SOCIO-CULTURAL HERITAGE OF BANGLADESH AND ITS IMPACT ON RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

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Introduction

The dictionary meaning of religious extremism refers to a tendency or disposition to go to extreme or an instance of going to extremes, especially in political matter. Thus religious extremism can refer to either to a process or to an institution. If an individual, or a group or an institution takes a firm stance to protect the religious values/norms may be termed as extremist. It has similarity with the more pronounced words fundamentalism and radicalism as the entire phenomenon has the tendency to adopt terrorism in extreme instance. It is vivid from the statement of Berman and Laurence in their write up 'Religious Extremism: The Good, The Bad, and The Deadly (Berman and Innaccone, 2005, p. 1)

At first glance, link between religious extremism and terrorism seems obvious. Religious extremists are willing to murder because they embrace theologies that sanction violence in the service of God. They have no sympathy for their victims, because they view those victims as enemies of God. And they readily sacrifice their own lives because they expect huge and immediate afterlife rewards in return from martyrdom.

Religious extremist group think that they are deprived and humiliated and need to establish their religious and social right. Here, deprivation refers to social right and humiliation refers to humiliation of 'Muslim Ummah' (Alam, 2008, p. 21). As a result, in extreme cases, they adopt terrorism to establish their both rights. Extremism in the name of any religion paid heavy toll in the past. The fanatic group of Hindu religion slaughtered thousands of Buddhists during Sena reign, while the communal disharmony between Hindu and Muslim caused thousands of lives in the Indian sub-continent. Since Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country, therefore, focus of the paper will be confined to extremism in the name of Islam only. Extremism in the name of Islam was surfaced in Bangladesh for the first time in late 90s. In fact, main thrust of terrorism act of militant Islamic fundamentalists started in March 1999 and lasted till January 2005. Harkatul Jihad – al Bangladesh (HUJIB) and Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) are the two principal militant Islamist outfits carried out these dreadful crimes. They

killed 156 people, mostly secular minded through bombing, suicidal and even grenade attack (Ali, 2006, p. 2). Grenade attack at the rally of the then leader of the opposition in broad day light and explosion of series bombs between 11:00 am to 11:30 am in 63 of 64 districts drew the attention of the world community.

It is fact that they rose at a certain period and left the ground almost at the same time. Government's zero tolerance policy; efforts of law enforcing agencies, death sentence to six kingpins including Shaekh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai and mass awareness are believed to be the grounds of their demise. However, it raises a question as to why they have failed to spread religious extremism in a Muslim majority Bengali society? It is being experienced in the field[1] that the general people of Bangladesh played a very active role in dislodging the extremist from the society. They even did not hesitate to hand over their near and dear ones to the law enforcing agency, if they were found to be involved. As a result, Islamic religious extremism could not take root in Bangladesh. There is a deep root in the success history of Bangladesh in limiting the escalation of militants Islamist fundamentalism. The people of Bangladesh inherited different religions and cultural traditions through sequential phases of evolution in the past. It has rich and diverse socio-cultural heritage in terms of art, music, theatre, poetry, literature and celebrations. Daily lifestyle of Bangladeshi is influenced by syncretistic form of religion, which has created an environment of peaceful co-existence, culture of tolerance, secular linguistic Bengali nationalism etc. These, in turn, have developed an inherent potency among population of Bangladesh against any kind of religious extremism.

The study analyses the evolution of religious and cultural traditions in pre and post partitioned period and Phenomenon leading to culture of tolerance. In this connection, whole spectrum of religious extremism in Bangladesh with special emphasis to 1999 to 2005 period, present state and phenomenon leading to religious extremism will be discussed in length and breadth. The endeavour is made to delineate the strength and weaknesses of socio-cultural heritage of Bangladesh through SWOT test. Finally, manifestation of Bengali culture and some policy options will be discussed to strengthen the population to resist religious extremism in Bangladesh.

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1. People's support experienced by the author, while apprehending members of HUJIB from south-western part of Bangladesh and interacting with general mass as Commanding Officer of Rapid Action Battalion (2007 – 2009)

Evolution of Religious and Socio-cultural Traditions

Pre-Partitioned Period. Present Bangladesh was the eastern part of the medieval Bengal, which was formed in a continuous process of accumulation of silts. Thus, fertility of the land attracted commercial and military adventures throughout its history (Alam, 2015, p. 2). In the process, Austric-speakers, Mongoloids, Dravidians, Aryans, Turko-Afghans, Pathans, Arabs, Persians, and Abyssinians (East Africans) came to Bengal to exploit different opportunities (Khan, 2007, p. 3). They came to Bengal as traders, conquerors, preachers or simply migrants. Many of them irrespective of caste, creed, and believers merged with the local people. Traditionally, the people of Bengal did not live in a closed society like northern part of India. As a result, conversion to alien beliefs took place number of times in different ages.

Period of Pala Dynasty. Pala Dynasty, the first independent Buddhist Empire, ruled Bengal for about four centuries (750 – 1120). Pala rulers' contribution in promoting secularism in their state policies was visible in the patronization of other beliefs and accommodation of Brahmin Hindus in their official positions. This period is known as the "golden chapter" in the history of Bengal (Chowdhury, 2004, p. 59). The majority of the common people at that period of time were Hindus. They created an environment where people from all faiths had respect for other religion, beliefs and culture, which left a significant impression in the mind of common people about culture of tolerance or peaceful co-existence (Khan, 2007, p. 4). Pala era may also be termed as the golden age for Buddhism. The Pala kings were also the pioneers in promoting Bengali language and literature.

Period of Sena Dynasty. The Sena rule following the Pala, Bengal observed a marked revival of orthodox Hinduism in the last quarter of eleventh century. They created a distinct rift between the Hindu-Buddhist societies (www.banglapedia.org/HT/S_0224.htm , accessed on 11 April 2015). A great number of Buddhists were forced to migrate to neighbouring countries following the onslaught carried out by the Sena ruler and their associates. Many of them were converted to Hindu again in order to live in peace. They introduced the caste system, commonly known as Brahmanical social system, which is opposite to the social values prevailed during the Pala reign. As a result, Buddhists as well as lower caste Hindus were persecuted and humiliated by the so called Brahman society. History witnessed the state sponsored first ever religious extremism in the soil of Bengal during Sena period. They lost the confidence of the common people and could not sustain in the power for long.

Muslim Rule. Scholars have different opinions as to how agrarian based Hindu-Buddhist society of Bengal turned into a Muslim majority country. Some view that advent of Islam started during the conquest of Sindh and Multan of modern Pakistan by Muhammad Bin Quasim in the 8th century (Karim, 2007, p. 17). However it could not infiltrate deep into the heart of India. So Bengal being in the remote and inaccessible area had no impact on this perception. Another school of thoughts argue that the Arab merchants used to land in the Chittagong port for onward movement to China, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Arab merchants had been using this port since pre-Islamic period and continued to do so after they embraced Islam. They used to preach Islam during their short stay in Chittagong (www.muslimpopulation.com, accessed on 11 April 2015). The conquest of Bengal by Muhammad Bin Bakhtiar Khalji in the early of thirteenth century ushered a new era to spread Islam in Bengal. Gradual growth of Islam took place in this land in the same process as the land has been formed - in a continuous process of accumulation of silts.

Sufism. Sufis were the most vibrant group in preaching Islam in Bengal. Their spiritual power coupled with slogans of universal brotherhood, equality, social justice, development works, construction of mosques, khanqas and above all conversion to Islam with their past culture, customs, rituals, beliefs attracted the oppressed Buddhist and lower caste Hindus to accept Islam. It was specially, drew the attraction of lower caste Hindus, who suffered inequality and lack of social mobility in a caste-ridden society (Khan, 2007, p. 5). The Sufis did not make any distinction between a convert Muslim and a born Muslim. Their khanqas were opened for everyone. They offered the masses a golden opportunity to raise their social status and to satisfy their hearts by the adoption of a simple and easily understandable creed like Islam. The Sufi practices inspired pirism and shrine worship which does not bear the dogmas of orthodox Islam. All these development between Islam and Hinduism resulted in a culture of religious tolerance as seen during the Pala reign and was almost lost during the Sena rule. Moreover, history witnessed agrarian growth and Islamization at the same pace. The involvement of Sufis, along with the Muslim ruler's policy of expanding arable land made Islam synonymous with agrarian growth (M. Eaton, 1993, p. 102). They also had huge contribution in the growth of socio cultural side of Bengal. Huq mentioned (Huq, 2009, p. 24): "Sufism not only helped in the spread of Islam in Bengal, but also contributed to the eventual creation of a Muslim society in Bangladesh. Apart from the religiosity, the influence of the Sufis became attached to popular Bengali culture by the confluence of the murshidi, marfati,

baul songs, and gazirgan. Many of the Sufi preachers became so renowned in different parts of Bangladesh that their tombs are still respected and visited as holy shrines by people from all walks of life".

British Colonial Period. In the wake of the British emperor, the abortive revolution of 1857 led by the Muslims left them in the apprehensive eye of the British master. As a result, Muslims became the lower cadre in the community. In reply of their feelings of deprivation and humiliation in the political, economic and social lives, Muslim community initiated movement of religious reform and establishment of educational institutions to promote a sense of Islamic identity (Alam, 2008, p. 7). Movement of religious reforms took place mostly in the rural areas, whereas, educational reform movements were centred in the urban areas. British colonial period (1757-1947) witnessed the evolution of Islam also, which accommodated much of the secular ideals and policies introduced by the British (Khan, 2007, p. 5). The British colonial rule had also an important influence in the formulation of what Roy (1983) characterizes as the syncretistic nature of Islam in Bengal. According to Custers, such syncretism works as powerful resistance to religious extremism and creates an environment of coexistence of different religious faiths in the region (Custers, 2006, p. 5). However, humiliation by the British ruler and oppression by the Hindu Zaminder (tax collector and later landlord) coupled with identity crisis led the Muslim community to opt for 'Two Nation Theory' in 1947 at the end of British colonial rule.

Post Partitioned Period. Indian subcontinent was divided into two separate nation-states: India and Pakistan basing on religion. Indian National Congress led the Hindu majority, while the All India Muslim League led the Muslim majority in 1947 (http://www.everyculture.com/South-Asia, accessed on 17 April 2015). The people of Bengal were in quest of a national identity, which would lift them from discrimination as felt during British rule. Their antagonistic/contesting relations with Hindu counterpart, in spite of having same ethnicity, culture and even language inspired to take such decision. Surprisingly, Bengal, which emerged as eastern wing of Pakistan, had only one similarity with western wing i.e. religion.

Secular Linguistic Bengali Nationalism. People of Bengal from all walks of life rose their voice to protect their mother tongue, which reached to the climax on 21 February through the sacrifice of language martyrdom. Finally, Pakistan government was compelled to declare Bengali as one of the state language (Gupta, 2007, p. 171). As a result, language movement was the turning point for the Bengali nationalism and ultimate separation from Pakistan. It is a paradox

that how religious nationalism turned into secular linguistic Bengali nationalism within a short span of time. The elites of Pakistan failed to understand the religious traditions and cultural heritage of East Bengal. They neither could conceive the philosophy of universal brotherhood of orthodox Islam nor the brotherhood of one nation. Instead, they used to consider Bengalis as an inferior race (Maqsood, 2009, p. 3). The Bengalis were surprised to find that the feudal lords and tribal leaders of the most medieval type to be still in existence in West Pakistan with virtually no socio-political movement/agenda to free the under privileged/exploited classes." It became obvious through the declaration of Six Points Demand by Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1966, which ultimately led to the landslide victory of Awami League in the 1970 election.

Emergence of Independent Bangladesh. The deprivation, once again surfaced in an astounding spirit for the Bengali people, when Pakistani ruler denied to inaugurate the session of National Assembly in 1970. Instead, they carried out atrocities and killed thousands of innocent Bengalis in the dreadful night of 25 March, 1971. People from all walks of life joined the liberation war to liberate their mother land from the Pakistani oppressor under the vibrant leadership of Bongabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. According to S. Ahmed (2010), the independence war of 1971 and the creation of Bangladesh "was not an isolated event". It had origins in the search for self determination of the Bengali people and their demand for respect for their language and culture (Khan, 2007, p. 6). Bengali nationalism was expressed through the breakup of Pakistan and formation of Bangladesh through a bloody war (Fink, 2009, p. 3).

Contemporary Period

Immediately after the independence, nation building phase started based on secular nationalist principles that had labelled Islamic Political Parties as Collaborators of the Pakistani Army (Lewis, 2011, p. 75). The constitution of Bangladesh was proclaimed within one year of independence which upholds the fundamental principles: secularism, democracy, socialism and nationalism. Though the period of 1971 to 1975 termed as the secular era, but had a pathetic demise. The next two decades, covering 1975 to 1990, history witnessed the rehabilitation of Islam in state affairs. The contribution of military regime in the change of constitution, specially, inclusion of Islam in state affairs left Bangladesh in a conflicting scenario as far as fundamental principles of the constitution are concerned (Khan, 2007, p. 7). However, the overthrow of military ruler paved the way for

the regular free, fair and credible elections. The two major political parties of Bangladesh; Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Bangladesh Awami League (AL) came to power alternatively in three consecutive elections in 1991, 1996 and 2001 respectively. BNP formed coalition with Jamaat –e – Islam, a Islamist party, whose politics was banned by the 1972 constitution. Though the Islamic political parties of Bangladesh won very limited number of seats in the parliament in different elections, but the major political parties tried to sensitize the voters through their support. Militant Islamist parties were in a state of establishing their foothold under the liberal frame of mind of the major political parties towards Islam, specially contesting and conflicting attributes of BNP. AL government came to power with absolute majority through a free, fare and credible election in 2008. As a result, the era of re-secularization started with the restoring of 1972 secular Constitution and a commitment to crushing terrorism and Islamist militancy (Khan, 2007, p. 2). They implemented political manifesto through their full term, which includes restoration of secularism, trial of war criminals, stern actions against terrorism, strengthening the secular institutions etc.

Centre Right BNP and Centre Left AL is preferring to move towards Extreme Right (Jamaat - e - Islam) and Extreme Left (JSD, CPB, Leftist Parties etc) respectively since 2013. It raises a valid question, whether both the parties are creating a distance from the general people or not? Because general people never preferred religion based politics as it is evident in the result of free fare and credible elections. But the space or the vacuum created due to the extreme left or right politics may be exploited by the external and internal influence. It may give birth to extremism or anarchism or both, which will have an upsetting effect in the social order. The figure below amplifies this theme:

Figure 1: Contemporary Politics and its Effect						
Extreme Left	Centre Left	Vacuum Space	People	Vaccum Space	Centre Right	Extreme Right
UPPER CLASS (For 20% - Wealth Distribution 77%)						
MIDDLE CLASS (For 20% - Wealth Distribution 21.5%)						
LOWER CLASS (For 60% - Wealth Distribution 1.5%)						
Source: Authors analysis basing on contemporary power politics.						

Religious Extremism in Bangladesh

Rise and Control of Religious Extremism. A moderate Muslim country turned into a field of extremism from 1999 to 2005. The militant Islamist groups targeted most of the secular institutions, persons and programs during this period. Significant examples, which traumatized the nation and shaken the international communities are: explosion of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in 63 districts almost simultaneously on 17 August 2005 and grenade attack in the rally of the then leader of the opposition on 21 August 2004. According to the record of the law enforcing agencies, most of the attacks were carried out by HUJIB and JMB. Leadership of HUJIB took part in Afghan war against Soviet Union. At the end of Afghan war in 1989, the jihadists of Bangladesh returned home and formed HUJIB. According to CATR white paper of 2008; "The defeat of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and their withdrawal from Afghanistan was seen as an ideological victory for this strategy and added a significant boost to the Jihadists in the fight against the 'enemies of Islam'. These events had a profound impact on the mindset of the Afghan returnees and contributed to the evolution of violent extremist groups in South and Southeast Asia". On the contrary, leadership and members of JMB are the extreme followers of Ahle Hadith. There are different analysis among the intellectuals and stakeholders of the society about their rise. Argument and counter argument revolves round the socio economic condition, sponsorship of mainstream politics, connection with international network of terrorism, sense of deprivation and humiliation for Muslim Ummah etc. Mannan argued that the militants' outfit of Bangladesh follows the same tactics and techniques as international extremist group, but they are not bonded within the same network (Mannan, 2006, p. 27-48). On the other hand, Fink was straight forward in putting his remarks about Bangladeshi militants "They were keen in acquiring practical knowledge from Afghan war and applied the same in Bangladesh (Fink, 2009, CATR, accessed on 12 May 2015)". Whatever might be the case exact picture of religious extremist outfits to be identified including their origin, leadership, objective, funding, training and major activities in order to find out the future trend for appropriate actions at the policy making end.

Present State of Extremist Outfits

Militant Islamist groups did not carry out any violent act after 2005, except incident at Trishal in 2014[2]. Law enforcing agencies including intelligence organization and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) forces were found to be active in the field. Therefore, members of militant Islamist groups were apprehended in bulk by the law enforcers since 2005. At present, activities of HUJIB, JMB, Shahadat –e– Al-Hikma and JMJB are in a state of apathy or mixed up with other Islamist organization. Activities of Hizbut Tahrir are often observed in different places of Dhaka city, but they are non lethal in nature. The most vibrant militant Islamist group in the present day is Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) as known from electronic and print media, but their existence remained under question. The chief of ABT, Jasimuddin Rahmani is in jail, who was apprehended from Jhalokathi on 12 August 2013. Off late, it is alleged that local militant groups and ABT decided to work together, as their objective is to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh including parts of bordering areas of Myanmar and India (Daily Dhaka Tribune, 07 May 2015). Killing mission like blogger Rajeeb, Oashikur, Aveejit or Anonta are in the bag of confusion, though international terrorist group Al Qaeda declared its responsibility in this connection.

There is a well circulated belief that the students of Qwami madrashas are being trained or at best motivated towards the fundamentalism to extremism. But no one could give the exact figure or number or locations of Madrashas, which are falling in this category. The recent Hefazt-e-Islam movement in 2013, specially the incident of 05 May testifies the partial truth of this view. Government do not have control over the Qwami madrashas, as these are run and supported by religious endowment and private sector (Alam, 2008, p. 16). Generally, the students of these madrashas belong to poor families with rural background and cannot afford modern education. Graduate of these madrashas do not receive any recognition from the government and job market as well. As a result, their feelings of deprivation may be exploited by any corner. Present state of Qawmi Madrasha as shown in Figure 2.

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2. A large group of miscreants intercepted a prison van, opened fire on police, killing a constable, and snatched away three including two death row activists of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Trishal upazila of Mymensingh on 22 February 2014 (Source: bdnews24.com)

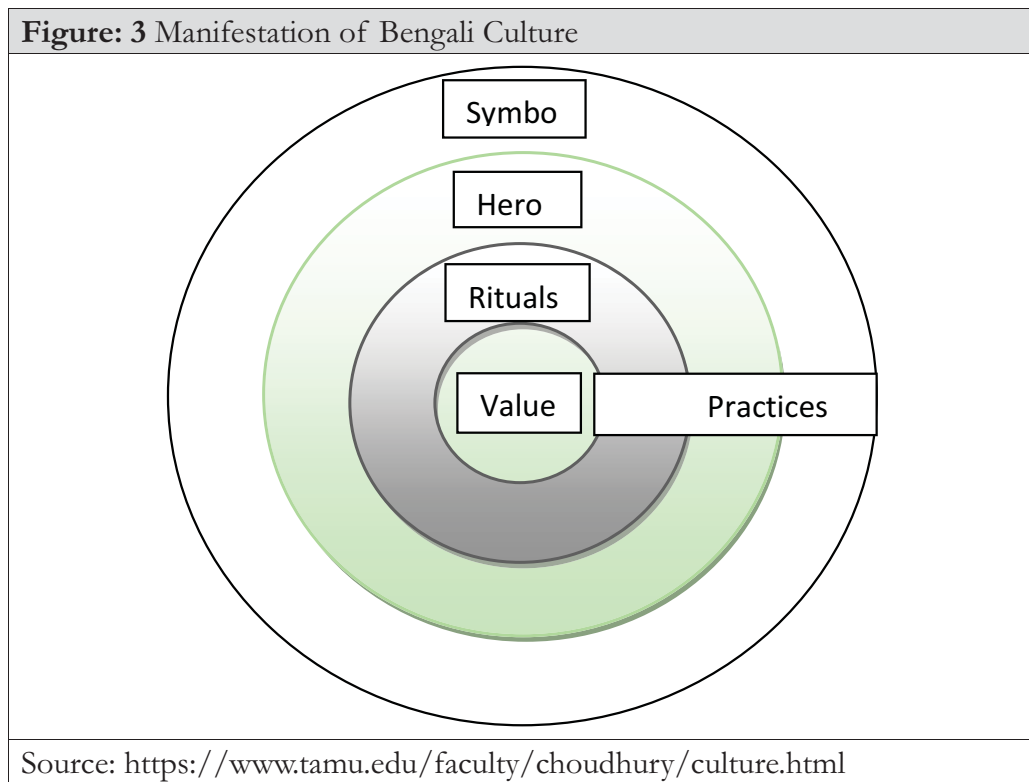| **Figure 2 :** State of Qawmi Madrashas in Bangladesh		
Level	Description	Schools
Takhmil	Master's	300
Fazilat	Bachelor's	200
Sanariaammah	Secondary	1000
Mutawassitah	Lower Secondary	2000
Ibtedayi	Primary	3000
Tahfeezul Quran	Memorisation of the Quran	2000
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qawmi accessed on 23 May 2015		

Strength and Weaknesses of Socio-Cultural Heritage of Bangladesh

Phenomenon Leading to Religious Extrmism. Though Bengali nation have proved their resilience number of times in the field of culture of tolerance, but the present worldwide scenario on terrorism necessitate addressing the issue deliberately. The Islamist Militant groups like: Ansarullah Bangla Team, JMB, Hijbut Tahrir or for that matter any extremist party may join together as their objectives are same. The major Islamic political party may patronize these groups with a hope of breathing space in the political field. However, phenomenon leading to religious extremism is appended below:

- Economic and social deprivation.
- Sense of Humiliation for Muslim Ummah.
- Education system in Qawmi Madrasha.
- Poverty and Unemployment.
- Illiteracy and ignorance.
- Promotion of religion in politics.
- Political instability.
- International NGOs or charitable organizations, providing financial support.
- External influence.
- Irregularities and discrimination in the society.

Manifestations of Bengali Culture. A culture is a way of life of a group of people—the behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next (https://www.tamu.edu/faculty/

choudhury/culture.html, accessed on 28 April 2015). Bangladeshi daily life is replete with traditions and festivals that reflect the unique culture and tradition of Bangladeshis. Some of the tradition and customs are as ancient as prehistoric days, while others are relatively recent. In the recent years, celebration of 'Pohela Boisakh' has become the symbol of unity for all communities irrespective of religion, caste or creed. Government holidays are also ensured for all the religious festivals, so that all citizens can participate and share joys collectively. This secular culture helped to reduce the threat of radicalization to a great extent. However, manifestations of Bengali culture which includes symbols, heroes, rituals, values and practices may be measured in following ways (Hill, 2003):

Figure: 3 Manifestation of Bengali Culture

Symbo

Hero

Rituals

Value   Practices

Source: https://www.tamu.edu/faculty/choudhury/culture.html

Phenomenon Leading to Culture of Tolerance. The people of Bengal nurtured and nourished their belief, culture, customs and rituals centuries after centuries. People were converted to Islam without sacrificing their culture, which is commonly known as 'Bengali Islam'. One of the conclusion of Asim Roy (1983) and M. Eaton (1994) was "Muslims in Bengal were exclusive products of neither Islam nor Hinduism but a single folk culture. Folk Islam in Bengal hardly had any connection with the dogmas of religion. A number of Muslim cultural mediators presented an indigenous version of Islam to the masses of Bengali believers". However, phenomenon leading to culture of tolerance is appended below:

- Syncretistic form of religion.
- Secular constitution, which separated religion from state affairs.
- Art, music, poetry and Bengali literatures of the country influence secular practice.
- Celebrations like: Pohela Boishakh, independence, victory and language martyrdom day symbolizes national unity.
- Maintenance of communal harmony since independence.
- Peaceful co-existence.
- Secular Linguistic Bengali nationalism.
- Government holidays for the festivals of all the religion.
- People do not prefer religion based political parties.

SWOT Analysis. Basing on the foregone discussion and investigation, an attempt has been made below to carry out a SWOT analysis on the culture of Bangladesh, to derive strategies that are required to counter proliferation of religious extremism, if any.

Strength. The detail analyses on socio-cultural and religious traditions entail following strength:

- Culture of tolerance.
- Syncretistic form of religion.
- Secular constitution.
- Communal harmony and peaceful co-existence.
- Linguistic unity and its global image.
- Absence of gun-abuse culture.
- Peace loving people.

Weaknesses

- Economic and social deprivation.
- Sense of humiliation for Muslim Ummah.
- Education system in Qawmi Madrasha.
- Poverty and unemployment.
- Illiteracy and ignorance.

Opportunities

- Success of government in promoting cultural based secular mindset.
- Failures of Islamic political parties in the successive national elections.
- General peoples' hatred towards terrorism.
- Regional stance of cooperation in preventing manifestation of terrorism.
- Global cooperation for anti-terrorism strategies.

Threats

- Political instability.
- Perception of political injustice.
- International NGOs or Charitable organizations providing financial support to the extremist groups.
- External influence, political in nature.

Having the present scenario in respect to economical development and religious and cultural traditions that are maintained in the society; the religious extremist groups will have hardly any scope to motivate the people towards their political goal. However, greater cooperation between the people with secular mindset irrespective of political ideology; political stability, good governance and rule of law can play a significant role to avert country from the menace of extremism.

Recommendations

Considering the overall national and international involvement in fighting the terrorism (religious extremism), a powerful cell with members from all security and intelligence organization including concerned ministries, law enforcing agencies, armed forces, intelligence organizations, civil society, madrasha board etc may be formed at national level. They may be held responsible to National

Committee for Security Coordination and assigned with following tasks:

- Ascertain the exact figure of extremist outfits available in the country including their objectives, leadership, type and number of members, funding, training, regional or international connections etc. The institution to maintain an area wise database including their photograph, if possible.

- Ascertain their national, regional and international connections including movement of kingpins of their organizations.

- Keeping close liaison with the Bangladesh Bank in order to know their monitory transaction.
- Keeping all the monitory/finance related private organization under close supervision, which has international money transfer capability.
- Monitoring the charitable and International NGOs in respect to their monitory/financial dealings.
- Maintain liaison with the regional organizations involved with the same tasks.
- Keeping track of the international jihadists with the help of international/ regional tracking record.
- Working with the Alem/Ulama, civil society, local clerics and elites, NGOs, human right organizations at the ground level in order to derive actual picture on extremism.
- Motivational film, posturing, advertisement in electronic and print media to exploit the young society to rally against extremists.
- Organizing regular meeting with grass root level committee to avert any untoward occurrences.

Political differences between the major political parties to be eradicated and political stability to be sought at priority basis in order to face the future menace of religious extremism. Top down policy in this regards will help the locals to be more effective in maintaining so called 'Bangladesh Paradox', which never allows the escalation of extremism in the country.

It is not possible to close Madrasha education system over night, as it is a sensitive issue and related to fate of millions of poor students and their Muhtarim and parents. Therefore, constant dialogue/meeting with the madrasha authority is a necessity to bring change in the syllabus, which might help to develop culture of tolerance as well as usher job opportunity.

The mainstream secularist political parties should drop the politics of expediency as a strategy by aligning themselves with the fundamentalist organizations.

A secular democratic approach to solve any problem of the country should form the psyche of the nation. The history of Bangladesh in the perspective of diverse cultural heritage highlighting strength and resilience of the deeper traditions of tolerance and secularism, the power of nationalism and democracy and above all Islam in the Bangladeshi context to be included in the text book. This single impression of Bangladeshi paradox in the context of limiting the escalation of religious extremism or terrorism in Bangladesh as they did in the past can be used as a strong motivational instrument to motivate the whole nation.

Conclusion

The evaluation of socio cultural and religious traditions from the period of Pala Dynasty, the Bengali nation has proved their resilience number of times in favour of peace, stability, social and political rights and above all culture of tolerance. They raised their voice and even sacrificed their lives in case of deprivation, discrimination, humiliation and social injustice. Despite a Muslim majority country, its populations prefer to follow secular approach in their daily lifestyle. It has been evolved through the evolution of historical past over a period of time. Their values, symbols, heroes and practices of rituals testify that. It has a diverse and rich cultural heritage in terms of art, music, poetry, theatre and celebrations, which influence their daily lifestyle directly. Celebration of Pohela Boishakh has become the symbol of unity in Bangladesh. Religious extremist groups targeted those secular events and persons in order to create panicky situations in the society. Their objective was to establish Islamic state under sharia law. The worst possible situations prevailed between 1999 and 2005, when suicidal, bomb and even grenade attack became a regular phenomenon. Most of the Islamist militants were Afghan war returnees. However, they could not establish their foothold due to non cooperation from the general mass. Research hypothesis is hereby proved to be correct, as the Islamist militants failed to create a positive impression about their ideology in the society. But their activities are still continuing in persuasion of their objective. Numbers of Militant organizations are getting united in order to achieve their aim. The phenomenon of joining ISIS or ISIL like Afghan war is observed in the society, which might have adverse effect in the future discourse. Therefore, equality, social justice and rule of law should be ensured to avert frustration among the populations. It is only possible, if major political parties follow the centreline politics in dealing with the people. Otherwise, space created by the major political parties may be influenced by the external and internal malevolence motives, which will ultimately lead to either extremism or anarchism.

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