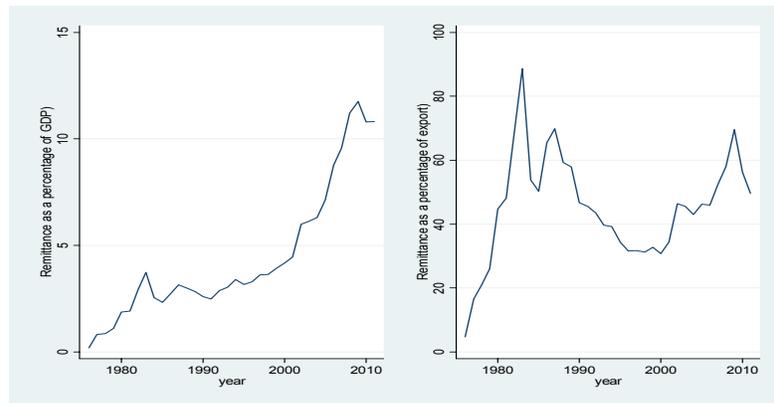
The income inequality, as shown by Gini Index, has also been stagnant since 2000 with consumption Gini being around 0.33 and income gini being around 0.46. This is due to the fact that the per capita income of the bottom quintiles have increased more compared to that of the top 20 percent of people (Table 3). The per capita income of the bottom 20 percent of the population increased by around 66 percent over the period stretching from 2000 to 2010 while the income of the top 20 percent of the population increased by 60 percent during the same period.

**Table 3: Growth in per capita income of different income quintiles**

Year	2000	2010	% increase
First quintile	162.87	327.79	66
Second quintile	225.69	456.61	68
Third quintile	295.28	593.19	68
Fourth quintile	396.28	785.13	67
Fifth quintile	800.64	1528.56	60

The fact that the income of the bottom quintiles is increasing at par implies that these people are being substantially engaged in productive activities. Because safety net program alone, which accounts for only 2-3 percent of GDP (2.51 percent in 2011-12 and 2.64 percent in 2010-11)<sup>12</sup>, cannot bring about the change. Roughly 10 to 11 percent of our GDP goes to the government. In the rest 90 percent, the bottom 20 percent of the population have their shares through employment. Because of the fact that the share of remittance as a percentage of GDP increased sharply since 2000 (from around 5 percent in 2000 to around 12 percent in 2012) and this steep rise has resulted from overseas employment of unskilled workers in low-paid job, it can be reasonably deduced that bottom quintiles have brought about the surge in remittance earning. Besides surge in export earning contributed to the reduction of poverty.

**Figure 9: Remittance as a percentage of GDP and export earning**



Source: BMET, 2013<sup>13</sup>

Remittances sent by overseas migrants contribute a lot to the economic development of the country through boosting foreign exchange reserves. Workers' remittance flow has been showing an increasing trend since the beginning of manpower export in 1976 (Figure 9). Remittances sent by the overseas migrants have increased from US\$ 23.7 million in 1976 to US\$ 12.84

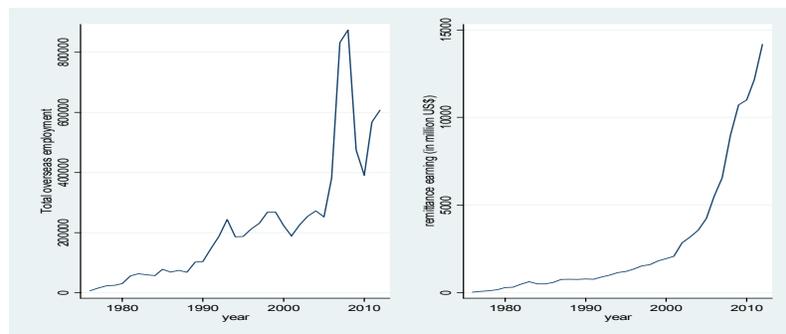
<sup>12</sup> <http://backbencherbd.blogspot.com/2012/01/social-safety-net-in-bangladesh.html>

<sup>13</sup> BMET (2013), <http://www.bmet.org.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction> [accessed on February 5, 2013]

billion in 2012.<sup>14</sup> The ratio of remittance to GDP has grown from a meager 1 percent in 1977-1978 to around 11 percent in 2012. The amount of remittances in terms of export earnings has also been increased. In fiscal year 1976-77, remittances as percent of export stood at around 4 percent, which has increased to 68 percent in 2009, although it has now reduced to around 50 percent. But, had the unofficial flow of remittances been taken into account, its contribution to GDP and export earnings might be much higher.

The rapid growth in remittance earning has been made possible by a rapid increase in overseas migration. Overseas migration is essential for a developing country like ours since it not only produces large inflows of valuable remittances but also offers an outlet for frustrated unemployed workers who might otherwise present serious domestic problems. It is also important in order to reduce unemployment at home and accumulate valuable foreign exchange to stimulate economic growth. With a huge surplus labor, Bangladesh participates in the supply side of the global labor market. Each year a large number of people of this country voluntarily migrate overseas for both short-term long-term employments. Figure 10 shows the trends in overseas employment from the period of 1976 to 2012. A total number of 8.30 million labors have been exported till 2012.

**Figure 10: Trend of total overseas employment and remittance earning**



Source: BMET, 2013.<sup>15</sup>

Bangladesh has achieved a remarkable growth in export earnings since independence. Bangladesh exported only US \$357 million worth of goods and

<sup>14</sup> Bangladesh Bank (2013), “Monthly Economic Trends: March 2013”, Vol. XXXVIII, No.3, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> BMET (2013), <http://www.bmet.org.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction> [accessed on February 5,2013]

services in 1972 whereas it was around US \$26 billion in 2011. As a result, export share in GDP increased from a meager 5 percent in 1972 to 22 percent in 2011. The large increase in export earnings has been largely facilitated by export of readymade garments. This export-oriented industry is the highest foreign exchange earner in the country. Even the recent global recession did not put any significant adverse impact on this sector's earnings. Not only has this sector been a tool of poverty alleviation and therefore, an economic boost to the country as a whole, but it has also been a vehicle of social change. Almost 85 percent of the workers employed in this industry are female. Thus, it has brought women out of their homes and thereby bringing in women empowerment to a great extent.

#### **4. Progress in social indicators**

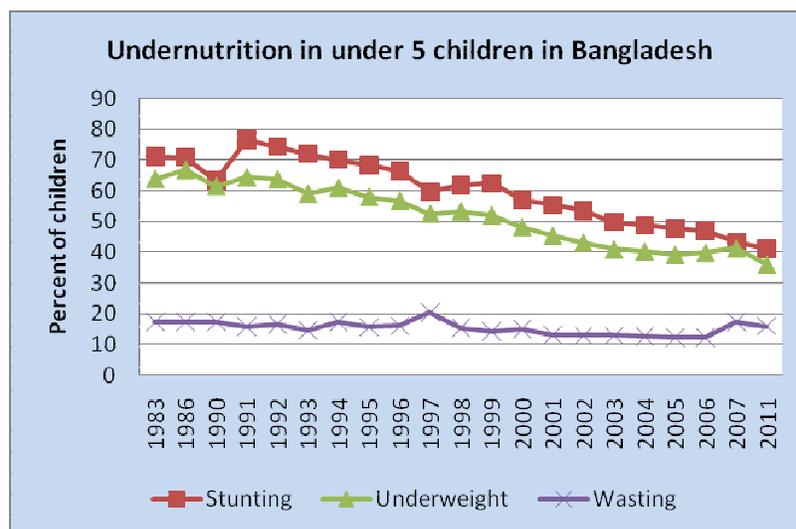
The success story of poverty reduction in Bangladesh has also been reflected in the significant progress in different social indicators. Bangladesh had in essence three types of endowment since independence – these are land, labor and capital. Due to population pressure land were becoming scarcer every year and the lack of adequate capital was always a chronic case. Thus, the growth must have been facilitated by growth in labor and land productivity. The growth in labor productivity has been made possible by increased human capital resulting from progress in different social development indicators. This section gives an overview of the progress made in different social development indicators since independence.

##### **4.1 Commendable progress in reducing malnutrition**

Bangladesh has made a significant progress in reducing under nutrition in regard to all anthropometric indicators, albeit the progress markedly slowed down after 2000. There has been significant improvement in underweight (low weight for height) status over the time. The level of underweight has declined from 65 percent to 36 percent between 1991 and 2011. Thus Bangladesh is in a position to achieve the goal of reducing Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age (6-59 months) to 33 percent by 2015 (MDG 1.c). Furthermore stunting (low height for age), which is less responsive to immediate shortage or increase in calorie intake and thus representing the country's long term under nutrition and developmental scenario, shows an encouraging picture. The prevalence of stunting reduced from 71 percent in 1983 to 41 percent in 2011 (BDHS 2011). Wasting however, is showing a rather alarming trend. The prevalence of wasting is still above the 15% emergency level that warrants implementation of a public health intervention as recommended by WHO.<sup>16</sup>

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16 WHO (2000), "The Management of Nutrition in Major Emergencies", Geneva, World Health Organization.

**Figure 11: Malnutrition trend in Bangladesh**

Source: World Bank and BDHS 2011

#### 4.2 Progress in enrollment in primary education

Bangladesh has made quite a good progress in primary school enrollment. Gross primary school enrollment, defined as the total enrolment of students in a grade or level of education, regardless of age, expressed as percentage of the corresponding eligible official age-group population in a given school year, increased from 61 percent in 1972 to about 103 percent in 2010. Net primary school enrollment, refers to the number of pupils in the official school age group in a grade, cycle or level of education in a given school year expressed as percentage of the corresponding population of eligible official age group, also increased from 68 percent in 1973 to 94 percent in 2010.<sup>17</sup> Thus Bangladesh is quite close to reach the goal of achieving 100 percent net primary school enrollment (MDG Goal 2A).

#### 4.3 Significant progress in other social development indicators

In addition to reducing income-poverty, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in human development indicators since independence. Bangladesh is in fact among the few developing countries which are on target towards achieving

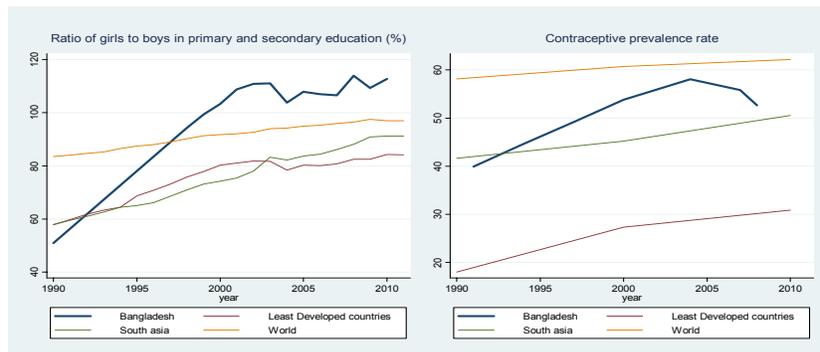
<sup>17</sup> Data from 1990 to 2006 has been taken from BANBEIS, others are taken from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics <http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/bangladesh/school-enrollment>

the Millennium Development Goals in respect of most of the social development indicators. Amartya Sen suggested that, Bangladesh performs better than India regarding almost of all social development indicators. The decline in infant and child mortality rates, for example, is among the fastest in the developing world. Child mortality rate declined from 270 per 1000 live births in 1970<sup>18</sup> to 140 per 1000 live births in 1990 and 49 per 1000 live births in 2011. Thus Bangladesh is progressing towards achieving the goal of reducing child mortality rate below 48 per 1000 live births by 2015. Bangladesh's progress in reducing child mortality rate has been commended, including a UN Award.

Bangladesh has also made remarkable progress in reducing maternal mortality rate since 1990. Maternal mortality rate declined from 800 per 100000 live births in 1980s to 240 per 100000 live births in 2010. Despite this progress Bangladesh is not likely to achieve the goal of reducing maternal mortality below 144 per 100000 live births (MDG goal 5.1).

Bangladesh has already eliminated gender disparity in primary and secondary school enrolment (MDG goal 3A) and has made a remarkable progress in providing universal basic education. The ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary school increased from 51 percent in 1990 to 113 percent in 2010. In this regard Bangladesh compares well to the average performance of South Asia, LDCs or the World.

**Figure 12: Gender disparity in primary and secondary school and contraceptive prevalence rate**

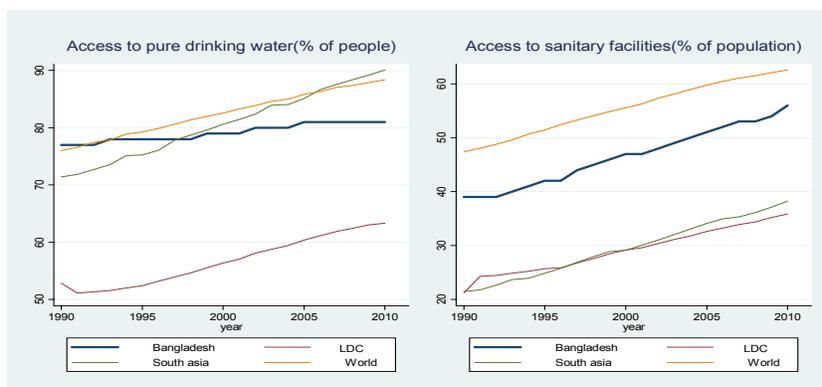


Source: World Bank

18 Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, *Bangladesh Demographic Data Sheet*, <http://www.dgfp.gov.bd/data%20sheet.htm>

The success in reducing the population growth rate through the adoption of birth control measures is also quite unique for countries at similar per capita income levels like LDCs and the countries of South Asia. Contraceptive prevalence rate increased from 40 percent in 1990 to 58 percent in 2007. Accordingly, adolescence birth rate per 100 women declined to 59 in 2007 from 77 in 1990s. Population growth has declined to 1.32 percent per year which was around 2-3 percent during the 1970s and 1980s.

**Figure 13: Access to pure drinking water and sanitary facilities**

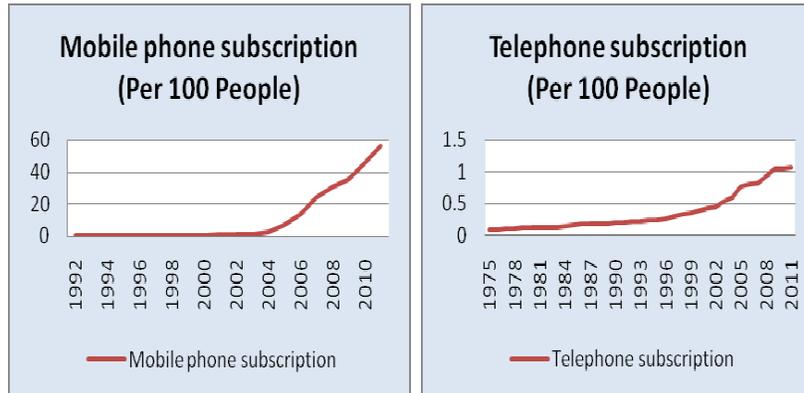


Source: World Bank

Significant progress has occurred in case of access to pure drinking water and sanitary facilities. Proportion of population using an improved drinking water sources was 77 percent in 1990 whereas the proportion now stands at 82 percent. Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility rose from 39 percent in 1990 to 56 percent in 2010.

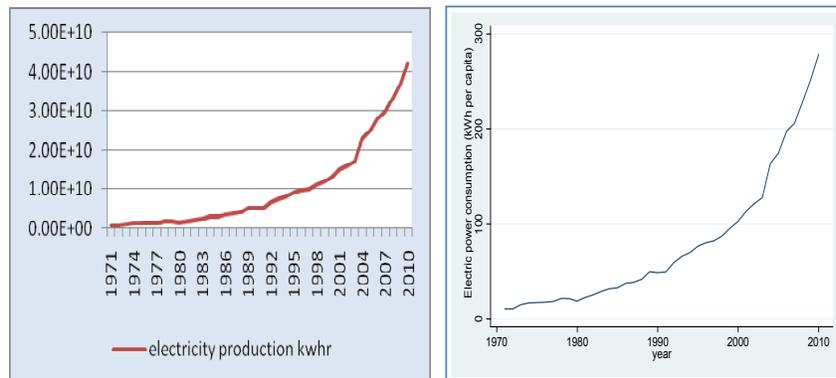
#### 4.4 Revolution in communication technology

Bangladesh has experienced a massive progress with respect to using communication technology. This progress has mainly been brought about by mobile phone technology. Since its start in 1992, the use of mobile phone increased rapidly and access to mobile phones surpassed fixed line phone access in 2001. But the significant change in mobile phone use came since 2003. The number of mobile phone user per 100 people increased from 1 percent in 2003 to around 56 percent in 2011. Use of telephone has also increased from 8 per 10000 people in 1975 to 106 per 10000 people in 2011, although its growth rate has been much less than that of mobile phone.

**Figure 14: Access to mobile phone and telephone**

#### 4.5 Increase in production and consumption of energy

The development of energy sector is integral to the development of a country. A country's growth lags behind because of poor energy infrastructure. Although the energy infrastructure of Bangladesh lags behind that of its neighboring countries there has been a significant increase in energy use since independence. Per capita electric power consumption was only around 10 Kilowatt-hour in 1971. The use of electric consumption has increased tremendously since then and stood at about 279 Kilowatt-hour in 2011.

**Fig. 15: Trend in electricity production and consumption per capita (KWhr)**

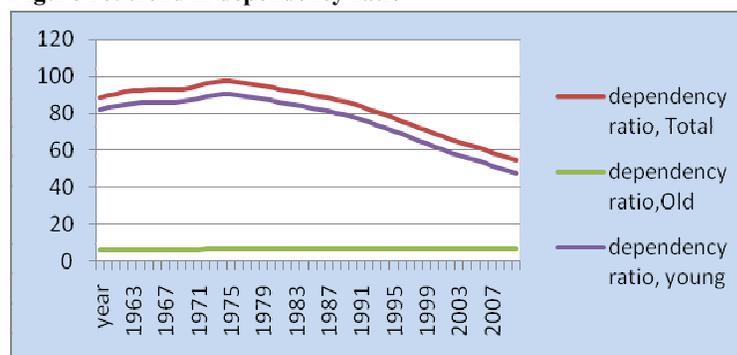
### 5. State of Realization of full Potential

Despite all the progress discussed above, Bangladesh has not been able to realize the full potential of its abundant labor. Bangladesh has not been able to realize the “demographic dividend” due to its inability to absorb additional labors productively. Bangladesh is one of the leading manpower exporting countries in the world. Most of its workers employed overseas are less skilled and are engaged in low-paid derogatory works. If we could equip our workers going abroad with little technical know-how or even equip them with foreign languages, it could have been quite easy for them to double or triple their overseas earnings. The country has not been able to extract the full potential of its land resources due to lack of appropriate human capital and technology adoption.

#### 5.1 Not realizing the full potential of Labor: Demographic dividend

The population aged below 14 and above 64 constitutes the dependent population of a country. Figure 17 shows a gradual decline in dependency ratio in Bangladesh over the last few years, creating opportunities for development known as “Demographic dividend”. This dividend is a window of opportunity that is created when faster rate of economic growth and human development coupled with effective policies cause a decline in fertility rate. This is followed by a significant reduction in child and infant mortality rates. This is also followed by an increase in average life expectancy allowing the families to have fewer children to reach their desired number of offspring. However, this drop in fertility rates is not immediate. This time lag produces a generational population bulge that surges through society. For a period of time this “bulge” is a burden on society and increases the dependency ratio. Eventually this group begins to enter the productive labor force. With fertility rates continue to fall and older generations having shorter life expectancies, the dependency ratio declines dramatically. This demographic shift initiates the demographic dividend.

**Figure 16: trend in dependency ratio**



Source: World Bank data

This 'dividend' at present provides an opportunity to Bangladesh to make use of its working-age population for productive socio-economic activities. There are four steps to reap the benefits from the demographic dividend.

The first is the increased labor supply. The magnitude of this benefit however depends on the ability of the economy to absorb and productively employ the additional workers.

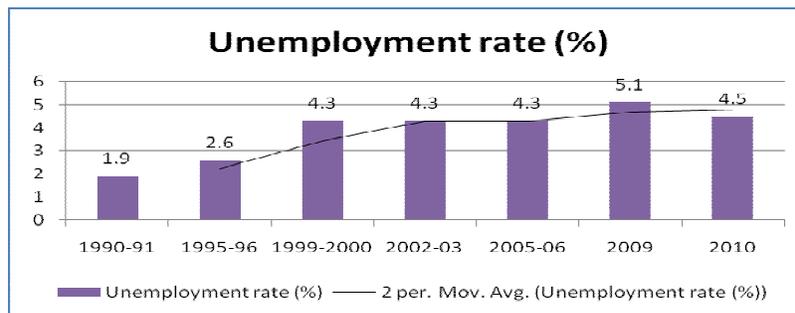
The second one is the increase in savings. As the number of dependents decreases individuals can save more. This increase in national savings rates in turn increases the stock of capital and leads to higher productivity if the accumulated capital is invested.

The third one is human capital. Decreases in fertility rates result in healthier women and fewer economic pressures at home which allows parents to invest more resources per child, leading to better health and educational outcomes.

The final one is the increasing domestic demand brought about by the increasing GDP per capita and the decreasing dependency ratio.

But the opportunity and the reality are not synonymous. How much benefit Bangladesh will realize from this demographic dividend depends, among others, on the employment opportunities in the economy. If there is little employment opportunities, a large part of the increased labor force will remain unemployed, hindering the benefit to be reaped from demographic dividend. A time series plot of youth unemployment in Bangladesh over the last few years shows an increase youth unemployment. Historically, from 2000 to 2010, Bangladesh unemployment rate averaged 4.6 percent reaching an all time high of 5.1 percent in December 2009 although the rate somewhat decreased to 4.5 in 2010. Thus realizing the dividend by means of increased labor supply is not that much obvious, given the present circumstances.

**Figure 17: Trend in unemployment**



Source: Bangladesh economic review, 2010 and BBS

Realization of the demographic potential through increased investment depends on how much of the savings converts into investment. Saving as a percentage of GDP is increasing continually. But investment as a percentage of GDP is not increasing that much, particularly over the last decade (when the investment share of GDP stagnated at 25 percent). The barriers to boosting investment can be attributed to macro-economic strains, infrastructural deficit, corruption, abrasive tax administration and political instability. The following table compares the ranking of Bangladesh with its South-Asian counterparts and China with regard to different infrastructural facilities and policies related to doing business (i.e. investment). As can be seen from the table Bangladesh performs poorly in all of the indicators apart from protecting indicators. For these reasons investment in Bangladesh has not been up to the mark which makes it difficult to realize the benefit from demographic dividend quite challenging.

**Table 4: Ease of doing business ranking in different countries, 2012**

	Bangladesh	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	India	China
Starting a Business	95	98	33	173	151
Dealing with Construction Permits	83	105	112	182	181
Getting Electricity	185	171	103	105	114
Registering Property	175	126	143	94	44
Getting Credit	83	70	70	23	70
Protecting Investors	25	32	49	49	100
Paying Taxes	97	162	169	152	122
Trading Across Borders	119	85	56	127	68
Enforcing Contracts	182	155	133	184	19
Resolving Insolvency	119	78	51	116	82
<b>Ease of Doing Business Rank</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>91</b>

Source: IFC, 2013.<sup>19</sup>

However, as the example of Sri Lanka, and many other countries outside the region, clearly illustrates this demographic dividend does not last forever as illustrated by the experience of Sri Lanka and many other countries. At some point this people in the working age population will transform itself into elderly population. According to a World Bank estimate this demographic dividend will last until around 2033 when the adult dependency reaches significant

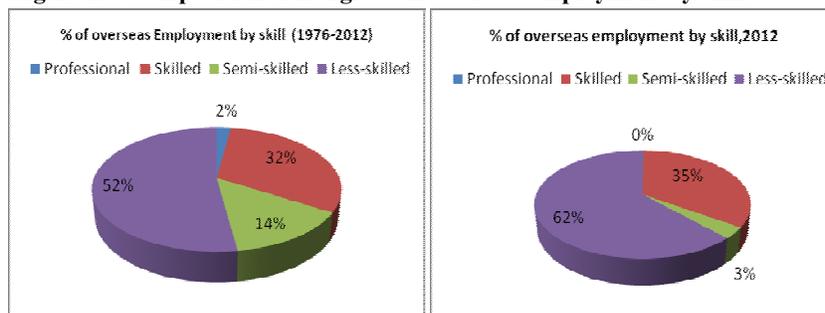
19 IFC (2013), "Doing Business 2013: Smarter regulations for Small and Medium size Enterprises", 10th edition, The World Bank.

proportions.<sup>20</sup> The demographic dividend might, in fact, be a cost if policies are not formulated accurately, leading to unemployment and an adverse impact on old age security. Thus it is high time to utilize the golden years in a way to achieve economic growth and build a good social security system.

### 5.2 Not realizing the full potential of labor: Overseas employment

Bangladesh is one of the countries who earn highest remittance from overseas employment. Following an increasing trend of overseas employment, an increasing trend in the flow of remittances sent by expatriate workers' has been observed. However, most of the workers are engaged in low-paid derogatory jobs requiring minimal level of skill. Figure 19 shows various categories of Bangladeshis like professionals, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor force employed in different countries. Doctors, engineers, teachers and nurses are considered as professional workers, while manufacturing or garment workers, drivers, computer operators and electricians as skilled. Tailors and masons are considered as semi-skilled, and housemaids, agricultural workers, hotel workers and menial workers as unskilled workers (Farid et al., 2009)<sup>21</sup>. Of the total overseas employment during 1976 to 2012, the highest 52 percent are unskilled worker followed by 31 percent of skilled, 14 percent of semi-skilled and 2.21 percent of professional (BMET, 2012). This trend has not been changed even in the recent years. For instance in 2012, the highest 62 percent are unskilled worker followed by 35 percent of skilled, 3 percent of semi-skilled and only 0.13 percent of professional workers. Since unskilled workers are engaged in low paid job the remittance earning is much lower than what could be earned if we could have exported more skilled manpower.

**Figure 18: Composition of Bangladeshi overseas employment by skill**



Source: BMET, 2013.<sup>22</sup>

20 <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=129240>

21 Farid et al., "Trends in International migration and remittances inflows: Case study Bangladesh", *J. Bangladesh Agril. Univ.*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2009, pp. 387–394

22 BMET (2013), <http://www.bmet.org.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction> [accessed on February 5, 2013]

A study by South Asian Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) reveals that Migrants from South Asia represent several categories of skills. They range from the professional, the middle and clerical, skilled, semi skilled, unskilled to a separate category of housemaids. While India accounts for large segment of professionals and skilled categories, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan mainly cater to the market of semi skilled and unskilled workers. Housemaids constitute the overwhelming bulk of the Sri Lankan migrant workforce (SACEPS 2009). Even compared with Srilanka and Pakistan, Bangladesh accounts for a large portion of unskilled labor. The proportion of unskilled overseas workers accounts for 52 percent for Bangladesh, whereas the share is 40 percent<sup>23</sup> for Srilanka and around 40-45 percent for Pakistan.<sup>24</sup>

## **6. Challenges towards realizing the potential**

### **6.1 Challenges towards realizing the potential of Labor**

#### **6.1.1 A huge investment on human capital development**

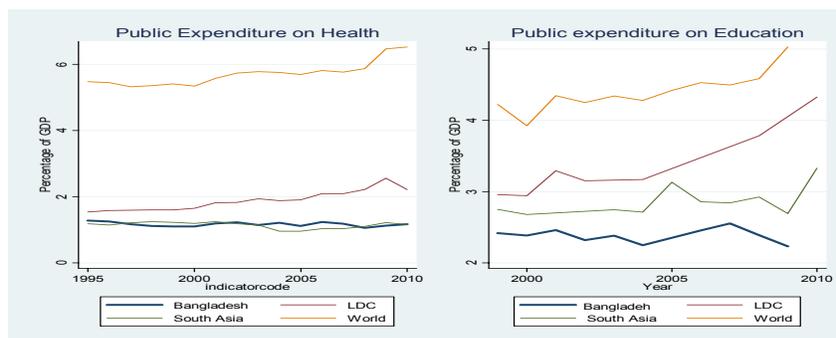
The substantial reduction in poverty in Bangladesh is praiseworthy. A major reason for this decline is the rising per capita income, growing from less than 2 percent a year in the 1970s to around 5 percent a year in the 2000s. Yet, it is worrisome that an estimated 47 million people are still below the national poverty line. Continued growth in per capita income will help reduce poverty further. Thus, Bangladesh must seek inclusive economic growth and put in more resources for reduction of poverty to pursue sustainable economic development. Clearly, a major vehicle with which the government can maintain a high economic growth is by making investment on the poor targeting human capital development. This will equip the poor to get more and better jobs. An educated and healthy labor force can thus help increase economic growth while improving income distribution.

However public spending on health and education has been quite low in Bangladesh. Public spending on education is a mere 2.4 percent of GDP while it is only 1 percent of GDP on health. On the contrary, the average public spending of the world on education and health is around 5 percent and 6 percent of GDP, respectively. Bangladesh also spends much less on education than South Asia as a whole.

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23 N. Arunatilake, S. Jayaratne, P. Jayawardena, R. Jayaweera, & D. Weerakoon, (2010), "Impact of Remittances on the Household of the Emigrant and on the Economy of the Migrant's Country: Sri Lanka"

24 U. Kock, & Y. Sun (2011), "Remittances in Pakistan - Why have they gone up and why aren't they coming down?" IMF, WP/11/200.

**Figure 19: Public expenditure on health and education as a share of GDP**

Source: World Bank

Thus Bangladesh needs to create and expand access to opportunities through more investment in health, education and safety net programs for the poorest. It also needs to expand and improve the education and health services. This will require major improvements in the delivery of public education and health services through education policies, governance and institutional reforms.

### 6.1.2 Providing energy infrastructure at a reasonable cost

To create the capacity of the economy to absorb and productively employ the increased young labor force, Bangladesh requires a big investment on infrastructure - energy, power generation, roads, railway and ports to attract further investment and ensure industrial development and employment creation through private sector participation. Particularly energy infrastructure is crucial to industrial development. The deficiencies in power, gas, and basic infrastructure are the major supply-side bottlenecks for industry sector growth in Bangladesh.

Only 41 percent of total population of Bangladesh has access to electricity (World Bank, 2012). To sustain accelerated industrial growth, the government needs to urgently address shortages in power and gas supplies. To meet this end energy source diversification is badly needed. Energy production in Bangladesh is too much reliant on natural gas. In 2010, 80 percent of the total electricity used to be generated by natural gas, whereas the respective share of oil, coal and hydroelectricity was 5 percent, 4 percent and 3 percent.<sup>25</sup> However, because of

<sup>25</sup> 26 27 Mof (2011), "Power and energy sector roadmap: an update", Finance division, Ministry of finance, Government of the people's republic of Bangladesh.

infrequent and insufficient gas supplies, the electricity production has been hampered recently. For example, in 2010 due to shortage of gas supply approximately 500-800 MW electricity could not be produced<sup>26</sup>. In this context, it is required to reduce over-dependence on natural gas and to increase use of alternative source for electricity generation.

One such source could be coal since Bangladesh has an actual coal reserve of 3 billion metric ton,<sup>27</sup> which is distributed in five mines across Bangladesh. Moreover coal is a relatively cheaper energy source and power generation from coal is also cheaper. According to the data of Nuclear Energy Institute, the cost of per kilowatt-hour electricity production was 3.06 cents from coal, 4.86 cents from Gas, 2.14 cents from nuclear and 15.18 cents from oil. Although Bangladesh has substantial deposit of quality coal, there is a concern about the method of extraction as well as the technological security which has led many experts to recommend that the quick resolution of energy problems lies on coal import.

Accordingly, the government has taken initiatives to set up 10 imported coal-based plants with a capacity of 7000 megawatt which would require 20 million of imported coal worth \$2 billion<sup>28</sup>. However there is serious concern regarding imported coal-based power plant. The import cost per ton of coal may go much higher than anticipated. The C&F cost per ton of coal (import from Indonesia) to Chittagong stands at between US\$130 which may rise to US\$170 per ton after paying various fees and port taxes.<sup>29</sup> To make the matter worse none of the ocean-going vessels carrying coal to Bangladesh from the source will be able to berth that leads us to assume that a deep sea port is going to be developed, a time consuming and costly affair. All these may cause the cost of electricity generation go up further. The lesson learnt from quick rental experiment teaches such fluctuation in the energy price can be quite harmful to the macroeconomic stability. The government should weigh the cost and benefit of going for an imported coal based policy. Besides, the government should think of the efficient use of its own high quality coal reserve.

## **6.2 Challenges towards realizing the land potential**

### **6.2.1 Land degradation**

One of the main challenges towards realizing the land potential is degradation of land in Bangladesh as it is a threat to agricultural productivity. Land degradation

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28 [http://www.thefinancialexpressbd.com/more.php?news\\_id=120535&date=2012-02-18](http://www.thefinancialexpressbd.com/more.php?news_id=120535&date=2012-02-18)

29 [http://www.thefinancialexpressbd.com/more.php?news\\_id=95121&date=2012-01-20](http://www.thefinancialexpressbd.com/more.php?news_id=95121&date=2012-01-20)

refers to the wearing down or away, and the general lowering and reduction of the earth's surface by the natural processes of weathering and erosion. Improper farming practice, land transformation and deforestation, urbanization, intensive farming method, drought, population pressure etc are contributing to land degradation in Bangladesh. An integrated soil and nutrient management approach, therefore, is needed to ensure efficient and judicious use of all major sources of plant nutrients so as to get maximum economic benefit without any deleterious effect on physical, chemical and biological properties.<sup>30</sup> Further research is needed to avoid the land degradation in Bangladesh.

### **6.2.2 Unplanned Urbanization: Removing extreme pressure from Dhaka**

The urbanization of Bangladesh is closely associated with the intense development of Dhaka City which has experienced a massive migration from the rural areas of Bangladesh in recent decades. Since 1971, Dhaka experienced a tremendous growth to meet the needs of the newly independent country's capital. Its existence as a major urban centre caused to propel the growth of population further. The city's population rose to 2 million in 1974 from 0.7 million in 1961 and within a decade it leapt to 3 million in 1981. Then Dhaka city experienced its highest rate of physical and population growth during 1981-1991 when its population just doubled. The population of Dhaka city exceeded 10 million in 2001.<sup>31</sup> The city is now estimated to have a population of 15 million.

To keep pace with the high population growth, the urbanization began encroaching on the low lying areas within the city limits and even the adjacent areas of its outskirts. But this massive influx has not been matched by the simultaneous creation of infrastructure due to resource constraints. Consequently this unprecedented growth has turned into a symbol of chaos and confusion and caused unexpected sprawling of slums and squatters. Life has been difficult due to tremendous traffic congestion, housing scarcity, water pollution and extreme water-logging problem. It seems that life in Dhaka city has become very much stressed in all respects. Once an important urban agglomeration, Dhaka has already booked its spot as the second worst place to live in.

It is high time to give a serious thought to Dhaka's future. In this circumstance, decentralization is the best and only way to solve the problems. The government should look into the matter and take steps to decentralize business facilities while preparing the urban strategy plans. Besides DAP (Detailed Area Plan) can be implemented for development control and making Dhaka livable. But the

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30 [http://www.banglapedia.org/HT/L\\_0045.HTM](http://www.banglapedia.org/HT/L_0045.HTM)

31 S. Hossain, "Rapid urban growth and poverty in Dhaka city", Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology, Vol. 5; No. 1, January 2008.

most important thing is that the influx of migrants has to be stopped. To this end, an indiscriminate economic growth is required across the country.

### **6.2.3 Environment and climate change**

The climate change poses a major development challenge for Bangladesh. There is a risk associated with Bangladesh's vulnerability to natural disasters. Bangladesh is one of the countries who will be the greatest sufferer of the climate change due to its geographical location. According to the United Nations Human Development Report 2007/2008, one meter rise in sea level would inundate 18% of land area in Bangladesh, directly threatening 11% of the population.<sup>32</sup>

Climate change will also affect all four dimensions of food security and have an impact on human health, livelihood assets, food production and distribution channels, as well as changing purchasing power and market flows. Its impacts will be both short term, resulting from more frequent and more intense extreme weather, and long term, caused by changing temperatures and precipitation patterns. Agriculture-based livelihood systems that are already vulnerable face immediate risk of increased crop failure, new patterns of pests and diseases, lack of appropriate seeds and planting material, and loss of livestock. People living on the coasts and floodplains and in hilly regions are most at risk. As an indirect effect, low-income people everywhere, but particularly in urban areas, will be at risk of food security owing to loss of assets and lack of adequate insurance coverage. Development partners need to strongly support the country to undertake a holistic approach to mitigate the effects of climate change and to adapt with the impacts of environmental degradation, and natural disasters.

### **6.2.4 Facing the very competitive globe**

To remain competitive for reaping the potential economic benefits from the globalized world, Bangladesh must transform its sluggish and complex bureaucratic structure of the Government. The pyramid bureaucratic structure inherited from the colonial days is characterized by red tapism, inefficiency, centralization, lack of delegation and job description. Too many tiers in the decision making process, archaic filing and noting system, lack of e-governance and poor pay structure which are out of place in the modern states.<sup>33</sup> For the complex bureaucracy the country has been incapable of promoting business and investment at the expected level. Thus the government needs to take essential measures for transforming this bureaucracy.

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32 UNDP (2007-08), "Human Development Report 2007-08: Fighting Climate Change: Human solidarity in a divided world".

33 Du, Hua, "Bangladesh economy: Opportunity and challenges", *Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh*; Vol. 1, No 3, October, 2008.

## 7. Conclusion

Since independence Bangladesh has made commendable progress in various macroeconomic and social development indicators which is reflected in various development indexes of World Bank and the United Nations. However, we could have achieved much more had we utilized the full potential of our labor force. The percentage of population aged below 14 and above 64, which constitute the dependent population of a country, is shrinking in Bangladesh. Increase in working-age population creates a greater opportunity for productive socio-economic activities in Bangladesh. This opportunity is known as “demographic dividend” which is realized in 4 steps to economic growth and development.

An increased labor supply results in increased savings and capital stock coupled with decreases in fertility rates and better women health, more child care, and consequently, an increase in GDP per capita resulting in an increased demand stimulating the economic growth and development further. Bangladesh could not realize the full potential of this dividend. A substantial part of the labor force could not be employed in good and better jobs due to lack of appropriate skill in labor and infrastructure deficiency. An unemployed labor is practically dependant even though he or she is not dependant in terms of age consideration.

Over time this demographic feature or advantage goes away. Thus, it is high time that we realized this advantage. Challenges towards realizing the potential are critical and manifold. Proper utilization of natural resources such as land is very crucial. Environmental sustainability is a must for Bangladesh. Capable political leadership, business friendly policies, efficient bureaucracy, decentralization, strong local governments and opportunities for participation of the poorest are essential to confront the challenges.

Beside domestic resource mobilization and support by multilateral lending institutions, foreign private investment will be highly beneficial to offset shortage in investment. Bangladesh needs to invest more on human resource and skill development in order to create and sustain a competitive edge in the globalized world. Only then Bangladesh will become an economically sound country and could even emerge as one of the next eleven fast growing countries in the World as predicted by Goldman Sachs.

## UNPUBLISHED GOLD COIN OF ŚAŚĀŅKA IN THE BANGLADESH NATIONAL MUSEUM

Shariful Islam\*

This short article is aimed at drawing the attention of scholars to four hitherto unpublished gold coins of Śaśāᅇka, are preserved in the reserve collection of the Bangladesh National Museum. These coins were collected by the museum from South-East Bengal in 1973-1976. The acquisition history of these coins is not recorded in details in the museum document. The exact find spots of these gold coins are not known. Three coins were collected from somewhere in Kachua police station of Comilla District along with other Post-Gupta gold coins. It is most likely that these coins were discovered from a hoard. The local coin dealer collected these coins from a jewelry shop and sold these to the Museum. The other gold coin came from North Bengal, though the exact provenance is not known.

Among these four pieces, the first three gold coins are clearly Samatata type and another is the normal gold coin of Śaśāᅇka. It is interesting to note that one gold coin has the unique characteristic feature which discloses some new facts in the history of ancient Bengal. These numismatic sources demand a fresh assessment of the Post-Gupta history of ancient Bengal.

The typological and symbolical features of these coins are as follows:

1. Accession No. 73.1506  
Weight: 5.03 gram.  
Find place: Kachua, Comilla.  
**Obverse:** Within a circle of large dots, Siva reclining on a couchant bull with the trident held in the upraised left hand. Under the bull, the legend 'Sri Jaya' is written in Brāhmī script.  
**Reverse:** Within a circle of large dotted border, a goddess is seated on a lotus, presumably Lakᅇmī. She holds a lotus bud in her left hand,

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while an unknown object in her right hand. The legend is in Brāhmī 'Śrī- Śaśāṅka'.



Obverse



Reverse

2. Accession No. 73.1795  
Find place: Kachua, Comilla  
Weight: 5.5 gram.

**Obverse:** Within a circle of large dots, Siva reclining on a couchant bull with the trident held in the upraised left hand. Under the bull, the legend 'Vijaya' is written in Brāhmī script.

**Reverse:** Within a circle of large dotted border, a goddess seated on a lotus, presumably Lakṣmī. She holds a lotus bud in her left hand, while an unknown object in her right hand. The legend is 'Śrī-Śaśāṅka' on the left field of the deity.



Obverse



Reverse

3. Accession No. 76.1016  
Find place: Unknown, collected from a coin dealer of Dhaka.  
Weight: 5.83 gram.

**Obverse:** Within a circle of large dots, Siva reclining on a couchant bull with left hand upraised holding a trident. Under the bull, the legend 'Śrī-jaya' is written vertically in Brāhmī.

**Reverse:** Within a circle of dotted border, goddess Lakṣmī is seated on a lotus. She holds a lotus bud in her left hand, while an unknown object in her right hand. The legend is in Brāhmī character 'Śrī-Śaśānka'.



Obverse



Reverse

4. Accession No. 75.1102

Weight: 9.34 gram.

Find place: Unknown, probably collected from Dhaka.

**Obverse:** Siva, nimbate, reclining on a couchant bull with his left hand upraised; 'Śaśā' in Brāhmī script written vertically in the right field and the legend 'Jaya' is under the bull.

**Reverse:** Goddess Lakṣmī, seated on lotus and two elephants are pouring water over her head; the legend: Śrī-Śaśānka.



Obverse



Reverse

**Implication:** Among these above noted four coins, the first three coins are rare and are different from the normal coin of Śaśāṅka, king of Gauḍa. Only one piece of such coin has hitherto been published by Jahar Acharjee<sup>1</sup> and B. N. Mukherjee.<sup>2</sup> This single piece was discovered from southern Tripura and this is preserved in the Rajendra Kirtisala Museum of Agartala in Tripura. It is interesting to note that the normal coins of Śaśāṅka do not have any dots, but these coins bear the large dotted border like the other coins of Samatata, such as the coins of the Ratas, the Khāḍgāṣ and the Early Devas. Most of the normal coins of Śaśāṅka weigh 9.4g. But the weights of these coins are around 5.7g. It is interesting to mention that goddess Lakṣmī of the coin is holding an object in her right hand that is very similar to the object in the hand of the deity depicted on the normal coins of Samatata. These coins are fairly good metal, thinner and broader flan and the figures are well punched like the other Samatata coins. Comparing these characteristics with the Samatata coins, this coin has rightly been assigned to Samatata type gold coin of Śaśāṅka by B.N.Mukherjee.<sup>3</sup> N. G. Rhodes has supported B. N. Mukherjee and gave a clear description of the Samatata type gold coin of Śaśāṅka.<sup>4</sup>

However, our new findings show variations among the Samatata type coins of Śaśāṅka. In the above noted pieces, it is observed that no. 2 bears unique legend 'Vijaya' in place of 'Jaya', and this is a unique feature of the gold coins of Śaśāṅka so far discovered and published. Variation in the posture of Siva, sitting or reclining on the bull, indicates the artist power of innovation.<sup>5</sup> This coin also suggests that Śaśāṅka issued several coins from Samatata.

Banabhatta refers to Śaśāṅka as the king of Gauḍa, while Huen Tsang mentions him as a king of Karṇasūvarṇa (in present Nadia district). The Rohatāgarh seal, the three copper plates of Śaśāṅka (two Midnapur and Egra copper plates)<sup>6</sup>, and the Ganjam copper plate of Madhavavarman II, vassal of Śaśāṅka, all these are located in ancient Rādha sub-region. The provenances of most of the published normal coins of Śaśāṅka were in ancient Rādha and Gauḍa and no coin of this king had been discovered in the past from South-East and North-Bengal. So, it was thought in the past that Śaśāṅka's kingdom was confined to the areas of ancient Rādha and Gauḍa.

It is only reported in the *Mañjusrimūlakalpa*<sup>7</sup> that “there was a king Soma of the Brahman caste. The king *Ra* of the Vaisya caste was as much powerful as Soma. *Ra* was killed by a king of the low caste. *Ha*, the younger brother of *Ra* went to the city of Puṇḍra to fight with Soma. He defeated Soma.” Some scholars identify the kings *Ra*, *Ha*, and Soma with Rayavardhan, Harshavardhan and Śaśānka respectively. Only on the basis of this mention, it is decided that north Bengal was under the sway of the kingdom of Gauḍa in the Post-Gupta period. But the historicity of this literary text has been questioned. Hence, there was no definite evidence to the scholars in the past to prove that Śaśānka could make himself lord of the whole of Bengal. But these above noted coins clearly show that South-East as well as North Bengal was within the kingdom of Śaśānka as these numismatic evidences may be taken as corroborative sources for the account in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.

These coins clearly show that Samatata was within Sasanka’s empire and he issued gold coins from this place. On the other hand, the legend ‘Vijaya’ of one gold coin apparently suggests that this was issued as a mark of victory of Samatata. It may also be taken to mean that Śaśānka conquered Samatata and issued gold coins from there as a mark of his victory. The rival of Śaśānka might have been Bhāskarvarman, the ruler of Kāmarūpa. It is reported in the *Harsacarita* that Śaśānka was antagonist of Bhāskarvarman who made alliance with Harsavardhan, the rival of Śaśānka. The *Dubi* copper plate of Bhaskarvarman reports this conflict and a battle between the kings of Gauḍa and Kāmarūpa.<sup>8</sup>

Now from the coins reported above we can substantiate the suggestion of B. N. Mukherjee who assigned this first in the Tripura Museum collection as Samatata designed gold coin of Śaśānka. The above noted coins suggest that Śaśānka was king of the whole of Bengal. However, these coins demand fresh assessment of the history of Śaśānka and these numismatic sources need to be incorporated in the history of ancient Bengal.

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## **MIGRATION, URBANIZATION AND POVERTY IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH\***

Shahadat Hossain\*\*

### **Introduction**

The issues of rural-urban migration and urban transformation form an essential part in an analysis of urban poverty as they are creating severe pressure on cities and sustaining the urban absorptive capacities, thereby aggravating urban poverty. Massive changes are taking place in patterns of urbanization on a global scale. But the South is urbanizing very rapidly despite the fact that its various regions differ markedly in the level of urbanization they have attained.<sup>1</sup> About 95 percent of humanity will live in the urban areas of the South, whose population will double to nearly 4 billion over the next generation.<sup>2</sup> The most dramatic result will be the growth of new megacities with populations in excess of 10 million, and, even more spectacularly, hypercities with more than 20 million inhabitants. The number of urban poor living in slums in the world has already crossed the one billion mark-when one in three city residents live in inadequate housing with no or few basic services and often face forced evictions from their settlements.<sup>3</sup> Hundreds millions of new urbanities will be involved in the peripheral economic activities in the informal sectors of the economy who become a living museum of human exploitation in the age of a surplus humanity.<sup>4</sup> During reforms under neo-liberalism while market becomes very dominant due to the declining role of the state the proliferation of fortified enclaves has created a new model of spatial segregation and transformed the quality of public life in many cities which marginalizes the poor urban communities. The policing of poverty has been strongly spatialized through the segregation of the poor on the urban periphery and through slum clearance justified as urban renewal or development.<sup>5</sup>

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Bangladesh is currently facing huge challenges of rapid urbanization. The rate of growth of urban population is likely to fall to some extent in the future, but would still be quite high. The UN projection for urban population of Bangladesh for 2030 was 86.5 million.<sup>6</sup> The proportion of urban would possibly cross the 50% mark by 2040 and the 60% mark by the year 2050 when the total urban population would rise above 100 million.<sup>7</sup> The city of Dhaka in recent years has emerged as one of the fastest rapid growing cities in the world. It began with a manageable population of 2.2 million in 1975 which reached 12.3 million in 2000. The growth rate of Dhaka City's population will remain high and it will be the top ranking megacity with a population of around 25 million by the year 2025.<sup>8</sup> Urbanization of Dhaka is closely linked to the rural displacement triggered by the government's structural adjustment policies and concentration of wealth and employment in urban centres. In addition, natural disasters and vulnerabilities through climate change displace millions of population in the coastal areas who migrate to the city and mostly take shelter in the urban peripheries to escape from poverty. Thus, Dhaka's urban periphery has sprung up as rings of urban poverty in recent decades.<sup>9</sup> Most of the new migrants to the city take shelter in the peripheries due to easily available low cost housing. In addition, the urban poor from the city centre are increasingly being forced out to the peripheries due to increasing demand for land for urban development in the city centre. The new urban poor living in the peripheries are economically marginalized due to exclusions from the formal sectors of the economy. They are also marginalized in terms of the access to housing and infrastructure services in the city. They also remain socially and culturally marginalized in the new urban peripheries. The poor urban communities are often become the victims of the circumstances and they are treated as the criminals by the authorities.

It is in the context the paper aims to explore the recent migration and rapid urban transformation which has created the new challenges of urban slums and poverty in the peripheries of Dhaka. Combining the frameworks of urban political economy and urban ethnography developed by sociologist and anthropologists it will document the poverty and marginality of the new migrants who move to the urban peripheries to escape from poverty during the recent decades while the city has been significantly transformed due to neoliberal reforms.

### **Rural Displacement and Migration to the City**

The urbanization of Dhaka is linked to rural displacement and massive migration of rural population to the urban peripheries. Agriculture can no more

solve the economic needs of a growing rural population. Many people involved in agriculture are gradually being displaced from their land and involved in non-farming activities like services, trading and commercial activities. Many of them are moving to the city for employment which is also very common in many other developing countries.<sup>10</sup> In Bangladesh inequality in the ownership of land is also crucial for such rural displacement. Land is centralized in the hands of those who are not directly involved in agriculture. Remittance plays an important role for increasing inequality in the ownership of land. Ali moved to Savar, the rapid growing suburb of Dhaka, explains his experience of displacement in the Southern district of Barisal where he passed most of his life. He points out, 'I had nothing to do in my village as I was unable to work as a wage laborer there. I was forced to sell my land to my neighbors due to my debts. You know, our village life has been changed due to money sending from overseas. Those who are receiving money from their sons are buying land. Still I want to go back there but I do not know when I will be able to go there'.

Moreover, land is being leased by firms especially in the surrounding districts of Dhaka. Small landowners are unable to keep their land due to the increasing demand of land from the rich and firms. Over the years the government took policies for redistribution of land among landless which did not work much. In fact, land reforms have failed to resolve the problem of poverty in rural areas. In addition, modernization of agriculture through investments and new technology also causes new forms of rural displacement. Rural poor working as wage laborers are being displaced and they are migrating to the peripheries of Dhaka. The story of Rahman reveals the increasing trend of land leasing in the surrounding districts of Dhaka. He was working in his land in Gazipur inherited from his father which he had lost a couple of years back. Now he is living in Pallobi with his family of five members by working as a security guard in a garment factory. He mentioned, 'We were happy to cultivate our land over the decades. A group of people from Dhaka offered us to lease our land for ten years. We had no way to reject them as they had both money and power. At last they bought our land and we became landless. I had lost the money received from them and the only option remains for me to move to the city of Dhaka.' Thus, peripheries of Dhaka become the destinations of the new urban poor in recent decades.

Along with structural adjustments and modernization of agriculture the changing climate is playing a significant role in rural displacement in Bangladesh. Environmental disasters and vulnerabilities due to climate change force millions of rural poor out from their land. In the recent decades the rural

poor living in the coastal areas were frequently affected by natural disasters like cyclones. Huge number of poor people who used to work in their rural land became the new migrants in the cities. They have chosen migration as a strategy to escape from poverty and vulnerabilities. These climate refugees are mostly lacking of skills and employment training needed for jobs in the formal sectors of the urban economy. They usually move to the urban peripheries where they can find low paid jobs. In Kamrangirchar a huge number of migrants moved from the Southern districts of greater Barisal Division after disasters like Sidor and Aila. They lost their livelihoods in their villages and compelled to move to the city. Akther migrated here with his family commented, 'We lost our house, land, cattle and we were unable to manage our livelihood there after Sidor. Now we are alright here as we are working in the factories.' Despite such huge disasters poor people are also joining to the city slums on a regular basis due to river erosion. Rashid has recently moved to a slum in Mirpur with his family from Bhola, the mostly affected district of Bangladesh due to climate change. Rasid had lost his land by river erosion and had the only option to move to the city. He says, 'I never wanted to move here but I had no other option to choose. When my land was destroyed by the river, what I can do there. I have learnt pulling the rickshaw to bear my family here'. The fact is, a huge number of climate refugees are joining to the urban slums located in Dhaka's peripheries on a regular basis.

The existing laws of inheritance is also playing significant role for landlessness and migration to the city of Dhaka. Women in Bangladesh rarely have equal property rights and rarely hold title to land. Social and customary practices effectively exclude women from direct access to land. Similarly, although national law accords men and women equal rights to access to property and land, family law and practices are barriers for women. The fact is, women own very few assets in rural Bangladesh. Their situation is further impaired by discriminatory inheritance laws and cultural norms. Daughters inherit half the share of property received by sons, and women a one-eighth share of their husbands' property and one-sixteenth of their sons' property in case the sons predecease the mothers. Overall, Bangladeshi women are unlikely to claim their share of family property unless it is offered to them. This situation sometimes compels many rural women to migrate to the cities in Bangladesh.

In fact, the issue of rural-urban migration is closely linked to urban poverty as the poor are mostly rural migrants. The substantial body of literature available reveals that people move to the city for economic reasons.<sup>11</sup> When people are asked why they moved, they usually cite 'better prospects' in the urban

economy as the chief reason. The sight of severe and widespread poverty in the city of Dhaka easily leads to the assumption that migrants do not really know what to do and are unaware of the risk of being trapped in urban poverty. The fact is, they are often misled by migrants returning to rural areas who have described the city as a place of opportunities. Such myths have been perpetuated by returning migrants who wish to build up their image and their exploits. But they often underplay the problems they encounter in the city.

However, the relative success of most migration is due in large to the fact that it is embedded in social relation in Bangladesh.<sup>12</sup> Migrants typically receive considerable assistance when they move, in adapting to the urban environment, in securing a foothold in the urban economy. Once a group of villagers had gained a foothold in the city, they attracted others ready to leave the village. In many instances, potential migrants wait in their villages until their urban contact signals a job opportunity.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Neoliberal Urbanization and Peripherilization**

Neoliberal urbanization is characterized by economic restructuring and relocation of the poor communities in the urban peripheries. It is evident that in the global cities economic restructuring has been playing significant role in reshaping the urban space.<sup>14</sup> It is playing an important role in the formation of new urban peripheries in Dhaka. Formal urban labor markets stopped absorbing labor, generating a substantial increase in unemployment and underemployment. Increasing number of technology based employments in the Central Business District (CBD) of Dhaka creates the new challenges for unskilled and semi-skilled workers migrated from rural areas. Poor migrants are mostly illiterate and lack employment training being unable to get access to these emerging information based employments. Jalil's family has been recently moved to Demra where he is working as clerk in a factory. He explains his experience of displacement from the city centre: 'It was hard to continue job there due to increasing competition from technically sound people. Everyday new employees having better skills are joining there. We are older generation and unable to cope with the changes. We are better here as we can find few jobs.'

The existing informal sectors are unable to absorb the surplus labor force. Moreover, the authority is regulating informal sectors through restrictions over the years.<sup>15</sup> Ibrahim, a street vendor working in Jatrabari, previously worked as a street vendor in Gulistan where he often experienced harassment from the authorities. He says, "I moved here to continue vending in the street. In the city

centre streets are often cleared by the police. Hawkers were evicted to make the city beautiful during the last cricket game. I moved here to start this business but my earning had decreased.' The consequence is a general degradation in living conditions of millions of urban informals brought by structural adjustment policies in the last decades which is also valid for other countries.<sup>16</sup> In the context of employment restructuring they are moving to the peripheries of the city where new manufacturing and garments factories are developing. The new migrants prefer to live in the peripheries as they can easily find out a job. However, peripherilization of Dhaka is linked to economic restructuring and the changing pattern of employment.

In the period of neoliberal urban transformation the urban renewal and redevelopment justified for beautification of the cities become a common phenomenon around the world. The urban renewal and redevelopment affecting Dhaka like many other cities favours a very small portion of urban population. The city in short span of time has transformed, the landscape now dominated by new developments and an array of real-estate advertisements offering lucrative land and housing deals dot the city. The majority of these development projects are of high-end real-estate for the powerful and affluent classes; with the exception of a few housing projects where access was determined on having connections with political parties. Under the new wave of privatization a significant number of private schools, universities and hospitals have been established where the rich and affluent only have the access.<sup>17</sup> The fact is, Dhaka has emerged as the city of the new shopping malls, restaurants, cafes, beauty parlours and gymnasiums. This privatization of urban space discriminate the urban poor who are forced to move to the urban peripheries.

Beautification projects in the city have also marginalized poor communities from the city. The government has recently inaugurated the Hatirjheel project which has displaced huge number of poor people to the new urban peripheries. A major objective of the project is to have a storm drainage system to prevent flooding of the capital alongside urban beautification and environmental conservation. However, completion of recreational and landscaping components, including celebration point, water court, floating walkway, viewing deck, child play equipment, water taxi terminal, lakeside landing steps, and amphitheatre is expected by this year. The project costs Tk 1,971 crore, with Tk 1,048 crore spent for land acquisition and the rest for construction of various structures.<sup>18</sup> Poor people used to live in the area over the decades have been displaced and moved out to other places especially the peripheries of the city. A number of poor people still living nearby the project were interviewed

about their relatives and neighbors. They informed that they mostly moved to the new urban peripheries for low cost housing.

In the peripheries of Dhaka land grabbing becomes the source of different crime and violence. Frauds, kidnapping and killing are the most common urban crimes related to land in greater Dhaka. It is a huge challenge to continue the possession of land in urban peripheries by land owners as land grabbers are very powerful. In many cases the owner of the land are tortured and forced to leave the city. Local *mastans* and terrorists are often used to force them. Manan is currently living in Kachpur who had lost his control over land beside the link road of Dhaka-Narayanganj. He was tortured and forced out from his land by the carders of a local gang leader. Every year a number of land related cases are filed in different police stations in greater Dhaka. As the cases are lengthy and influenced by powerful parties, the victims do not get justice. Violence and protests for protecting their land are very common in the urban peripheries. In Rupganj, Narayanganj local residents protested against the authority to protect their land in 2010. Few protesters were killed and the government had to stop the project. But the question is whether local residents will be able to hold their control over land as it is needed for rapid urban expansions. Recently a number of protesters in Rupganj were interviewed who did not want to disclose their names for security reasons. One of them mentioned, 'You know, we won against the authority through huge protest but we could not protect our land later due to the increasing pressure from the authorities and private developers.'

#### **The New Urban Poverty and Marginality**

The urban peripheries become the dumping grounds of the urban poor in the new age of surplus humanity. The nature of life and labour in the peripheries clearly reveals their poverty and vulnerability. Most of the urban poor are involved in low paid peripheral economic activities in Dhaka like many other developing cities.<sup>19</sup> They mostly work as rickshaw pullers, street vendors, construction workers, transport workers, garments workers and low grade employees in the government and private sectors.<sup>20</sup> Women are mostly employed as garments workers in the new urban peripheries. The poor mostly experience harassment at their work place either by employers or police. Sadek recently moved to Mohammadpur is pulling rickshaw explains police harassment: 'I am riding rickshaw in this area as the authority has blocked the main streets. If any case I go to the main road, I need to pay bribe to the traffic police. Otherwise, they physically harass me and damage my rickshaw.' Street vendors also experience police harassment and they need to pay bribe to run their business. They are also threatened and harassed by the clients of local

political leaders. Those clients of political leaders force them to pay money to run their businesses. It is found that money collected through this process is distributed among them. Workers involved in construction and transports are seriously affected by recent political chaos through strikes. They are unable to go to their work during strikes which causes huge stress in their households.

The poor women working in the garment factories are getting low wages despite working long hours. The condition of their work place is very unsafe and they often become the victims of accidents. In the past year more than one hundred workers were burnt in Tazrin garment in Savar. The victims of this accident did not get any benefit from the employer or government despite huge promises. More than a thousand workers working in garments in Rana Plaza in Savar died due to its collapse. Thousands of workers are also injured and many of them will not be able to return to work. This tragedy attracts huge attention from national and international communities. Still garments workers are demonstrating to raise their pay and to improve the condition of their workplace. But the government does not pay attention to the demands of the workers despite their significantly contributing to the economy.<sup>21</sup> Rather, their demonstrations are stopped by the police. This reveals the vulnerabilities of garments workers, and as we all know, in Bangladesh garments have been emerged as the main source of employment for the new urban poor.

Poverty is clearly seen in the pattern of consumption of the poor migrants living in the urban peripheries. Poor people are involved in low-paid jobs and they have insufficient earnings to support their livelihoods. Their low level of earning means that their expenditure level is also low with most of their earnings spent on food. As a result, essential non-food items like health and education are often neglected.<sup>22</sup> The urban poor usually buy food items at a low cost and generally avoid costly items for their daily meals. In recent times chimerical is overwhelmingly used as preservative for food especially fish and fruits. Although people from all social strata are affected, the poor communities are severely affected as they have no option to buy quality food from super markets where there are some means to prevent it. Abdul Halim, a rickshaw puller says, 'We are poor and we always buy cheap food from local market to survive. We have no option to choose quality food from super market which is reserved for the rich. We do not bother for formalin though we are mostly affected by this harmful chemical'. In fact, chronic malnutrition and poor health is the result of deprivation of necessary food items over a long period of time.

Housing is an important aspect of the quality of life and necessary expression of material well-being. Although many of them improved their conditions in terms

of their income and food consumptions, the poor living in the urban peripheries are marginalized in terms of housing. Material deprivation and higher levels of vulnerabilities of the urban poor to housing conditions clearly revealed through tenure insecurity and poor quality of housing. The poor communities have no access to urban land and the most have been forced to settle on vacant land on the periphery of the city, where they have been relocated because of increasing demand for land and its increasing value. The poor quality of construction materials makes their houses vulnerable to annual floods. They have limited access to urban infrastructure services despite living in the city for a long time. Whatever the reason for the appalling environmental conditions in which poor people live, the sanitation is far from satisfactory when their health is endangered and they are also obliged to devote time which could otherwise be used for productive income-generating work to obtain daily supplies of potable water or fuel.<sup>23</sup>

The poor people living in the urban peripheries are the real victims of environmental injustices as they are suffering from environmental problems in cities of the South.<sup>24</sup> Sufia living in Hajaribagh explains her experience of living near the tannery. She says, 'We are living here in very dangerous situation in terms of environmental risks as we have no option to move. It is hard to live for humans in such an unhealthy environment'. The poor living in other peripheries are also experiencing the similar forms of environmental injustices. The fact is, the poor physical and environmental contexts, which is the lot of the poor, is the result not only of rapid urbanization and limited resources, but critically of a lack of political will of urban and national governments and individuals to invest in much needed infrastructure.<sup>25</sup>

People living in poor environment are sufferings from different diseases. Infant and children are the most affected groups in the urban slums. Despite ill health and prevalence of diseases the urban people have limited access to available healthcare services. Long-wait and less attention are the common groups for avoiding public hospitals by the poor people. Moreover, privatization of urban healthcare facilities has created the new challenges for the urban poor in recent decades. Manan, a resident of a poor settlement in Badda, points out, 'We cannot think of going to see a doctor in a private hospital or clinic because of his/her high fees. These private hospitals and clinics only serve the rich people. Even doctors in the public hospitals do not pay attention to the patients because they are mostly busy for private practices'. The exclusion of the poor from the city healthcare services often compels them to undertake a variety of alternative treatments. Poor women often seek help from untrained persons for childbirths,

which causes deaths among pregnant women. Poor children are extremely vulnerable to diseases and they do not get proper medical treatment because of the low household incomes, resulting in a higher rate of infant mortality in the city slums.

The peripheralization process has created the new enclaves of poverty. The poor people living in the peripheries are often treated as criminals by the authorities. Punishing the poor becomes the most important agenda of the neoliberal state.<sup>26</sup> The metropolitan police of Dhaka often raids in the urban peripheries to search criminals and gang members. The fact is, residential segregation has created stigmatization and the city of walls.<sup>27</sup> People living in upper and middle class suburbs also consider the peripheries as the places of criminals. People from wealthy suburbs of Dhaka are scared of visiting the urban peripheries. A number of interviews were conducted with residents of Dhanmondi about the images of the poor neighborhood of Kamrangircha. Most of them consider the place as dangerous neighbourhood where the criminals are mostly living. Some Nazim Uddin replied: 'I never think of visiting the area at the night time. Even I am scared of visiting there in day time. I think it is totally occupied by criminals and dangerous people.' However, fortified enclaves are developing in the peripheries of Dhaka through urban planning and policy over the decades.

The poverty and marginality leads to violence and protests in the urban peripheries. The exclusion and deprivation of the new urban poor and their victimization by the authorities make them desperate. Thus, Dhaka's peripheries become the location of huge number of insurgent and rebel citizens.<sup>28</sup> In Savar people involved in garment factories often demonstrate for increasing their payments. Interviews with a number of garments workers reveal their justifications for the protest. Rafiq, a young protester complains, 'Both the police and mastans (the clients of local gang leaders) are forcing us to stop the protest. We need help from the civil society to make it successful'. Currently the poor workers are fighting for increasing their pay and improving the condition of workplace in Dhaka's peripheries. It is true that exclusions and deprivations of the new urban marginals lead to violence there. In fact, urban slums have always been sites of violence and social confrontation but globalization has only produced more complex violence through diversifying cultural and social identifications globally.<sup>29</sup>

Urban poverty is linked to the emergence of the new Islamist politics in the peripheries of Dhaka. In recent decades huge numbers of poor people having no

access to the urban services provided by the government get services from different faith based organizations in the peripheries of Dhaka. The poor people mostly take health and education services from these faith based organizations and they have some support to their activities. Mousseau observed the support for Islamist groups among the urban poor in many Muslim countries including Bangladesh.<sup>30</sup> It is evident that a number of Madrassas have been developed in Dhaka's peripheries. The poor children having no access to schools often prefer to go there for learning. The poverty has forced them to depend on such faith based education. They are most likely the supporters of Islamists. They think their poverty and vulnerability could be ended up through the establishment of the new faith based society. Kalam, a young boy attending a Maddraasa in Kamrangirchar posits out, 'The existing political system is unable to establish a just society as the leaders are corrupt. We will establish the new society through the new Islamist movement'. However, the poverty and marginality in the urban peripheries leads to the faith based political movement in Dhaka.

It is true that armed with the MDG goals of poverty alleviation and urban shelter, international agencies and NGOs have become involved with grassroots organizations concerned with gaining secure tenure of land, adequate and durable housing, and access to elements of urban infrastructure, notably to electricity, transport, sanitation and allied services.<sup>31</sup> This grassroots politics is revealing 'new geographies of governmentality' shaped by three elements: first, the emergence of new forms of globally organized power and expertise within the existence of nation-states; second, the redundancy of national government as governance is outsourced; third, the explosive growth of non-government organizations of all scales and varieties fuelled by the UN development system and the emergence of a global discourse on human rights. The crisis of slum housing has become a major focus for 'deepening democracy' in the city rather than the nation.<sup>32</sup>

However, as sites of social and spatial emergency, slums have also created opportunities for international intervention. Apocalyptic urbanism which refers to the new urbanism outlived its original purpose due to the emerging urban climacteric has been the formation of a number of international organizations and projects to alleviate urban poverty. The UN-Habitat report, *Challenges of Slums* identifies some of these international initiatives, for instances the Cities Alliance, the Urban Management Program and the Municipal Development Program.<sup>33</sup> The Cities Alliance launched the project of cities without slums based on an alliance between the poor, local authorities and their international

associations, national government and bilateral agencies and multilateral agencies (World Bank, UN-Habitat). Slums developed in the new urban peripheries as an emergency measure has emerged as a kind of humanitarian problem.

### **Conclusion**

The formation of new urban poverty in the peripheries represents a vital area of research which can only attract greater attention. The rapid urbanization makes the city of Dhaka a major site of research. The research reveals that the urbanization of Dhaka is closely linked to the rural displacement triggered by the government's structural adjustment policies and concentration of wealth and employment in urban centres. Along with these factors environmental challenges push huge number of rural poor to the city of Dhaka. This massive migration of rural population to the city leads to the development of the new urban peripheries of Dhaka. Moreover, the urban renewal and redevelopment justified for beautification of the city has forced the urban poor to be resettled in the peripheries during the period of neoliberal urban transformation.

Thus Dhaka's peripheries become the dumping grounds of the urban poor in the new age of surplus humanity. Life and labour in the urban peripheries reveals their poverty and marginality. Poverty is clearly seen in terms of their consumption, housing and access to the services in the city. The exclusion and deprivation of the urban poor and their criminalization by the authorities often make them desperate and violent. The fact is, poverty, widespread violence, and massive population movements to the urban peripheries of Dhaka have combined to significantly deteriorate the living conditions of the people. The experience of poverty and violence for the migrants living in the peripheries follows the urbanization without development, the very opposite to their expectations and aspirations.

However, the peripheries of Dhaka become the new location for theorizing contemporary urban life. The city's politics of citizenship can be studied through the marginality in the peripheries. The poverty in the new urban peripheries will remain an important focus of social research because of the intensification of urbanization. The urban peripheries will be attracted by international development agencies for future interventions. They will be designing programs in the new pockets of poverty with the partnership of local authorities under neoliberal urban governance.

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### Book Review

Suchira Roychoudhury (ed): *Gaur, The Medieval City of Bengal*, Special Issue of *Pratna Samiksha* (A Journal of Archaeology), Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training, Eastern India, Kolkata, 2012, vii+218, 3 Maps, 34 Colour Plates, ISBN 2229 7979 (Institution Rs. 1000.00 and Individual Rs. 800.00).

The volume under review is a Special Issue of '*Pratna Samiksha*' a journal published by the Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training, Eastern India, Kolkata. The volume is a thematic one containing a collection of research papers on the Medieval City of Gaur, (C. 1450-1565 CE) contributed by the core members of a research project on Gaur. Based on the findings of archaeological explorations, original contemporary records, coins, inscriptions and the available maps from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the contributors attempted to make a fresh study of the medieval urban centre of Gaur, which held the focal point of the administration of the Muslim rulers of Bengal in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century CE. All the attempts in the articles have revolved round the urbanization of Gaur, its background, the political and economic stimulus that contributed to the making of Gaur. Profusely illustrated with photographs of the sites and the artifacts and the old maps the volume is a most welcome addition to our knowledge of the very important medieval urban centre of Bengal. It helps us to understand the features of urbanization of the largest Sultanate city of Bengal.

The volume has been divided into six sections, namely Background, Historiography, Political History and Economic Formation, Environment, Archaeology and Settlement Pattern, Epigraphy and Numismatics, and Technological Innovation. An 'Aftermath' (quite curious a heading) has been added at the end.

In the 'Background' section Aniruddha Ray places the city of 'Gaur' in the overview of the medieval archaeology of Bengal as well as gives us a clear idea about the site and surroundings of the city in historical perspective. The author also delves into the decline of the city. But it must be mentioned that Ray chooses a very broad canvas of the whole of Bengal, which is rather somewhat irrelevant in the context of the present monograph, and thereby 'Gaur' loses its focus in his write up.

The second section, 'Situating Gaur in Colonial and Nationalist Historiography', by Ratnabali Chatterjee is a very competent historiographic analysis of both colonial and local writers from Alexander Cunningham and the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1861 to Akshay Kumar Maitreya (1861-1930). The section is an analysis of Colonial and National explorers who surveyed the ruins of Gaur and left records of the findings; notable among them are the Indigo planter Henry Creighton's (1817), *The Ruins of Gaur* M. Abid Ali Khan's *Memories of Gaur and Pandua*, edited and revised by H.E. Stapleton, 1931) and Akshay Kumar Maitreya in his journal *Aitihāsik Chitra* and *Gaura Lekhamala* (1912). Maitreya's exploration of medieval Gaur was part of a much larger project of writing the history of the Bengali people. His essays, *Gaurer Katha* (BS 1390) provide valuable data on medieval Gaur and he has been credited to have "laid the foundation of regional history which had the ethno-linguist identity of the Bengali people built into its core".

In conclusion the author makes it clear that the current project on Gaur was rooted in the historical problem of treating, in the context of Bengal, Muhammed Habib's thesis: 'that an urban revolution was initiated in India in the thirteenth century'. It was found from the study of the works of colonial and nationalist archaeologists that a rich literature (dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE) as well as the material remains that a rescrutiny was needed. And that is what prompted the present volume.

The next two chapters in the third section reconstructed the political history of Pre-medieval and Medieval period, the latter is titled as Dynastic History: A Framework. The next chapter authored by Aniruddha Ray deals with the Economic Formation of medieval Bengal as a background study for the understanding of the urbanization of Gaur.

Utilising Persian, European and Bengali sources Ray tries to give us an idea of Economic Formation of pre-medieval and medieval Bengal. The author has dealt very elaborately on the basis of Mukundaram Chakravarti, one of the greatest poets of the *Mangal Kuryas*. His knowledge of European sources has been well-blended with the local vernacular sources to form an idea about the forces that acted in the formation of the Bengal economy and the society.

The narrative of the archaeological remains of the city of Gaur, its environment and settlement pattern are the subject matters of the next section of the book. The narrative of the archaeological remains is quite exhaustive and Sharmi Chakraborty's chapter on the Environment of Gaur adds quite a welcome addition to present day historiography.

Environmental history is a recent addition to the discipline of history and Sharmi Chakraborty's attempt to quite a laudable effort at reconstructing the physical environment of medieval Gaur. Tracing the geography, geology, river system, tanks and ponds, the climate and above all the geography of Gaur, Chakraborty places the locational advantage of Gaur for its growth and at the same time blames the ever-oscillating channel of the Ganges and seasonal epidemics as the causes of its decay. The author concludes, "Gaur is, like in most of the urban centres of its time, an expression of how the people harnessed their natural resources as the technology of the time would allow them to do. But within those limits the medieval man showed his ingenuity and common sense— an understanding of the land handed down by thousand years of adaptation to this specific environment and technique acquired from ever-expanding cultural horizon. However, once the Ganges shifted its course Gaur lost its logic of continuation and was subsequently abandoned" (p. 125).

The next chapter in this section, Settlement Pattern through Archaeological Finds, is very ably chalked out by Sutapa Sinha. The investigating team found the survey map prepared in 1878 by J.H. Ravenshaw most accurate and they carried out their intensive and extensive explorations in the city of Gaur on its basis during the years 1992 to 1997 and identified all the 113 habitation sites. They also plotted extant structures of all types in the 15 sector maps. After reassembling all the 15 sector maps, an idea of the settlement pattern of the city has been formed on the basis of spatial distribution and density of assemblages and their inter-relation. The city was divided broadly into four principal functional zones: the Royal Centre, the Noble's Quarter, the Urban Core and the Garrison Area. All these have been clearly shown in a map (No. 3).

The description of extant buildings along with the artifacts found is quite elaborate and the value of the book lies in the detailed recording done on the basis of the fieldwork for a number of years; of course, a very painstaking job done admirably well.

The next section of the book deals with Epigraphy and Numismatics, in which Pratip Kumar Mitra documented some new Epigraphs and Sutapa Sinha documented the coins found in Gaur. Both the chapters add a wealth of new information derived from the epigraphic and numismatic sources.

In the next section on 'Technological Innovation'. Ratnabali Chatterjee studies the Glazed tiles from Gaur, and Somnath Ghosh, Varada Khaladkar and Kaushik Gangopadhyay make an Archaeometric study on the Technology of the Glazed Bricks from Gaur and Pandua. To my knowledge, there are only a few studies on glazed ceramics of medieval India. Studies on glazed ceramics are

rare - all the studies are on the basis of historical evidence without any archaeometrical analysis. From this context the chapter by Somnath Ghosh *et. al.* is quite innovative and rather technical, but its value cannot be overestimated.

The last section of the book, "Aftermath" contains Soumitra Das' interesting note on 'Gaur to St. John's Church' in which he clearly showed by digging into the archives that the blue marble floor of St. John's Church situated in Dalhousie Square (at present BBD Bag) of Kolkata was laid with the stones brought from Gaur through the good offices of Charles Grant, a director of the E.I. Company who was stationed at Malda.

In this Section, 'Aftermath', Pratip Kumar Mitra has drawn a short biographical sketch of Henry Creighton (1764-1807), the Manager of the Guamalati Indigo Factory owned by Charles Grant, Commercial Resident at the East India Company's factory at Malda. Guamalati was right among the ruins of Gaur, a photograph of the factory is provided in Pl. 31a of the present book. Henry Creighton (1764-1807), a native of Scotland, pioneered the research on the remains of the medieval city of Gaur. He was the man who drew the attention of the contemporaries about the treasures of Gaur that lay hidden under the forest and groves. He developed a large portfolio of drawings of the ruins of Gaur and its vicinity. In 1801 he completed the field survey of the city of Gaur and prepared a detailed map of its ruins. Ultimately in 1817, after his death, Creighton's labor was put in print, *The Ruins of Gaur: Described and Represented in Eighteen views with a topographical map.* This appendix on Creighton is highly informative and places the work of this man from Scotland in the proper perspective for the present research on Gaur.

But, no doubt, the best documentations of Gaur in this monograph are the 64 high quality coloured photographs of the remains that have been retrieved during archaeological explorations as well as of some of the buildings to show their present condition, especially the glazing used in the different buildings. Four maps— two by J.J. Pemberton (1847-48), one by J.H. Ravenshaw and one by Henry Creighton (1801)— reproduced in the volume in their original size are of immense value, since they were not easily available to scholars and one map drawn on the basis of the Survey of India records attempts to recreate the environmental condition of the time, add to the value of the present volume on Gaur.

In this context it may be mentioned that the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh published in 1997 a volume on 'Gaur-Lakhnauti' edited by ABM Husain. The

historical city of Gaur at present stands in the two modern states of India and Bangladesh. The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh's volume naturally concentrated on the Bangladesh side of the medieval city. But the major portion of the medieval city lies in the Indian side and the volume under review gives us a detailed picture of the glories that was Gaur. The two volumes taken together have a record of the medieval city of Gaur for the posterity.

*Gaur, The Medieval City of Bengal*, is an excellently produced book and well designed to cover all aspects including historiography, environment and technological innovations. The two entries in the 'Aftermath' section are interesting and at the same time informative. I have no doubt that the volume will be welcomed by one and all as a very useful addition in the field of Bengal's historical archaeology and it will hold its ground for a long time to come.

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*Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*, by Rana Mitter,  
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Boston and New York, 2013), pp.464

China's heroic struggle for survival during its War of Resistance Against Japan from 1937 to 1945, which caused about 20 million deaths and another 90-100 million refugees, is not generally acknowledged in the West. The result of a decade-long research project, generously funded by the Leverhulme Trust, *Forgotten Ally* by Oxford historian Rana Mitter not only chronicles the eight-year long ordeal by incorporating new archival materials accessible after the liberalisation of China and the end of the Cold War, it also provides a profoundly touching human perspective to the sacrifice, fortitude and dedication of the Chinese people during that conflict. Navigating with refreshing clarity through the thicket of a politically complex narrative, it inspires the reader to delve further into the pivotal but convoluted and little understood episode of the ancient country.

The time-frame of the book inevitably puts the focus on the rise of Japan and its eventual military might, to which Professor Mitter attributes the unprecedented defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. However, he elides the key role of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 in facilitating Japan's expansionism for the subsequent two decades, and the overall Western support in empowering and catapulting it onto the stage of international politics – thereby becoming instrumental in containing Russia, as well as subverting “pernicious” Chinese nationalism. It may be mentioned that, for the good part of the twentieth century, China was regarded as “geopolitical Goldilocks' porridge” of sorts, which was not to become too powerful to threaten the West, nor to remain too weak to be “hijacked by a non-Western power,” i.e., either Russia/Soviet Union or Japan. During World War II, U.S. and British interests too diverged fundamentally over the question of a post-war “strong China,” reflecting deep-seated Western ambivalence toward it.

Not quite a “revisionist” history of China's War of Resistance, *Forgotten Ally* is a reassessment of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's role in combating the Japanese military challenge, whose imperatives at times compelled him to opt for politically expedient, but morally culpable and strategically controversial steps—firstly, the November 1937 decision to “fight to the death” for the

disastrous defence of Nanjing, for which the Kuomintang or KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party) army was ill-equipped. Secondly, the breaching of the dikes of the Yellow River in June 1938 to forestall the Japanese march toward Wuhan, the KMT military headquarters, which eventually capitulated. Fighting a two-front war with the Chinese Communists and the Japanese, Chiang's policy was to first subdue the Communist opposition led by Mao Zedong, and then tackle the Japanese threat ("internal unity before external danger"), which resulted in his contribution to the anti-Japanese war largely negated in the historiography of the People's Republic of China, a legacy now being reevaluated by Beijing.

Mitter portrays Chiang as a tragic figure, whose political fate, sealed as it was by the brutal realities of international politics, was further compounded by intra-KMT factional rivalry, flawed military strategies and tactics, economic sabotage, corruption, war-induced societal disruption, demoralization and desertion of his troops, etc. For one thing, he was kept in the dark about the secret negotiations during 1944-45 between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union that rode roughshod over China's sovereignty by conceding Dairen, Port Arthur and the Chinese Eastern Railroad (lost in the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War), to Moscow, at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam. That the British military objective in the war was not so much the liberation of China from Japanese occupation as the recovery of their colonial possession (with the prospect of KMT establishing control over Hong Kong being a particular concern), was a concomitant hazard that undermined his position. Although Chiang desisted from making a separate peace with the Japanese (and potentially complicating the Allied war-efforts in the Pacific), he nevertheless intuitively realised that the U.S. administration would ultimately dispense with him, especially in the aftermath of his falling-out with Stillwell in October 1944, which further aggravated the anti-Chiang sentiments already circulating among U.S. policy-makers, scholars and the media. A January 1945 paper of the State, War and Navy Coordination Committee (SWNCC), the predecessor of the National Security Council (NSC), ominously suggested that, militarily assisting China (as an Allied country after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December, 1941), was only a short-term U.S. goal, "while its long-term aim was to bring about the unification of China. For the former aim, Chiang Kai-shek was the only candidate who could lead China, but for the latter aim, Chiang was not necessarily the only one." The first official U.S. contact with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Peoples Liberation Army, the United States Army Observation Group, or "The Dixie Mission" (July 1944 to

March 1947), to the Communist headquarters in Yan'an, famously observed that, "The Communists are in China to stay. And China's destiny is not Chiang's but theirs." In the Nationalist indictment, the claim of US\$2 billion war-time American military aid to the KMT government was a myth, which estimates effective U.S. military assistance to the Republic of China between 1941 and 1948 to be around US\$200-300 million. U.S. Lend-Lease aid to China from 1941 to 1944 was mostly spent on General Claire L. Chennault's 1<sup>st</sup> American Voluntary Group/14<sup>th</sup> Air Force ("Flying Tigers"), transporting supplies from Assam, India to Kunming across the Eastern Himalayas (popularly called "the Hump"), for the American forces in China, rather than on the KMT army. Even the US\$125 million allocated by U.S. Congress through the China Aid Act of 1948, after the 1946-1947 arms embargo, did not reach KMT government till December 1948, a delay significantly shifting the balance of power in favour of the CCP, in the ongoing civil war.

Mitter aptly concludes that, "There was nothing inevitable about the [CCP]'s coming to power in 1949. Without the war with Japan, there would have been a greater possibility of an anti-imperialist, anti-Communist Nationalist government consolidating power. It would have still been an immensely hard task, not least because of the Nationalists' own huge flaws, but the war made it nearly impossible." Although it is still unclear exactly who or what triggered the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 7, 1937, some Nationalist critics hypothesise that it was the pre-meditated handiwork of the Comintern which provoked it through Chinese GRU(Main Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet Army General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union) agents in order to start a second Sino-Japanese war (the first occurring in 1894-95), the twin objectives of which were to annihilate KMT forces, as well as get Japan bogged-down in it.

While Mitter discusses the December 1937 Nanjing massacre (one of the worst in recorded history), in a somewhat limited format, he regrettably refrains from addressing the true nature and magnitude of Japanese wartime atrocities in China, which even today remain a toxic issue between Beijing and Tokyo, casting a long shadow over their bilateral relations. He maintains total silence about the infamous Japanese "Unit 731" in Harbin, Manchuria that was in operation from the early 1930s till 1945 as a biological warfare research centre for conducting inhuman experiments on Chinese civilians and prisoners of war, as well as Russians, involving infection of contagious diseases and vivisection, among other things. Yet, not a single person associated with the unit was tried

at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East or, Tokyo Trial, for war-crimes.

The complex story of China's 1937-1945 war against Japan, and the course of its communist revolution call for further research in order to provide the missing pieces of the jig-saw puzzle of one of the crucial chapters of modern history. A well-written, informative albeit sanitised history of China's War of Resistance, *Forgotten Ally* is indisputably a major scholarly work, deserving a front-row placement in the discourse of modern Chinese history that should be read by anyone interested in better understanding the historical background of present-day China.

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