

## The Networks of Social Infrastructure Linked with Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh

Upendra Kumar  
PhD Scholar,

Dr. K.R. Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), New Delhi, India

### Abstract

This paper claims that Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami heavily invests in building social infrastructure in the country. Indeed, building social infrastructure by religion based political party like Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has a deep implication in terms of social and political sphere. Through the facilitation of various social services and welfare works, the party aspires to garner support of the people for its political legitimacy and accessibility in the society of Bangladesh. The social infrastructure provides a legitimate space in which the party tries to expand its popular base and change the secular characters of the country into Islamic state. In the first half of the paper, a short description of the party and discourse on building social infrastructure, resources etc. are delineated, and in the second half, the party linked organisations, institutions and programmes are given in detail. In this paper, primary sources such as government and organisational reports, and secondary sources have been used. Moreover, online newspapers and various websites of the concerning organisations and institutions have been accessed to prepare this paper.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh, Social infrastructure, Sharia Law, Fundamentalism, Islamism, Welfare work, Islami Bank Foundation, Ibn Sina Trust, Islamic State.

### 1. Introduction

The term “social infrastructure” stands for facilities, services and programmes which improve quality of life involving human capital formation. The term comprises the facilities and programmes which are related to schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, community health centres, housing and so on. Social infrastructure overtly and covertly provides space to connect beneficiaries with the organisation which build it, and the connections and networks might be very potential for a political party which is deeply engaged with building the social infrastructure. In this context, it would be very noteworthy to study the involvement of Islamist political party Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami in building social infrastructure in Bangladesh. The efforts of the party have various dimensions, especially, in the context of the socio-political landscape of Bangladesh.

The nation is a Muslim dominated and politically and socially polarised to a certain extent (Taj Hashmi 2015). More than 90 percent population of the country is Muslim while remaining population is religious communities such as Hindu, Buddhist and Christian (Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh-2012). Its polity is fragmented on the basis of secularism and Islamism. After the demise of the military-junta regime<sup>1</sup> and restoration of democracy in earlier part of 1990s, the country has been ruled by two main political parties namely Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Both parties represent dissimilar political ideology and national identity. The former’s ideology is “Bengali Nationalism” while the later adopted “Bangladeshi Nationalism.” The national identity is severely divided between “Bengali” and “Bangladeshi”. Amid these social and political settings, the Jamaat has been struggling to establish itself as a major Islamist political power in the politics of the country. So that it can convert the political system of the country into Islamic state<sup>2</sup>(Karlekar 2005, 137).

### 2. Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami:

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, which is also a religious organisation and movement, is a biggest religion-based political party in Bangladesh. Originally, Jamaat-e-Islami was established in 1941 in Lahore with the objective to establish ‘Islamic State’ in Indian subcontinent. But after the partition of India in 1947, Jamaat-i-Islami was divided as Jamaat-i-Islami Hind and Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan in 1948. Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan opposed the liberation of Bangladesh (1971) because any split of Pakistan was against pan-Islamism in which it had faith. It collaborated with Pakistani army and committed genocide against Bengali people and intellectuals during the Liberation war of 1971 (Karlekar 2005).

After the emergence of Bangladesh as a separate nation state, the Jamaat-e-Islami was banned to take part

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, a military- junta regime came into power and it continued under Ziaur Rahman and Muhammad Irshad, respectively till the restoration of democracy in 1990.

<sup>2</sup> It is a type of governance and political system based on the enforcement of Sharia law.

in any political activities of the country. Because, its vision to establish 'Islamic State' did not match with the four fundamental principles namely Secularism, Nationalism, Democracy and Socialism, of the Constitution of Bangladesh 1972. Indeed, the communal appeal of the party undermined the aspiration of secular ethno-Bengali nationalism and the secular character of the state.

During the military-junta regime, the character of the state and constitution changed from secularism to Islamism. As a result, the Jamaat got recognition as a political entity. The regime patronised it for political purpose and lifted the ban on the Jamaat. Those leaders and workers, who had, previously, worked for the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing established Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami in 1979. It began to participate in national politics of the country and in 1991 played crucial role in the formation of BNP led government when democracy was reinstated in the country. More importantly its two leaders got portfolio in the BNP-led the four-party alliance government (2001-2005). Its organisational structure and ideology are not very different from the Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami. It desires to replace the existing political system and social structure with the Islamic State. Additionally, the party has challenged the official narrative of the Liberation War and the foundational principles of Bangladesh. Its fundamental ideology, i.e. Islamism, is directly opposed to the ideology of the AL, i.e. Mujibism.<sup>3</sup>

The Jamaat has resorted to patronage politics to deepen its social base in the country. There are various socio-culture and economic organisations of the party through which it has been trying to popularise its ideology among rural and urban masses. The socio-economic base of the Jamaat-e-Islami is very strong in the country. It has a strong student organization known as the Islamic *Chatra Shibir*, whose members basically come from *Qawmi* madrassas. The Jamaat has set up madrassas, hospitals, universities, orphanage centres and so on. It also runs coaching centres to help poor students get into admission in various professional courses and to be successful in competitive examinations. Apart from these, the establishment and expansion of Islamic NGOs, Islamic Banks, clinics and the micro credit program of the Jamaat-e-Islami have helped it to reach out to a large constituency. The welfare measures and social infrastructure undertaken by the Jamaat-e-Islam has been a means to reach to its end of establishing an Islamic State (Nasr 1994).

### 3. Discourse

The involvements of the Jamaat in creating alternative social infrastructure in the country have been strategic initiative to bring changes in socio-political and cultural belief of the people of the country according to Sharia law. In the 1958 during an election campaign in Pakistan, Syed Abul Ala Maududi<sup>4</sup> illustrated the importance of socio-economic and cultural organisations and their works:

It brings intellectual change in the people; secondly [it] organises them in order to make them suitable for a movement. Thirdly, it reforms society through social and humanitarian work, and finally it endeavours to change the leadership. Once the leadership had been won over to Islam the Jamaat taking power the society would be Islamized and all socioeconomic maladies would be automatically cured. Education and propaganda were therefore singled out as the principles agents for furthering the revolutionary struggle (quoted in Nasr 1994).

The networks of social infrastructure of the Jamaat should be understood in the context of above mentioned Maududi's design to bring total change in society on the basis of Sharia law. In essence, the socio-cultural organisations, institutions and infrastructure are the part of the strategy to achieve the political aims of the party. The large Islamic educational institutes such as Islamic universities, madrasa education system, and various research centres like Maududi Research Sansad and Centre for Strategy & Peace Studies are basically exertions to bring intellectual change according to the Jamaat's ideology in Bangladesh.

Liberal political theorists construe that investment in building social infrastructure, and welfare work of religion based political party like the Jamaat-e-Islami has big political implications. According to liberal political theory, the Jamaat's involvement in the formation of socio-economic and cultural organisations is a political tool to be successful in the electoral politics (Bano 2012). The motive of the Jamaat is to garner electoral supports through expanding its various organisational networks and social services. Rosenblum (2003) states, by quoting the work of Ira Sharkansky on Israel,<sup>5</sup> that "political scientists argue that in Israel, for example, the religious parties attract voters through material benefits like school systems, housing construction, and political positions." But Bano (2012) argues that this "voter-centric explanation" is inadequate to understand the Jamaat's social infrastructure. Bano (2012) claims "the motives for engagement in welfare are much more complex than material

<sup>3</sup> Four basic principle of the Bangladeshi polity, namely secularism, socialism, Bengali nationalism and democracy are often labelled as Mujibism by the AL. It was crafted by Mujibur Rahman, first prime minister of Bangladesh and hero of the liberation war of the country.

<sup>4</sup> Syed Abul Ala was the founder of the Jamaat-i-Islami and the proponent of political Islam.

<sup>5</sup> Ira Sharkansky delineated about the intersection of religion and politics, using the case of Israel in his book "The work is The politics of Religion and the Religion of Politics: Looking at Israel" (2000).

opportunism.” She quoted Nancy L. Rosenblum: “By means of the associational nexus religious parties integrate political activity with social and spiritual life. Seen as part of this web of associations with overlapping affiliations, religious parties appear more like membership groups than other parties” (Bano 2009).

It is also argued that the primary motive of the Jamaat’s engagement into building social infrastructure, and welfare works is to win the trust of party members. “It gives the members a sense of achievement and keeps their morale high even they are not in power” (Bano 2009). During field work Bano (2009) found that the Jamaat’s engagement with various socio-economic and cultural organisation and social works give its member an assurance that they are working for the central goal of bringing “social justice”. Additionally, the huge networks of madrasas, schools, Islamic universities, hospitals and dispensaries, NGOs etc. provide employment for its members. They get engaged as director, manager, teacher, doctor, nurse, clerk and so on.

Islamic principles based social infrastructure penetrated in Bangladesh when the socio-political environment got changed since late 1970s. After the end of the AL led secular government in 1975 and subsequent emergence of Military-junta regime (1975-1990), the nature of the state changed from secularism to Islamism. Therefore, since 1980s Islamic NGOs started their works by providing humanitarian and emergency relief and rehabilitation. But later they moved to build social infrastructure and run various socio-economic programmes. Although, western funded NGOs have been working since the liberation in the country, they have limitations. These secular NGOs have been driven by neoliberal economic model, and the large sections of the secular NGOs are highly concentrated on microcredit programmes followed by health care and sanitation (Salehin 2016, 50).

Due to the failure of government development agencies to provide assistance the poor and decreasing poverty, especially in rural area, the secular NGOs have emerged as benevolent organisation for the poor people (Riaz 2008, 144). But the activities of the secular NGOs in the country has been criticised and attacked by Islamists since 1990s. They alleged that the operation and large funding of secular NGOs by western country was the conspiracy of the Christians and Jews against Islam. The involvement of the NGOs in the promoting human right, secularism, women empowerment, secular education etc. made Islamists aggressive. Along with this, the emergence of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami in 1990s as a political force heightened the criticism of the NGOs. In these circumstances, apart from the criticism, Islamists embraced a strategy to establish their own NGOs on the basis of Sharia law so that secular NGOs could be neutralised. Furthermore, the strategy was guided by political interest of Islamists. In the course of building social infrastructure Islamists seek to expand their electoral support base. The emergence of the large networks of social services and infrastructure of the Jamaat-e-Islami can be viewed in this course.

The inability of the government’s development agency to assist the people in emergency situation was also a cause of penetration of Islamic principle based social infrastructure in the country. In 1977 and in 1991, Rohingya Muslim refugee fled to the south-eastern part of Bangladesh due to brutality of Burmese army (Riaz 2008, 145). In this situation, the government was to unable to supply emergency relief due to lack of resources and mechanism. Therefore, the government had to allow the some Islamic NGOs including, Rabita al-Alam al-Islam to work with the refugees (Riaz 2008, 145).

Islamic education system and infrastructure from madrassa to university level have increased rapidly since the liberation of the country (1971). Madrassas based education system have become very crucial for poor sections of the society. The numbers of secondary and post-secondary madrassas have increased from 1412 to 11746 between 1972 and 2004 (Riaz 2008, 126). The internal and external factors played significant role in the hasty extension of Islamic educational networks and infrastructure in the country. The incapability of the government education system to provide education to poor section of the society, has paved the way for expansion of madrassas based education system (Riaz 2008, 135). The expenditure of the government on education is very low. In 1991 the government expenditure on education was only 1.2 per cent, which could not reach more than 2.2 per cent till 2016 (except 1995, 2.4 percent) (Riaz 2008, 136, Table 4.7; World Data Atlas, knoema.com). Apart from this, the allocation of the budget for education sector has been urban bias. As a result, education has become unavailable for rural people. The absence of the government education system in rural areas gave accommodating space to Islamic education in areas. Furthermore, in the name of Islamic movement oil rich Middle East countries particularly Saudi Arabia poured the bulk of money in the country to build Madrassa and other educational institutes since 1970s. Various Islamic universities such as Darul Ihsan University, International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC) have been established with the financial and human resource supports of Middle East countries.

#### **4. Nature of services**

It is hardly seen that political party, which seeks political power and forms government, is directly and indirectly involved in building social infrastructure or running social welfare programme in Bangladesh. The BNP and the AL do not have any organisations which offer any social welfare work and building social infrastructures. But, the Jamaat is most visible fundamentalist party which facilitates various social services and charitable work to

the people of the country. It heavily invests in building and running hospitals, schools, universities, madrassas, socio-cultural and economic organisations etc.

However, the Jamaat does not provide full free services. It tries to provide better services with minimal cost compared market price. It offers free services only to those poor people who cannot afford the services. Indeed the party prefers to give subsidised social services with good quality. As a senior Jamaat official argued “We offer the best facilities at 25 per cent less than the market rate. However, every year we also spend Rs. 10 crore to provide free services to poor people” (quoted in Bano 2009). Bano (2012) summed up the nature of the amenities and works of the Jamaat linked organisations:

In Bangladesh, in fact, here the principle of providing good quality service at a rate which is 25% below the market price was the primary formula guiding Jama’at Involvement in provision of social services. Here again, entirely free service was provided only to those who could not afford it..... The Jama’at therefore places emphasis not on provision of free service but on ensuring provision of basic social services of reasonable quality at subsidised rates.

### 5. Resources

The Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami is not only religion based political party and organisations but it has large economic enterprises. Banks, insurance companies, household-level micro-credit firms, madrasas, mass media, information technology, trading houses and non-governmental organizations are the segments of economic enterprises of the party. According to Abul Barkat, who is prominent economist and Professor of University of Dhaka, the Jamaat-e-Islami has created a “state within a state” and an ‘economy within an economy’ in Bangladesh (Mukherjee 2016). Barkat has valued that Jamaat's net annual profits is about \$278 million which come from its economic undertakings.

**Table-1: Sector wise Share in the Annual Profit of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami**  
 (In Percentage)

Bank, Insurance and Leasing companies	27.5
NGOs	18.7
Trade and Commerce	10.5
Pharmaceutical Industries and Healthcare Institutions	10.1
Education Sector	9.4
Real Estate Business	8.8
Media and Information	7.7
Transport	7.3
Total	100

Sources: Amitava Mukherjee, “Economy of Islamic fundamentalism In Bangladesh”, *Dhaka Tribune*, 9 February 2016.

According to Barkat, the mainstream national economy grows by 6 percent while the Jamaat-run economy grows 9 percent, and the Jamaat linked economy is the 8.62 percent of the national development budget of the country (Mukherjee 2015). These business enterprises and networks are the major financial sources of building social infrastructure.

Apart from above mentioned financial sources, oil rich Middle East countries have been assisting with finance, human resources and technique to the party for the purpose since 1970s. The Saudi based Islamic NGO Rabita-al-Alam-al-Islami, Kuwait Relief Fund and Al Nahiyen Trust of UAE are the significant financial sources for building social infrastructure in Bangladesh (Ahmed 2015). The Bengali migrants, who work in the Middle East countries, also contribute for the purpose. These workers are influenced with “the retrogressive social values and a less tolerant version of Islam in the host countries” (Riaz 2008, 143). And when they return, they wish to maintain and spread the values and lifestyle whatever they get in the host countries. As a result they give financial supports in building social infrastructure, particularly for madrasas (Riaz 2008, 143).

### 6. Fundamentalism:

The efforts of organisational penetration like establishment and running of various Islamic organisations and institutions, of the Jamaat-e-Islami in the economic sectors and socio-cultural spheres of Bangladesh is a strategic decision to overcome mind and body of the people to create Sharia based society in the country. Shehabuddin (2008) argues that to small group of the nation’s women believed that the Jamaat’s activities “would help safeguard their passage to heaven.” Complex networks of Islamic socio-cultural, economic and political organisations, and social infrastructure of the party is viewed as “institutionalisation of fundamentalism” by Barkat (2013). According to him:

*institutionalisation of fundamentalism* implying organized penetration of Islamist fundamentalists forces (with ideology assimilating *mythos* of religion with *logos* of reality) in all key spheres of life and state operation, namely in economic sectors, in political institutions,

in key positions in the administration and judiciary, in government – autonomous – semi autonomous bodies and private sectors, in educational institutions with predominance in Madrasha system, in health, in NGOs, in women’s organizations and in many professional bodies.

Barkat (2013) argues that in 2001, the formation of the BNP-led four-party alliance government, in which the Jamaat had played major role into the formation of the government, strengthened this institutionalisation. The members of the Jamaat were strategically well positioned in the government.<sup>6</sup> The party’s members were given Ministry of Agricultural, Social Welfare, and Industry of Bangladesh to run. It was the infiltration of the fundamentalist group in the polity and administration of the country. The Jamaat used this penetration to its advantage. It further enhanced institutionalisation of Islamist fundamentalism. In addition, Barkat (2013) acknowledges that:

The relative strength of *institutionalized fundamentalism* is also evident in the formation and operation of Islamic Shariah Council against the usual norm of the Central Bank (the Bangladesh Bank). This Islamic Shariah Council- the central policy making body of all Islamic financial institutions – is a body fully controlled by the mainstream Islamist party and headed by the *Pesh Imam* (the head) of the National Mosque, who is a government servant, who preaches in favour of implementation of Shariah rule through mosque-based administration and judiciary.

## 7. Organisations and Institutions

The involvements of the Jamaat in building social infrastructure are more informal. Many organisations and institutions of the party have been working not only on charitable basis but also for economic interest. But it is not formally and legally associated with those organisations and institutions which always deny any links with the Jamaat. Behind the logic of refuting the links is illustrated by a senior official of Ibn-e-Sina Hospital: “After the banning of the party, it was easier to undertake social service work through establishment of independent trusts rather than through party platforms” (Bano 2012). So it is clear that the Jamaat does not want to take any risk of closure of its socio-economic organisations by Bangladeshi government. The legal status of the party has been in dilemma as such in 2013 the High Court of Bangladesh declared the registration of the party is unlawful (Aljazeera 2013). In addition, recently State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh Shahriar Alam said “Bangladesh is planning to ban the Jamaat-e-Islami” (The Hindu 2016). In this situation the party and also its conglomerates tactically do not want to show any links with each other.

A report appeared in Dhaka Tribune, published on January 18, 2016 and updated on January 27, 2016 claims that the Bangladeshi government is planning to take over firms and organisations, including Islamic Bank and Ibn Sina Hospital, linked to the party. When the reporter of the newspaper asked to the Finance Minister of Bangladesh AMA Muhith that how the government would identify the party-connected companies and organisation, Muhith said: “Firstly, we will check the background of the members of board of directors in the institution. Secondly, we will identify the sources of funds of those firms.” The party’s members have been the part of the board of directors of many Islamic institutions and organisations and they hold managerial and executive posts in Islamic economic firms, educational institutions and socio-cultural organisations which work on the basis of Islamic principle (Bano 2009). For instance, the project selection and execution of the Islamic Bank foundation, is closely overseen by the party’s persons (Bano 2009). In the same report of the Dhaka Tribune gave a long list of institutions and organisations which are linked to Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. These are:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Islamic Bank Foundation                     | 11. Far East Islami Life Insurance Company Ltd |
| 2. Ibn Sina Trust                              | 12. Takaful Islami Insurance Ltd               |
| 3. Fouad Al-Khateeb Charity Foundation         | 13. Keari Limited                              |
| 4. Rabita al-alam al-Islami                    | 14. Coral Reef Properties Ltd                  |
| 5. Agro Industrial Trust                       | 15. Education Aid                              |
| 6. Daily Sangram                               | 16. Panjeri Publications                       |
| 7. Daily Naya Diganta                          | 17. Allama Iqbal Sangsad                       |
| 8. Manarat International University            | 18. Maududi Research Sangsad                   |
| 9. International Islamic University Chittagong | 19. Al-Mutada Development Societ               |
| 10. Darul Ihsan University                     | 20. Centre for Strategy & Peace Studies        |

<sup>6</sup> There were two important ministries namely Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Social Welfare assumed by the Jamaat’s leader Motiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Mojaheed respectively in Four-party Alliance government in 2001. Both ministries provided opportunity to connect itself with largest groups of Bangladeshi people. Later the Ministry of Agriculture was replaced by Ministry of Industries.

### 7.1. Islami Bank Foundation:

Islami Bank Foundation is charitable arms of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL) which is based on Sharia law. The IBBL is the party's key financial support in the country (Mukherjee 2016). Mir Quasem Ali<sup>7</sup>, now awarded death sentence, was once the IBBL director. In 2016, Deputy Managing Director of the Bank Nurul Islam has been sacked by central bank of Bangladesh for his connection with the party.

Islami Bank Foundation, which is registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare of Bangladesh (Salehin 2016, 73) provides better networks of social infrastructure in the country from rural to urban level. It plays significant role in providing charitable works on the basis of Islamic principles in Bangladesh. It runs health care, educational, socio-cultural programmes and humanitarian and disaster relief works under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). According to Annual Report 2016 of the Bank it spent Tk 4,997.88 million for 14,991,452 beneficiaries from 1983 to 2016.

**Table-2: Sector wise CSR Expenditure and Beneficiaries (1983-2016)**

Sectors/Year	1983-2015		2016		(Amount million taka) Total	
	Amount	Beneficiary	Amount	Beneficiary	Amount	Beneficiary
Humanitarian & Disaster Relief	1045.55	2601,011	425.95	481644	1471.5	3,082,655
Education	964.95	520,537	161	14235	1,125.95	534,772
Health	1390.27	7244,230	16.84	209	1,407.11	7,244,439
Sports	468.96	414,422	0.00	0	468.95	414422
Arts, Literature & Culture	121.55	230,406	0.12	4	121.67	230,410
Environment	85.80	2583,018	26.39	690251	112.19	3,273,269
Other	250.03	210,734	40.47	751	290.5	211,485
Total	4327.11	13,804,358	670.77	1187094	4,997.88	14,991,452

Sources: Annual Report 2016 of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, Dhaka.

The involvement of Islami Bank Foundation in the sectors of healthcare, education, and social and cultural activities, mentioned below, is illustrated in Annual Report 2013 of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited.

#### 7.1.1. Healthcare

*Islami Bank Hospitals:* There are seven Islami Bank Hospitals; three in Dhaka, two in Rajshahi, one in Khulna and one in Barisal.

*Islami Bank Community Hospitals:* Seven Islami Bank Community Hospitals are located in Satkhira, Manikgonj, Rangpur, Jhenaidah, Dinajpur, Faridpur and Naogaon.

*Islami Bank Medical College, Rajshahi:* It was commenced in 2003 with the objective of to “produce religiously well disciplined, self motivated and dedicated doctors”.

*Islami Bank Institute of Health Technology, Rajshahi:* Its purpose is to develop human resource through advancing technical knowledge.

*Midwifery Training Programme:* The Foundation organises Midwifery Training Program by taking help of Islami Bank Hospitals and Islami Bank Community Hospitals.

*Mobile Eye Camp:* Islami Bank Foundation runs Mobile Eye camp to eye treatment. Under this program, poor people are facilitated eye treatment at a minimal cost.

*Charitable Dispensaries:* Many charitable Dispensaries in rural area are run by the foundation.

*Circumcision Program:* The Foundation arranges Circumcision Programme in village areas with the help of local Hospitals and doctors. Under this program, the operation is conducted for poor children, who are also given free of cost of essential medicine, Lungi etc.

#### 7.1.2. Education

*Islami Bank Institute of Technology (IBIT):* Islami Bank Foundation runs 6 Institutes of Technology; two in Dhaka, one in Bogra, one in Sylhet, one in Chittagong and another in Khulna. These are involved in training of jobless youths so that they can become self-reliant in the technological advancement.

<sup>7</sup> War criminal Mir Quasem Ali was top businessman and the Jamaat's leader. He held the membership of Central Executive Council of the Jamaat, and was well known person who supplies funds to the party. Quasem held various posts in Keri Ltd, Diganta Media Corporation Ltd, and Agro Industrial Trust. He is the member secretary of Fouad Al-Khateeb Charity Foundation. He is also associated with Allama Iqbal Sangsad, Islamic University of Chittagong, Darul Ihsan University, and Centre for Strategy and Peace Studies. He also served as a member secretary of Islami Bank Foundation and the director (marketing) of Ibn Sina Pharmaceutical Industries. See, “Profile of Mir Quasem”, The Daily Star, 9 March, 2016.

*Islami Bank International School & College:* The main purpose of the establishment of this institute to associate modern education system with moral values.

*Islami Bank Model School & College:* Islami Bank Model School and College, located at Mirpur in Dhaka, is also an effort to solidify modern education with moral values, it is.

*Islami Bank Mohila Madrasah:* The foundation is also involved in madrasahs education, and set up Islami Bank Mohila Madrasah in Mirpur.

*Scholarship Program:* The foundation gives scholarship to the deprived meritorious students for research program.

*Model Forquania Maktab:* Under Model Forquania Maktab, children are permitted to learn recitation of the *Holy Quran*. Along this, children get education in English and Bengali alphabets. The purpose of this program to helps them to enter in the School and Madrasah level education. Hitherto, 13,884 pupils have gotten elementary education in the Maktab.

### 7.1.3. Social and Cultural organisations:

*Bangladesh Culture Centre:* It has established by the foundation in Dhaka and Rajshahi. And settings up of 33 centres are under process.

*Islami Bank Women Rehabilitation Centre:* it has been established in Mirpur. It is in involved in training and rehabilitation of the helpless widows and divorced women.

*Monoram- Islami Bank Crafts and Fashion:* it works in Basundhara City, Mirpur and the Grand Plaza of Moghbazar. It is playing a substantial role for elevating the condition of the deprived women. It provides a channel to them to trade their products.

### 7.2. Ibn Sina Trust:

Ibn Sina Trust, placed in the country, is a trust which operates various organisations, and runs welfare works inspired by Islamic principles of social welfare in Bangladesh since 1980s. Its works are related to health care, medical education and related publications. It built a number of hospitals, laboratories, consultation centre, medical college and pharmaceutical industry as part of social infrastructure. Free Medical Centers, Free Investigation & Free Hospitalization, Susmita (Free operation and treatment for cleft-lipped children), Walk Well (Free operation and treatment for club feet babies), Students Stipend, Financial Assistance to the Distressed, Co-operation for Spreading Islamic education of schools and madrasahs, Islamic Dawa Program, Staff Welfare Program, Financial Help in Case of natural calamities, Ibn Sina Marriage Media etc.” are the welfare efforts of Ibn Sina trust.’ Islamic Dawa Program is for free distribution of copies of the *Holy Quran*, *Hadith* and Islamic publications. These are the major units of Ibn Sina Trust:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1.Ibn Sina Diagnostic & Imaging Center, Dhanmondi | 6.Ibn Sina D.Lab & Consultation Center, Doyagonj                 | 11. Ibn Sina Diagnostic & Consultation Center , Badda                             |
| 2.Ibn Sina Hospital Dhanmondi                     | 7.Ibn Sina Hospital & Diagnostic Center, (Fouad AL Khateeb Unit) | 12.Ibn Sina Pharmaceutical Industry Ltd.  |
| 3.Ibn Sina Medical College Hospital, Kallyanpur   | 8. Ibn Sina Nursing Institute, Kallyanpur                        | 13.Ibn Sina Diagnostic Center, Lalbagh Ltd.                                       |
| 4.Ibn Sina Medical Imaging Center, Zigatola       | 9.Ibn Sina Hospital Sylhet Ltd.                                  | 14.Bangladesh Journal of Medical Science  |
| 5.Ibn Sina Medical Check-Up Center, Badda         | 10.Ibn Sina Medical College                                      | 15.Ibn Sina Diagnostic & Consultation Center ,Uttara, Jessore, Bogra and Malibagh |

The trust, established in 1980, was motivated by the former Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in Bangladesh Fouad Abdul Hamid Al-Khateeb who had close relation with Jamaat’s leaders (Kabir 2002, 161). Although the Ibn Sina Trust has been denying that it has any link with the Jamaat (bdnews24.com 28 March, 2014). But its connection with the Jamaat is often reported in newspapers. Its founding trustee Mir Quasem Ali was a member of Jamaat central executive council and considered by many as a top financier of the anti-liberation party.

### 7.3. Universities

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has set up various universities to achieve the goal of the Islamsation of knowledge. The establishment of *Darul Ihsan University* was the first Jamaat’s effort to propagate Islamic knowledge at higher level education in the country. It was first private university in Bangladesh, established in 1989 by Darul Ihsan Trust (DIT) and approved in 1993 under the Private University Act 1992 by the government of Bangladesh. Its founder Vice Chancellor was Professor Syed Ali Ashraf, who was prominent Islamic educationist and specialised on Islamisation of education.

*International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC)* is another university which is linked with Bangladesh

Jamaat-e-Islami. It was established by Islamic University Chittagong Trust (IUCT) in 1995 and its mission as stated on its website is “to revive the glorious past of the Muslim Ummah.” Its objective is to Islamise Knowledge and academic curriculum of various branches of knowledge “so that its students can imbibe the true spirit of Islam as an effective guiding principle in their profession and daily life.” The university seeks to create new generation of Muslim youths who would be highly moral and well-disciplined according to Islamic norms.

*Manarat International University (MIU)* was set up in 2001 by Manarat Trust as a private university in Dhaka. The trust has been working for the spreading Islamic injunctions through educational welfare activities since 1981. It was formed by Islamic highbrows and thinkers who were involved in the process of Islamisation of knowledge and creating a value based educational institutes and networks in Bangladesh. Their first educational effort was to establish an English medium Kindergarten school called “Manarat Dhaka” in 1979. In 1985 its name was changed to “Manarat International School”, and in 1991 it was upgraded and renamed as “Manarat International College”. The Manarat School and college is closely linked with Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. Its prominent leader Abdul Quader Mollah<sup>8</sup> was founder secretary of Manarat School and College in Dhaka.

It is very attention-grabbing that all above mentioned Jamaat linked universities have some similar characters. All are for the spreading of Islamic orders and moral education which are confined under the dogmas of the Jamaat. But most important thing is that all universities are closely linked with Middle East oil rich countries which provided substantial help to the Jamaat to set up and run these universities. Prof. Dr. Abdullah Omar Naseef (Chairman of IUCT & Former Deputy Speaker, Saudi Parliament), Prof. Dr. Abdullah Abdul Aziz Al Mosleh, (Vice Chairman of IUCT and Secretary General of The Scientific Miracle in the holy Qur’an & Sunnah), Prof. Dr. Allama Yusuf Al Qardawi (Director, Sunnah & Sirah Research Center of Qatar University), H.E. Dr. Saleh Bin Abdullah Bin Humaid (Speaker, Saudi Parliament), H.E. Yousuf Jaseem Al Hajjee (former Minister & Chairman, International Islamic Charitable Organization, Kuwait), H.E. Ambassador Naser Hamdan Al Zaabi (Chairman, The Permanent Council For Islamic Solidarity Fund, (OIC) U.A.E.), Dr. Adel Abdullah Al Falah (Secretary, Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs, Kuwait) are some people from Middle East countries, who played significant role in formation and developing the infrastructure of above universities<sup>9</sup>. And they have been also holding major administrative posts in the universities and their trust time to time. In addition there are many Islamic NGOs, charitable organisations and Ministries, which associated with Middle East countries, have been playing significant and various roles in the universities. These are Qatar Charitable Trust, Iqra Charitable Society (Jeddah), Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), The Zayed Bin Sultan Aal Nahyian Charitable & Humanitarian Foundation (Abu Dhabi), Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs, Kuwait, Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs, Qatar International Islamic Charitable Organization (Kuwait).

#### 7.4. Coaching Centres

The Jamaat does not provide only various scholarships to Bangladeshi students but also its student wing *Islami Chhatra Shibir* helps students of the country to qualify university entrance examinations. For this there are various coaching centres are run by the party and the *Shibir*. The *Shibir* works for the students through “12 University and Medical coaching centres manned by high-level policy makers of the party across the country” (Islam 2005). *Focus* for Dhaka University, *Concrete* for Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, *Index* for Chittagong University, *Success* for Islami University, *Songshaptak* for Jahangirnagar University and *Retina* for Medical Colleges are the main coaching centres run by the *Shibir*. There are about 150 branches of these coaching centres in the Bangladesh. And their annual revenue is TK 25 crore. These earnings are used to expand activities of the wing and to give arms training to the member of the *Shibir* (Islam 2005).

#### 7.5. Rabita al- Alam al-Islami:

Rabita al-Alam al-Islami, Known as Al-Rabita and World Muslim League, is an influential Saudi Arabia-based non-governmental organisation (NGO). Its works and activities in Bangladesh are run by the member of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The party’s leader Mir Quashem Ali has been country director of the Al-Rabita in Bangladesh since 1980 (Islam 2014). Al-Rabit has been functioning for Islamisation process in Bangladesh, especially in remote areas (Habib 2012), mainly among Rohingya refugee camps in southeast part of Bangladesh (Riaz 2008, 83). But most significant attempts of the NGO into the direction of Islamisation process among the hill people to

<sup>8</sup> Abdul Quader Mollah was a top leader of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, who was convicted of war crimes committed during the war of liberation of Bangladesh 1971. He was sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), Bangladesh formed by the government of Bangladesh, and hanged in Dhaka Central Jail on 12 December 2013.

<sup>9</sup> The mentioned names have been found from the website of the International Islamic University Chittagong, Darul Ihsan University and Manarat International University.

build madrasas and mosques. 800 mosques and about 300 madrasas are constructed by Saudi NGO. It runs Islamic Missionary Centre which is involved in converting tribes into Islam. It spends bulk of money for spreading “Sharia law” and “violent Islamism” (Habib 2012). Its activities often turn into religious extremism in Bangladesh.

### 7.6. Takaful

Takaful is the concept of Islamic Insurance<sup>10</sup> which follows financial rule of Sharia law. This is based on mutuality and cooperation in which all policyholders become as the part of joint investors. And they work as a manager or a commercial agent and share in the investment pool's profits and losses. In Bangladesh, Islamic Insurance is run by some key Insurance Companies whose links are often reported in newspapers with Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. *Far East Life Insurance Company Ltd* and *Takaful Islami Insurance Limited* are among them which are based on Sharia law and linked with the party (Bhattacharjee 2016).

*Fareast Islami Life Insurance Co. Ltd.* was formed in 2000. Its effort is to Islamise life insurance industry on the basis of Sharia law. Its mission “to provide financial security to their participants with Life Takaful policies that are most befitting to their needs and to make Life Takaful a forced and easy saving instrument and a profitable one with attractive bonus.” In addition, its mission is to promote Islamisation in the economic activities of Bangladesh for “the solidarity of the Muslim Ummah”. The company is involved in Ekok Bima, Group Insurance (GI) and non-traditional Micro Insurance business under the title of Sharbojonin Bima. It has two subsidiary companies - Fareast Islami Securities Limited and Fareast Islami Properties Limited.

*Takaful Islami Insurance Limited* was set up in 2001. Its major sponsor came from those Businessmen who were earlier engaged with Islami Bank in Bangladesh. Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, Ibn Sina Trust, Ibn Sina Pharmaceuticals Ltd, the Daily Naya Diganta and Diganta Media Ltd, which are Jamaat’s liked firms, are the key clients of the company. It seeks to become leading Shariah based insurance company in the country. Its mission is “to provide Protection & Financial Security to the nation through ‘Tabarru’ guided by Islamic Shariah”. Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi are the main region where the company runs its business.

### 8. Conclusion

Building social infrastructure by Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami has been far reaching implications in terms of the socio-economic and political sphere of Bangladesh. It tries to provide services at highly affordable rates. Importantly, it covers those areas where the government has failed in delivering services. The failure of the state’s development agenda in so far as fulfilling the basic needs of the people, particularly in rural areas, are concerned, has given the Jamaat potential space to establish its foothold in such matters. Rising inequality and unemployment have provided opportunity to the party to expand and sustain the socio-economic activities in the country. 82 percent of the country’s poor live in rural areas. 60 percent of these households are without land of their own and 65 percent of them do not have access to the public health system (Barkat 2013). In the light of this, the efforts of the Jamaat to build schools, hospital, universities, and other social infrastructure are very noteworthy. It is able to provide job opportunity for its members and workers. Its educational institutions and healthcare programmes have enabled marginalised sections of Bangladesh’s Muslims to access services relating to health and education. The political implication of these efforts is immense. Through this, the party tries to win support among the masses and wishes to gain the sympathy of those people who are beneficiaries of the socio-economic and welfare activities of the party.

### References

- Ahmed, Abu Nasar Saied (2008). *Fundamentalism in Bangladesh: its impact on India*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.
- Ahmed, Sabir (2015). Jamaat-e-Islami and its financial resources. *Dhakatimes*24, 3 July. Available at: <http://www.dhakatimes24.com/mobile/2015/07/03/72827> (accessed 6 May 2016).
- Aljazeera (2013). Bangladesh court declares Jamaat illegal. 1 August. Available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2013/08/2013819424198348.html> (accessed 17 April 2016).
- Bahadur, Kalim (1979). *The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan: Political Thought and Political Action*. New Delhi: Chetana Publications.
- Banu, U.A.B. Razia Akter (1994). Jamaat-i-Islami in Bangladesh: Challenges and Prospect. In: Hussin Mutalib and Taj ul-Islam Hashami (eds) *Islam, Muslims and the Modern State: Case-studies of Muslims in Thirteen Countries*. New York: Martin’s Press, pp. 80-99.

<sup>10</sup> Data and Information regarding Islamic Insurance in Bangladesh gathered from the website of Far East Life Insurance Company Ltd and Takaful Islami Insurance Limited.

- Bertocci, Peter J. (2002). Islam and social construction of the Bangladesh countryside. In: Rafiuddin Ahmed (eds) *Understanding the Bengal Muslims*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 71-85.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2013). 2012 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 32<sup>nd</sup> Edition, August. Ministry of Planning Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh. Dhaka
- Bano, Masooda (2012). Welfare Work and Political of Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh. *Economic & Political Weekly* VOL XLVII (1): 86-93.
- Bano, Masooda (2009). Marker of identity: Religion Political Parties and Welfare Work- The Case of Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Working paper 34. Department for International Development, University of Birmingham. Available at: [http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1569/1/Bano\\_PoliticalParties.pdf](http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1569/1/Bano_PoliticalParties.pdf) (accessed 9 February 2016).
- Barkat, Abul (2013). Political Economy of Fundamentalism in Bangladesh. *Mainstream* LI (14) March 23 - Special Supplement on Bangladesh, online published on 24 March, 2013, Available at: <http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article4071.html> (accessed 9 April 2016).
- Bdnews24.com (2014). Inb Sina denies link to Jamaat, 28 March. Available at: <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2014/03/28/ibn-sina-denies-link-to-jamaat> (accessed 26 March 2016)
- Bhattacharjee, Rupak (2016). Economy of Islamic Fundamentalism Poses Threat To Bangladesh- Analysis. *Eurasia Review*, 12 April. Available at: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/12042016-economy-of-islamic-fundamentalism-poses-threat-to-bangladesh-analysis/> (accessed 12 April 2016).
- Daily Star (2016). Profile of Mir Quasem, 9 March. Available at: <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/profile-mir-quasem-788428> (accessed 28 March 2016).
- Dhaka Tribune (2016). Govt to take over firms with Jamaat ties, published on January 18 and updated on January 27. Available at: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/jan/18/govt-take-over-firms-jamaat-tie> (accessed 26 March 2016).
- Fuller, Graham (2003). *The Future of Political Islam*. New York: Palgrave.
- Grare, Frederic (2001). Political Islam in the Indian Subcontinent The Jamaat-i-Islami. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Hakim, Muhammad A. (2002). Parliamentary Politics in Bangladesh in The 1990s: Consensus and Conflict. In: Mahfuzul H. Chowdhury (eds) *Thirty Years of Bangladesh Politics Essay in Memory of Dr. Mahfuzul Huq*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, pp. 103-131.
- Habib, Mohshin (2012). Ethnic Cleansing in Bangladesh, *Gatestone Institute*, 5 October. Available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3385/bangladesh-ethnic-cleansing> (accessed 2 April 2016).
- Hashmi, Taj (2015). No place for "anti-Indians" in Bangladesh!. *The Daily Star*, June 13. Available at: <http://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/politics/no-place-%E2%80%9Canti-indians%E2%80%9D-bangladesh-96136> (accessed 24 May 2016).
- Islam, Fakhru (2014). Jamaat's fund provider. *Prothom Alo*, 31 October. Available at: <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/55770/Jamaat-s-fund-provider> (accessed 24 March 2016).
- Islam, Gazi Jahirul (2005). Islami Chattra Shibir activities through coaching centres. *bdnews24.com*, 10 December. Available at: <http://bdnews24.com/politics/2005/10/12/islami-chattra-shibir-activities-through-coaching-centres> (accessed 15 April 2016).
- Islam, Maidul (2015). Limits of Islamism: Jamaat-e-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh. Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
- Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (2013). *Three Decades One Mission: Annual Report 2013*. Dhaka.
- Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (2016). *Consolidating Strength Fostering Progress: Annual Report 2016*. Dhaka.
- Karlekar, Hiranmay (2005). *Bangladesh Next Afghanistan?*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd.
- Kabir, Bhuian M. Monoar (2002). Islamic politics in Bangladesh: Internal and External Contexts. In: Mahfuzul H. Chowdhury (eds) *Thirty Years of Bangladesh Politics Essays in Memory of Dr Mahfuzul Huq*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited, pp. 149-202.
- Mishra, Aliva (2012). Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: A Comparative Study of Pakistan and Bangladesh. *Indian Quarterly* 68 (3): 283-296.
- Mukherjee, Amitava (2016). Economy of Islamic fundamentalism In Bangladesh. Dhaka Tribune, 9 February. Available at: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/feb/09/economy-islamic-fundamentalism-bangladesh> (accessed 2 April 2016).
- Mukherjee, Amitava(2015). Can Sheikh Hasina act against Bangladeshi Fundamentalists?. *The Economic Times*, 27 June. Available at: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/can-sheikh-hasina-act-against-bangladeshi-fundamentalists/articleshow/47839352.cms> (accessed 12 April 2016).
- Nasr Seyyed Vali Reza (1994). *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*. London: I.B. Tauris Publishers.
- Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza (1996). *Mawdudi and the making of Islamic revivalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Rahman, Md Mizanur (2011). Emigration and the Family Economy: Bangladeshi Labor Migration to Saudi Arabia. *Asia and Pacific Migration Journal* 20 (2-3): 389-411.
- Riaz, Ali (2008). Faithful Education: Madrassahs in South Asia. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press.
- Riaz Ali (2008). Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web. New York: Routledge.
- Rosenblum, Nancy L. (2003). Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 6 (1): 23-53
- Salehin, Mohammad Musfequs (2016). Islamic NGOs in Bangladesh: Development, Piety and Neoliberal Governmentality. New York: Routledge.
- Sharkansky, Ira (2000). The work is The politics of Religion and the Religion of Politics: Looking at Israel. New York: Lexington Books.
- Shaon, Ashif Islam (2016). Mir Quasem's death penalty upheld. *Dhaka tribune*, 8 March. Available at: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/03/08/mir-quasems-death-penalty-upheld/> (accessed 28 March 2016).
- Shehabuddin Elora (2008). Jamaat-i-Islami in Bangladesh: Women, Democracy and the Transformation of Islamist Politics. *Modern Asian Studies* 42(2/3): 577-603.
- The Hindu (2016). Bangladesh Plans to ban 'terrorist' Jamaat-e-Islami. 14 April. Available at: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/bangladesh-plans-to-ban-terrorist-jamaateislami/article8472978.ece> (accessed 17 April 2016).
- The Hindu (2014). Bengali Hindu in Muslim-majority Bangladesh. 15 January. Available at: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/bengali-hindus-in-muslimmajority-bangladesh/article5579528.ece> (accessed 18 June 2016).
- World Data Atlas, Bangladesh - Public spending on education as a share of gross domestic product. Available at: <https://knoema.com/atlas/Bangladesh/topics/Education/Expenditures-on-Education/Public-spending-on-education-as-a-share-of-GDP> (accessed 28 January 2018)

**Websites:**

- <https://jamaat-e-islami.org/en/>  
<https://www.ibnsinatrust.com/>  
<http://www.ibfdb.org/>  
<http://www.islamibankbd.com/>  
<http://diubd-ac.com/>  
<https://www.iiuc.ac.bd/>  
<http://www.manarat.ac.bd/>  
<https://www.fareastislamilife.com/>  
<http://www.takaful.com.bd/>