

International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research

IJOSPER

ISSN: 2667-8810 (Online)

ijosper.uk

OPEN ACCESS

Original Article

Article No: 19_V6_I1_A7

**FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM IN BANGLADESH:
CONTRIBUTION OF BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN AND
AWAMI LEAGUE**

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Abstract:

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu¹ Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-1975) is the great architect and the immortal morphologist of a new map of independent Bangladesh. During his rule, he took various steps for the welfare of the country and the nation. He took realistic and effective measures to propagate Islam because of the economic, social and physical infrastructural measures in it, keeping in mind the religious sentiments and values of the people of the Muslim majority in Bangladesh. The outstanding contribution he has made to spread Islam, the promotion and establishment of Islamic values during his reign has become a rare example in the contemporary Muslim world. He was always trying to make Bangladesh a country of peace for all people of all religions. He is not only a great architect of an independent sovereign state but also, he is the architect of spreading Islam under government-sponsored Bangladesh. Especially by establishing the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, he provided a solid institutional basis for the spread of Islam. He gave greater importance to all citizens who have equal rights regardless of religion and have been an assurance of all religions, which serves as a protector against intolerance when drafting the constitution of Bangladesh. However, the research tries to highlight how Bangabandhu contributed to reducing the religious hatred and extremism, fanaticism, and fundamentalism and establishing peaceful co-existence of various cultures and religions among the people of Bangladesh. Therefore, the result of my study shows how the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami league is establishing or has contributed in establishing status equality, love, promote religious cohesion, tolerance, and brotherhood among the masses and taught people to respect each other's religion, emotions, and practices in Bangladesh.

Key Words:

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Awami League, Bengal Civilization, Peaceful Coexistence, Religious Pluralism & Tolerance, Different Cultures, Social Development.

Introduction

Bangabandhu¹ Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was well-known as the modern architect of ancient Bengali civilization. He was the first President of Bangladesh and the president of the Awami League, established by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani. He was one of the most influential political figures in the Indian subcontinent who organized the partition of India from British India to protect Bengal's rights. To establish a new state by using Bengali nationalism, he led the language movement of 1952, the education movement of 1962, the six-point movement of 1966, and the mass uprising of 1969. Later, he led centrally in the struggle to establish Bangladesh from East Pakistan. Due to his efforts, Bangladesh became an independent country.

For this reason, the people of Bengal gave Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the title of "Father of The Nation" in Bangladesh. One of the ideals of Bangabandhu's pursuit of politics throughout his life was communalism and humanism. The War of Liberation also led these two ideals. As a person, he adhered to the religion of Islam but had equal love for people of all religions. People of all communities, including Muslim-Hindu-Christian-Buddhists, participated in the liberation war at the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was a purely patriotic Bengali, humanist and non-communal consciousness. He never used Islam for political purposes. He took many steps to make Bangladesh a peaceful country basis of all religions. However, there is the main reason for peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance in favor of the enormous influence of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This study was also carried out by descriptive analysis through the literature review of existing papers.

1. Objectives of the Study

The prime purpose and objectives of this study are to highlight and explore the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has established religious tolerance and Social development among the different religious groups in Bangladesh. The following objectives have been set for the study:

- i. Explaining the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to promote religious tolerance in Bangladesh along with its different approaches.
- ii. Identify the worthwhile activities regarding freedom of religion, faith in Bangladesh.

¹ He is popularly dubbed with the title of "Bangabandhu" (Bôngobondhu "Friend of Bengal") by the people of Bangladesh.

- iii. We are evaluating the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in promoting Islamic activities to general people for helping to accept Islam in Bangladesh.
- iv. It is appraising the religious pluralism in Bangladesh and its current conditions.
- v. The role of the Awami League regime's activities is enhancing social and political development, removing discrimination and tranquility with focusing upon to Bangladesh.

2. Theoretical Structure & Proposed Methodology

This research was done principally based on secondary data and information. For concept building, a comprehensive literature survey covering books, some different Bangladesh government ordinances were undertaken. All kinds of material documents like the literature of management, newspapers, journals, books, television channels, conference papers, and pertinent research papers are the secondary sources of data. Some relevant specialist and academicians have recommended. There is various distinctions survey report like-Islamic Foundation Bangladesh report has been reviewed.

3. Research Question

Considering the importance of these matters, this research will have a primary research question. The primary research question of this study is that there are thirty-three ethnic tribes of different religions in Bangladesh. How Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League regime were so much success in founding religious liberalism in Bangladesh.

4. Literature Review

During his short reign, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took various steps for the welfare of the nation. In keeping with the economic and social steps of the country, he took adequate measures to promote Islam by keeping in mind the religious sentiments and values of the people of the Muslim majority in Bangladesh. Notably, he took a stable institutional framework for the spread of Islam by establishing the Islamic Foundation. Today, by looking at the widespread and multifaceted public welfare activities of the Islamic Foundation established by Bangabandhu, one can see how he was a far-sighted and truly successful loving countryman. Understanding the issues, Dr. Md. Ashikur Rahman Biplob wrote a book called "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's contribution to establishing Islamic ideals

and values." In this book, the authors talk about the liberation war, the views of Islam and Bangabandhu, the impact of Islam in the life of Bangabandhu, and the views of Islam in the context of independence. Besides, the authors also discussed how the Bangabandhu established Islamic ideals and values, Islam, sectarianism, humanity, the contribution of Bangabandhu to the development of Islam, Introduction, and evaluation of secularism, etc. (Biplob, 2019).

Shamim Mohammed Afzal mentioned his book as the name of "The father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Preaching and Propagating Islam," Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bengali of all time with the great architect of independent sovereign Bangladesh. He is an integral part of the national history, heritage, and glory of Bangladesh. He is the person who has given the Bengalis an independent sovereign country in the history of Bengal. He gave Bengalis distinctive flags and distinctive self-identification. He also points out that Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country. Bangabandhu took many breakthrough steps in spreading the message of Islam to the majority of the people of this country, peace, communal status, generosity, tolerance, and humanity among the people (Afzal, 2010, p. 24-25).

Syed Ali Ahsan mentions in his book "How I saw Bangabandhu." Alcohol, gambling, were not forbidden when Pakistanis governed the country in the name of Islam. However, the Bangabandhu government stopped the wine, gambling, and serving wine for foreigners on gambling, lottery, and Gambling in the name of racing in Suhrawardy Gardens in Dhaka. In a speech delivered at the Dhaka Aliya Madrasa, Bangabandhu said, "There has been much anti-Islam work in our country during the Pakistan era." Gambling was nationally recognized in the name of the race. I came to power and stopped the races first, told the police to be quick, banned gambling. I talk about secularism; secularism is not antisemitism. I am Muslim, and I love Islam, if you help me, you will see that anti-Islam activities will never happen in this country (Ahsan, 2003).

Principal Mohammad Shahjahan Alam Saju and Dr. Muhammad Ashraful Alam edited the book "Islam and Bangabandhu," which has been published in the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh. They point out that Sheikh Awal, ancestor of Bangabandhu, came to Bangladesh from Baghdad as a companion of Hazrat Bayazid Bostami (r). Later his descendants settled in Tungipara in present-day Gopalganj district. Bangabandhu is the seventh descendant of Islamist preacher Sheikh Awal. Bangabandhu's father, Sheikh Lutfar Rahman, was a Sufi, a devout Muslim and one of the holders of the propagation and spread of

Islam. The authors mentioned that the Father of the Nation never used religion for political purposes.

5. Findings and Analysis

There are 163.05 million people in Bangladesh. There is about 89 percent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim, 9.5 percent of the people depend on Hindu religion, 0.6 percent of people belong to Buddhists religion, 0.3 percent are Christians. It has less than one percent is Ahmadi Muslims and Shi'ite as well (Worldpopulationreview, 2018). When Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was drafting the constitution of Bangladesh, he assured to every religion of people to get vacations for their celebrating on national holidays. There is evidence of celebrating various religious ceremonies and festivals. There is all public participation in religious programs and festivals like Eid Ul Fitr and Eid Ul Azha for Muslims, Durga Puja for Hindus, Buddha Purnima for Buddhists, and Christmas for Christians (Hossain, 2014). It is a significant achievement in the country of such a religious majority. For this reason, Religious intolerance and extremism are not yet common in Bangladeshi society.

5.1. Contribution to Religious Liberalism under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

The contribution that Bangabandhu has made to the spread of Islam and the establishment of Islamic values during his rule is rare in the contemporary Muslim world. He took various initiatives to establish relevant provisions of Islam in society and public life (Hasina, 2015). He also emphasized the importance of Islam, as well as the activities of other religions. An overview of Bangabandhu's contributions to different religions are presented below:

5.1.1. Establishment of Bangladesh Islamic Foundation

After Bangabandhu came to power, he started reconstructing war-torn Bangladesh on the one hand, and on the other hand-formed an "Islamic Foundation" to spread the religion of Islam, to stop the religious business of the religious practitioners, whose activities spread all over Bangladesh today. Not only is that, but Islamic publications of the Islamic Foundation also gaining international recognition. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman founded the Islamic Foundation on March 28, 1975, by an ordinance. He established this institution by dissolving the two institutions like Baitul Mukarram Society and the Islamic Academy (Afzal, 2010, p. 28).

Most of the people of Bangladesh is a Muslim. Since ancient times Islamic ideals and values have been cherished and practiced in this country. According to the Islamic Foundation's Act, it aims to accelerate the promotion and spread of these ideals and values of Islam, as follows:

- i. Establish and maintain a mosque, Islamic center, academy, and institute.
- ii. To provide financial support to mosques, Islamic centers, academies, institutes, and organizations dedicated to social service.
- iii. Conduct research on the contribution of Islam to culture, thought, science, and civilization.
- iv. To support the propagation and publicity of the basic principles of Islam, such as world brotherhood, absolute tolerance, justice, etc., and recommend various measures, including institutional development, to implement Islamic values and policies in cultural social and economic life.
- v. To organize and disseminate research on the history, philosophy, culture, income, and judicial system of Islam to popularize Islamic values and principles and to publish Islamic literature.
- vi. To translate books, periodicals as well as to promote, compile and publish books related to the subject of Islam
- vii. Conduct conferences, lectures, debates and symposiums on history, history, philosophy, culture, income, and justice system of Islam.
- viii. To present awards and medals for outstanding contributions to the research of Islam.
- ix. To undertake, accept, or assist in the project related to Islam.
- x. To provide scholarships for research on Islam.
- xi. To manage and improve the Baitul Mukarram Mosque
- xii. Perform all or part of the above functions.

The Islamic Foundation, which founded by Bangabandhu, is now regarded as one of the largest government-run Muslim world organizations. From this institution, the Bengali translation of the Holy Quran, Tafsir, the translation of Hadith, the book written and translated on the life and works of the Prophet (Pbuh), the history of Islam, Islamic law and philosophy, Islamic economy, socialism, companions and intellectuals. More than three and a half thousand books have been published. These books are widely appreciated not only for the readers of Bangladesh but also in other countries of the world. The institution has been implementing various activities through the headquarters of Dhaka, sixty-four district offices

across the country, twenty-eight Islamic missions in the service of Art and Humanity, and seven Imam Training Academies Hossain, 2014).

The Islamic encyclopedia in twenty-eight volumes from this institution and the Sirat encyclopedia in twelve volumes have made outstanding contributions to knowledge in Islam. Islamic Foundation Head Office Agargaon, Shrebangla Nagar, Dhaka. Besides, there are several departmental offices at the headquarters of the office of Baitul Mukarram. The organization is implementing various activities centrally through seventeenth departments, seven projects, one central library, it has sixty-four district offices, with six divisions and fifty Islamic Mission Centers in the service of humanity, and 7 Imam training academy centers. Islamic Foundation is a company founded by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu. It is an organization under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Foundation has a Board of Governors consisting of honorable parliamentarians, distinguished academics, Islamic thinkers, and supreme administrative officials for the overall policy setting, guidance, adoption, supervision, and monitoring. The Honorable Minister in charge of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is the Chairman of the Board, and the Honorable Director-General of the Islamic Foundation is the Member Secretary of the Board. The chief executive of the Islamic Foundation is the Director-General. The government-appointed him. He is the CEO of the Islamic Foundation. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to implement its decisions. There are several secretaries, seventeen directors, one caretaker, and seven project directors appointed to assist him in the performance (Afzal, 2010, p. 29).

They are each head of a department/project. At present, the Islamic Foundation has two thousand three hundred eleven officers and employees in the revenue and development sector. Furthermore, there is a total of 84,253 employees, including 71,185 on an honorarium/allowance basis. The fund of the Islamic Foundation is the source of grants, donations, grants, investments, and property received from the foreign countries or organizations and the government of Bangladesh. (Hasina, 2015).

5.1.2. Secularism Does Not Mean Not Irreligion

He has struggled for a lifetime to ensure the right of all people to their respective religions. He made a statement firmly draft constitution conference held on October 04, 1972; he firmly declared that secularism does not mean not irreligion. Seven million people of Bengal will continue their right to practice religion. We do not want to stop the practice of religion by law and will not do so. Muslims, Hindus, Christians will practice their religion

freely; state power never can stop them. Many people complain that religious rights have been curtailed, I would say, arrangements have been made to protect religious rights (Rahman, A., & Rashid, A., 2019).

5.1.3. Reorganization of Madrasa Education Board

Bangabandhu reorganized the Madrasah Education Board to create an Islamic based life and expand bilingual education. Previously the Madrasa Education Board was not autonomous. Bangabandhu was the first to grant autonomous governance to the Madrasa Education Board and renamed it 'Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board.' The reorganization of the Madrasah Education Board by Bangabandhu was a milestone in the spread of Islamic education and values in Bangladesh. In addition to modernizing religious education by combining religious education with secular education, the madrasa opened the door to higher education for students. Moreover, he ensured government jobs and proper dignity for the madrasa teachers and students (Afzal, 2010, p. 31).

Prominent educationist Syed Ali Ahsan mentioned in his book 'As I saw Bangabandhu' When a proposal for closure of government grants for the madrasa was presented to Bangabandhu, Bangabandhu wrote in the file that 'the allocation for the education of the madrasa will remain so. However, we must examine whether this allocation can be further increased in the future and how much can be increased. Due to the restructuring of the Madrasa Education Board, the students from the Madrasa Education Board in Bangladesh are getting the opportunity to study at the University for higher education after completing their studies. As the Madrasas of Bangladesh is under a coherent policy and board, the foundation of the madrasas has also been strengthened. Gradually, Kamil Madrasa has been established at many Upazila levels, including every district headquarters in the country (Ahsan, 2003).

5.1.4. Allocate Additional Space for Kakrail Mosque and Place for World Ijtema in Tongi

Tabligh Jamaat is a non-political organization. Inviting the way of Islam is the only function of this organization. The Tabligh Jamaat has been actively promoting Islam worldwide. The Kakrail Mosque is considered as the center of the Tabligh Jamaat in Bangladesh. Each year, many Muslims from around the world join the Ijtema as Tabligh's preaching work expands worldwide. As a result, the importance of the Kakrail mosque was increased to the people. Even though the Baitul Mukarram is a National Mosque, the

importance of the Kakrail mosque was spreading abroad in terms of international identity and fame. The mosque of Kakrail, which is now centrally located in the Tabligh Jamaat office, was very non-spacious. Bangabandhu allocated so much space for the Mosque of Tablig Jamaat of Kakrail, and the mosque was expanded under his direction (Afzal, 2010, p. 32).

The Tabligh Jamaat holds a conference called World Ijtema every year. For the first time, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman provided the place to settle the World Ijtema peacefully on the banks of the Turag River. Since then, the Tabligh Jamaat has been practicing the World Ijtema there. Each year millions of Tablighi followers from different countries are invited to the conference. Millions of Muslims from all over the world are gathering here to hold the second-largest conference of Islam. Here they come together and receive action plans. Moreover, they are going to different countries to spread Islam. Through this organization, Bangabandhu sponsored the propagation and spread of Islam (Rahman, A., & Rashid, A., 2019).

5.1.5. Bangabandhu is Against the Passage of Anti-Quran Laws & Government Grants to Perform Hajj on Behalf of Bangabandhu

Bangabandhu told on the radio and television in Pakistan during the general elections of 1970. He mentioned, "It is being propagated against me that we do not believe in Islam. In response to this, my obvious point is that we do not believe in Islam like them. We believe in the justice of Islam. Our Islam is the Islam of the Prophet (Pbuh), who taught the people of the world justice and right. Our struggle against those hypocrites who repeatedly patronized oppression, exploitation, and deprivation on the land of East Pakistan (Hasina, 2015). Ninety percent of the population in Bangladesh is Muslim. So, they can think of passing anti-Islamic laws in this country, who use Islam for their benefit.

Therefore, there was no government grant for Hajj pilgrims during the Pakistan era. Bangabandhu arranged for donations from government funds for the first Hajj pilgrims in post-independence Bangladesh, and he abolished the Hajj pilgrims' travel tax (Afzal, 2010, p. 30).

5.1.6. Broadcasting of the Quran Recitation and Religious Programs and Radio, TV

During the rule of Bangabandhu, he was the first to broadcast the Holy Qur'an and its translations and other religious events with high importance on radio and television. As a result, the inauguration of the day began with the recitation of the Qur'an on the radio and TV

programs. Starting from the time of Bangabandhu, this system is still in the media of Bangladesh.

5.1.7. Establishment of Bangladesh Sirat Majlis and Eid Miladunnabi (Pbuh) Celebrations

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman came to power and first brought together the scholars of Bangladesh. He took the initiative to bring the right form of Islam to the people through the scholars. He took the initiative to bring the essential aspects of Islam to the people through Islamic scholars. Sirat Majlis, named an organization, was formed in Dhaka under the guidance and patronage of Bangabandhu. The initiative of this institute was to take a comprehensive program to celebrate the first Eid of Miladunnabi (pbuh) in the month of Rabiul Awal during 1973-1974 (Afzal, 2010, p.30). Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, as the head of the government, inaugurated the mahfil in the premises of Baitul Mukarram Mosque. The inauguration of the Eid-Miladunnabi (pbuh) Mahfil as the head of a government is the first instance in the history of the subcontinent. Abdullah bin Saeed Jalalabadi, the then editor of the Bangladesh Siraj Majlis and the Khatib of the mosque of Bangladesh Secretariat mosque, wrote in commemoration of the first Eid-Miladunnabi (pbuh) celebrations in Bangladesh, on that day, the inauguration of the Miladunnabi (pbuh) meeting of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Baitul Mukarram Mosque created a stir among the nation. In connection with this, Eid-Miladunnabi (pbuh) is being celebrated nationally every year in the Islamic Foundation.

5.1.8. Bangabandhu Government Announces Official Holiday on Eid Miladunnabi (Pbuh), Shab-E Kadar, Shab-E Barat

These three days are essential for Muslims. Primarily, these days Muslims worship more. To celebrate the holy day of Islam, Bangabandhu was the first to announce a public holiday on Eid-Miladunnabi (pbuh), Shab-e-Qadr, Shab-e-Barat in Bangladesh. To protect the sanctity of the days, he directed that the cinema hall be closed. Starting from the time of Bangabandhu, there are still public holidays these days. Muslims gather in the mosque and worship (Afzal, 2010, p. 31).

5.1.9. Prohibition of Alcohol, Gambling, and Confirmed the Provision of Punishment

Alcohol, gambling, and antisocial activities have been declared wholly banned in Islam. The verses of the Qur'an have guaranteed the provisions of the verse in favor of its prohibition. Because after eating these people lose their conscience and ruin the balance of society. Alcohol has been mentioned in the hadith as 'Ummul Khabayes,' which is the source of all kinds of evil. Alcohol destroys human life in every way. Allah forbids various foods that are harmful, like alcohol (Afzal, 2010, p. 31). No worship of the people who are fed by this forbidden food is acceptable in the court of Allah. Because Allah only desires the welfare of the people, not evil. Drinking alcohol loses human values. They cannot protect humanity, kindness, and sociality. It starts with the family. They treat their wives harshly and mistreat their parents. Gambling addicts induce people to steal, rob, and even murder. They lose all the accumulated wealth in the hope of gaining many multiples. After the independence of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu considered all such harmful factors and prohibited alcohol, gambling, and anti-social activities and issued punishment.

5.1.10. Bangabandhu Government Sends First Tabligh Jamaat to the Soviet Union

Current Russia was known as The Soviet Union at the time of Bangabandhu. This country followed communism. Because of this, they did not like Islam. At that time, the Soviet Union did not have the opportunity to preach Islam from abroad. Russia directly supported Bangladesh in Bangladesh's independence war. Due to this, Bangabandhu's strong relationship with the Russian government was developed at that time. Bangabandhu sent a mission of scholars to the Soviet Union, aiding the Liberation War, to express his gratitude to the beneficiary. During the discussion with the scholars, he mentioned the verses of the Holy Qur'an: "If you are thankful, we will give you more blessings, and if you are ungrateful, the punishment will be severe." "We should express our gratitude to the way Soviet Russia has supported us in the war of liberation. Bangabandhu's message of gratitude and the verse of the Quran was conveyed to the leaders of Soviet Russia by members of the Bangladesh Mission (Afzal, 2010, p. 33).

The president of Dnyia and Kazakhstan in Central Asia, Ziauddin Khanov, has been overjoyed when the Bangladeshi government expressed their gratitude as well as quoting the Quranic verses. Bangabandhu took advantage of this opportunity and arranged to send a Tabligh Jamaat to the Soviet Union after Bangladesh became independent. At present, the

Tabligh Jamaat has conducted the beauty of Islam to the Russian people. The Tabligh Jamaat has been promoting Islam in Russia. Because of this, many people in Russia are accepting Islam in their invitation (Hasina, 2015).

5.1.11. Prohibition of Horse Racing Competition

There is a place now known as Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka. Before the independence of Bangladesh, it was called the Racecourse Maidan. At that time, there were races every month. Many people participated in this competition. However, the problem is, there are wines, gambling, housebuilding, and betting competitions in the name of racing competition. That is why many people became helpless by participating in competitions.

Moreover, ordinary people split up into groups and started fighting. When Bangabandhu came to the country after Bangladesh became independent, he was distraught to see such lousy activity. He banned the antisocial activity, including alcohol, gambling, with racing races. He even changed the name of the Racecourse Maidan to "Suhrawardy Uddyan." He was inspired by the teachings of the Prophet in such a way, that the Prophet said, if you think tomorrow will be a resurrection, plant a tree today. Because of this, he planted many trees in Suhrawardy Uddyan to erase the memory of non-Islamic activities (Afzal, 2010, p. 31).

5.1.12. Attending the OIC Conference and Establish Diplomatic Relations with the Muslim Countries

Bangabandhu attended the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in Lahore, to introduce the Muslim population of Bengal to the Muslim world. During the summit of the Islamic Conference Organization, a greeting mission of the OIC came to Dhaka to take Bangabandhu to the conference as well as former Algerian President Houari Boumédiène sends his plane to take on Bangabandhu. In Lahore, Bangabandhu was greeted by representatives of various Muslim countries. Moreover, he formally proposed to include Bangladesh in this organization. Through this, the Muslim world-recognized Bangladesh as an independent country. In his speech at this historic summit, Bangabandhu expressed his unwavering support to the Palestinian Arab brothers. He took part in the conference as the head of a Muslim-dominated state, ignoring all obstacles. In the statement that Bangabandhu had addressed about Islam and Bangladesh, the status of Bangladesh was enhanced in fifty-seven Muslim countries.

Moreover, his fraternal brotherhood developed with the leaders of the Muslim world. In fact, under pressure from Arab countries, Pakistan was forced to recognize Bangladesh in the nineteen-forties. It was a great success of Bangabandhu's foreign policy in the Muslim world (Afzal, 2010, p. 28).

5.1.13. Providing Aid and Assistance to the Arab World in the Arab-Israeli War

In 1973, Bangabandhu supported the Arab world in the Arab-Israeli war. Bangabandhu continued strong support for the Arab world, especially the Palestinian brothers, at various international forums. Bangabandhu sent a volunteer group along with twenty-eight medical teams with One million pounds of tea, to support the establishment of the Palestinian state in the Arab-Israeli war (Afzal, 2010, p. 28).

As a result, Bangladesh has developed a close relationship with the Arab world as well as this closeness was based on equality. The Bengali nation was known to them as a dignified and hardworking nation. The historic speech of Bangabandhu, given at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit in Lahore, created an unprecedented stir throughout the Arab world. (Islamic Foundation, 2017). Because his speech was not traditional, it was utterly exceptional. In his speech, he emphasized the realization of the rights of the Palestinian brothers, as he proposed to use the Prophet's ideals values for the welfare of the exploited people of the world. He expressed solidarity with all the oppressed people of the world. He called on the OIC to work on human welfare, under the influence of imperialist power.

5.2.The Strengthening of Religious Liberalism in Bangladesh: Role of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Awami League

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has implemented a unique initiative in restructuring the humane society based on Islamic values to transform Bangabandhu's far-reaching ideas into reality. She has ensured all the fundamental rights of every people of the country, including food, shelter, medical, education. She thinks that without the principles of Islam, the dream of a society based on justice, poverty, and hunger-free Bangladesh cannot be imagined. Through the path shown by Bangabandhu, Sheikh Hasina has been working relentlessly in the development and promotion of Islam in Bangladesh (Islamic Foundation, 2017).

After the death of Bangabandhu, the Awami League government under the rule of Sheikh Hasina came to power four times a total of 1997-2001, 2009-2014, and 2014-2018 and she is running the country for the fourth time since 2018. During the days of her government, she

has been taking various practical steps to establish communal harmony in different religions. As she continues to follow religious rituals in her personal life, she helps all the citizens of the state in religious practices. As the head of the government, Sheikh Hasina has always been promoting Islam. She mainly made the Islamic Foundation as a competent institution established by Bangabandhu. She took practical steps to make everyone realize the true meaning of Islam in the fight against terrorism from the country. Because of this, the Islamic Foundation has been taking practical steps to create public awareness by removing religious prejudice among the people (Karim, 2014).

5.2.1. Master's Status for Top Qawmi Degree: Historical Recognition

The Qawmi madrasas is an education system mainly based on the Deoband Madrasa of Uttar Pradesh, India. Darse Nizami directs it. The followers of Deobandi emphasize the mainstream teaching of the Quran and Hadith in these madrasas. The education, which was almost a hundred fifty years old, had no state recognition. The Awami League government has fulfilled its historic duty with state recognition. There was no sudden decision on the recognition of the Qawmi madrasas. The discussion that the Prime Minister initiated with the Islamic Scholars from 2019 as well as it was included in the national education policy in 2010. According to the Bangladesh Education Information and Statistics Bureau (BANBEIS), in 2015, there are about 14 lakh students in 13,902 Qawmi madrasas across the country. At that time, the government made a policy decision to recognize Qawmi education. The government formed a commission headed by Allama Ahmad Shafi to implement the recognition of the Qawmi Convention in 2013 (Swadeshkhabar, 2019).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at the Ganabhaban on the night of 11 April 2017, declared the state recognition of the Qawmi madrasas education system in a program of the Ulama. On 13 April 2018, the President of Bangladesh issued a decree to give 'Dawra-e Hadith' to the equivalent of postgraduate equivalent in Islamic Studies and Arabic literature in general education. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Ganabhaban on the night of 11 April 2017, expressed her great views on the Qawmi madrasas at that meeting. Among the words she says are some of the most notable:

- i. Education started in Bangladesh (as well as in the subcontinent) through the Qawmi madrasas. If it had not started, we would not have been educated.
- ii. The beginning of independence in India was through the movement of the Deobandi in the Ulama.

iii. The real teachings of Islam in Bangladesh are taught in the Qawmi madrasas.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister gave historical recognition to the Qawmi madrasas with essential opinions. Similarly, she created a new history by recognizing the Qawmi madrasas. It may be said that she has added her name to the history of the education system of the Indian subcontinent (Amadershomoy, 2018). It should be noted that the draft law of the recognition of the Qawmi was approved in the Parliament on August 13, 2018. On September 19, 2018, under the Board of Al-Hayat Ulya Lil-Jamiaytil Qawmiya Bangladesh, the constitution of Bangladesh recognizing the certificate of Dawra-e-Hadith (Taqmil) from Qawmi madrasas as equivalent to certificate of master's degree (Islamic Studies and Arabic). On October 8, 2018, the Hon'ble President Advocate Abdul Hamid signed the law recognizing the Qawmi certificate and gave final approval. Therefore, Six Qawmi Madrasas Boards regulate all Qawmi Dawra-e madrasas in Bangladesh. Under this committee, The Board of Al-Hayatul Ulya Lil-Jamiaytil Qawmiya Bangladesh gives postgraduate certification to the students who pass the hadith examination. With the recognition of the government of Bangladesh, the list of these madrasas is placed in the government's account (Karim, 2014).

5.2.2. Establishment of Islamic Arabic University

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was making a breakthrough in the restructuring of Madrasah education in independent Bangladesh. At that time, Bangabandhu made the maximum allocation for the promotion of religious education. He initiated a diversity of initiatives aimed at widening the path of higher education for Madrasa students. One of his is the establishment of an Islamic Arabic University. It was established in 2013 to modernize the madrasa education system. It is the first Arabic university-affiliated to Bangladesh (Amadershomoy, 2018).

At present, the university is offering Fazil (undergraduate equivalent) and Kamil (postgraduate equivalent) degrees in madrasa education. Islamic Arab University has been established for the overall supervision, including development and modernization of madrasah education, approval of Fazil and Kamil level curriculum, development of quality of education, training of madrasa teachers, supervision, and monitoring of teaching and conducting examinations. The new university is a historic milestone in the development of Islamic education. This is the first such specialized university in the country. The leaders of Bangladesh Jamiatul Modareshin met with the Prime Minister and proposed to set up the university on April 20, 2011. Later, the bill was prepared under the special instructions of the

Prime Minister. On 6 August 2012, the Cabinet Committee approved the policy of drafting Islamic Arabic University Law 2012. After that, The Islamic Arabic University was passed in the Parliament in 2013. Through this, the progress of Islamic Arabic University began in Bangladesh. However, it is an Islamic Arabic university with affiliating powers like National University (Karim, 2014).

The Kolkata Alia Madrasa was founded in 1780 by Warren Hastings, has a deep connection with Islamic Arabic University. The two organizations have many similarities, including the syllabus. Under this Islamic Arabic University, Honors Courses have been started in eighty Government Madrasas, and master's courses have been started in thirty madrasas (Firoja, 2013).

5.2.3. Expansion of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque and Enhancement of Beauty

On 29 January 2010, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the construction of the mosque to enhance and expand the Baitul Mukarram mosque. Construction of a 6-foot-tall minaret of the National Mosque, Baitul Mukarram, Complete air conditioning, Extension of land on the south side for 20,000 Muslims, Expansion of female prayer rooms for five thousand women to pray and Underground construction five hundred cars were done to enhance the beauty (Amadershomoy, 2018).

5.2.4. Establishment of 1010 Darul-Arkam Ibtedayi Madrasas & 560 Model Mosques and Islamic Cultural Center

Under the direction of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Islamic Foundation established one thousand ten Darul Arakam Ibtidari Madrasahs throughout the country in 2018 to develop the bilingual education system of non-communal, liberation war and genuine Islamic consciousness. As more than five thousand highly educated scholars have created employment opportunities, more than a million children are getting bilingual education through proficiency in Arabic (Daily Jugantor, 2018).

Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina undertook projects to set up 560 model mosques and Islamic cultural centers in each district and Upazila at the cost of Tk eight thousand seven hundred twenty-two crore. The duration of the project has been estimated from April 25 to December 2020. Establishing 560 model mosques all over the country is a great concept

invented by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which he is a significant event in the history of Bangladesh (Swadeshkhabar, 2018).

5.2.5. Providing Employment Opportunities for 81147 Scholars

There are sixty-four field officers under the mosque-based children and mass education program, Sixty-four Master Trainer, five hundred fifty-one Field Supervisor, five hundred fifty model caretaker, One thousand five hundred ordinary caretakers, the teacher of the Center for Mass Education for seventy-three thousand three hundred sixty-eight, One thousand ten Darul Arakan Ibtidai madrassas with five thousand and fifty teachers as well as A total of seventy-five thousand hundred forty-seven scholarly employment has been recruited (Amadershomoy, 2018).

5.2.6. Distribution of the Holy Qur'an for Almost Two Million

Mosque-based children and mass education activities under the project, During the year 2000, four lakh forty-three thousand three hundred eighty-seven copies, in 2016, five lakh seventeen thousand three hundred eighty-seven, in 2017, six lakh one thousand three hundred eighty-seven and in 2018, five lakh ninety-nine thousand six hundred eighty as well as total twenty-one lakh sixty-one thousand eight hundred forty-one copies were distributed among the children of the Holy Quran free of charge (Swadeshkhabar, 2018).

5.2.7. Establish A Four-Story Central Library Building of the IFA and Islamic Foundation Halal Diagnostic Laboratory

On November 7, Secretary-General of the OIC Ekmeleddin Mehmet İhsanoğlu inaugurated a four-story Islamic Foundation Central Library building on the southeast side of the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque. There are about one hundred seventy thousand books and booklets on various topics, including translations of Holy Quran Sharif, Tafsir Books, Hadiths, Islamic Encyclopedia of twenty-six volumes, Sirat Encyclopedia of fourteen volumes, Islamic literature, medical science, Islam and science, Islamic economics, Islamic philosophy, Islamic philosophy, Islamic languages, and Islamic literature, and Islamic law, dictionaries and encyclopedias and children's literature in different languages.

In the present world, the halal sector has emerged as an essential sector in the field of commerce in almost all countries. Bangladeshi product manufacturers are earning substantial foreign currency by exporting Halal food, consumer goods, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and

other products in different countries with Halal certificates in favor of their products. The Islamic Foundation is the only institution approved by the Government to issue Halal certificates. It is important to note that on August 4, 2017, the Secretary-General of the OIC H.E., Dr. Yusuf bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen inaugurates the Islamic Foundation Halal Diagnostic Laboratory (Swadeshkhabar, 2018).

5.2.8. Establishment of Imam-Muazzin Welfare Trust

Imams and muezzins worshiped in the mosque throughout their lives, but at the last age, they received nothing. Instead, they were always in danger of leaving their jobs. The government has taken various projects considering religious education as well as employment of the scholars. Because of these, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has set up an 'Imam-Muazzin Welfare Trust' with a grant of Tk 30 crore forty lakhs in 2015-2016. Currently, the fund of Welfare Trust has a deposit of 47 crores Tk. More than seventy thousand Imam-Muazzin members belong to the Trust (Farooq, 2019, p. 7).

5.2.9. Construction of Academic Buildings in a Thousand Madrasas

It was demanded the establishment of the first independent madrasa Madrasa Directorate at the madrasa teachers' conference on Manik Mia Avenue in the capital. Madrassa affiliates from all over the country, including Talabay Arabiya in Bangladesh, have demanded every government to establish a Directorate since the sixties. No government has responded to this call. Sheikh Hasina's government established the Directorate of Madrasah Education in 2015 after four decades following the recommendation of the National Education Policy 2010. Independent madrasah department was established to promote the education of the madrasas and to demand the knowledge of the scholars of the country. After the government's position on education policy became apparent, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took several steps for the development of madrasa education, including the establishment of the Madrasah Education Department. In addition to Islamic education in the madrasas, the Awami government has integrated modern science education, information technology education. Like general education, science and computer education have been introduced in madrasa education. The salaries and allowances of the teachers and employees of the MPOs are being provided through the Madrasa Education Department. Madrasa Education Department oversees monitoring the administrative and academic affairs of many madrassas, students, and teachers (Swadeshkhabar, 2018).

The present government has taken a Comprehensive program for the development of madrasa education. Under the program chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, on April 12, 2012, a project called 'Academic Building in Selected Private Madrasas' was approved for the construction of a thousand madrasas in the country. The cost is about Tk seven hundred thirty-eight crore. During the last financial year, construction of hundred twenty buildings has been completed in one thousand quasi-government madrasa academic buildings (Islamic Foundation, 2017).

5.2.10. Funding for the Development of Mosques and Religious Institutions

Under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, twenty-one thousand five hundred twenty mosques and religious institutions have been renovated and developed at the cost of Tk. Thirty-eight crores and seventy-three lakhs. Besides, a development project of Tk hundred fifty crores have been initiated for the development of Chittagong's historic Anderkilla Shahi Jame Mosque. The Jamiatul Falah Mosque complex, located on twelve acres of land in the center of Chittagong city, has been vested in favor of the Islamic Foundation. Moreover, Extensive programs have been undertaken in government management for the development of the mosque complex (Farooq, 2019, p. 7).

5.2.11. Provide Basic Training to Two Lakh and Twelve Thousand Imams

Since 2013, the Imam Training Academy Dhaka teaches reputable Khatib, Imams, and Mujahidin of the mosques through the four centers of Chittagong, Raj Shahi, Khulna, Barisal, Dinajpur, and Sylhet. Besides, the Imam Training Academy has trained Khatib, Imams, and Muezzin's about the War of Liberation and Bangladesh, family welfare, agriculture and forestry, livestock farming and fisheries, primary health care, and first aid, tree planting, science, information technology, environment, and social development, Bangladesh and world education, basic computer training, Introduction to the Islamic Foundation as well as training in practical and verbal matters. They are being created as earning citizens and contributing to the socio-economic development of the country. Basic training has been provided to 2,12,647 imams, Regular training of ninety-five thousand eighty-five, Refreshers training for thirty-four thousand three hundred thirty imams, Computer training was given to 3 thousand six hundred thirteen Imams through seven canters (Swadeshkhabar, 2018).

5.2.12. Distribution of Free Medical Services and Medicines through Islamic Mission and Construction of Islamic Mission Hospital

The Islamic Mission has been providing medical services to the poor and needy people in remote areas of the country since 1983. Allopathic treatment and free medicines have been provided to two crore twelve lakh ninety-three thousand four hundred and nine patients across the country in exchange for ten tickets through fifty centers of the Mission. Homeopathic treatment has been provided to sixty-six lakhs seventeenth thousand eight hundred seventy-three patients, including free medicines for exchange of Tk 5 tickets. Till now, forty-three crores sixty-two lakhs sixty thousand three hundred sixty-six have been spent on medical care an Islamic mission hospital has been built-in Kanundasakthi village of Rajapur Upazila of Jhalakathi in 2015 to provide free medical care and medicines to the sick and helpless patients. It is constructed with thirty-one beds on 2.7 acres at the cost of Tk 15 crore. Besides, 3.9 lakh acres of land has been constructed in the village of North Ramjanpur of Kalkini Upazila of Madaripur at the cost of Tk 5356.46 lakh. Moreover, a fifty Islamic Mission Hospital complex is under construction in the Sirta village of Mymensingh Sadar Upazila (Swadeshkhabar, 2018).

5.2.13. All Activities of The Islamic Foundation are converted to Digital and Pension Implementation

All the activities of the Islamic Foundation have been converted into digital through a project implemented at the cost of Tk. 10 crores. A digital archive is set up as well. With this project, a database of the mosques, madrasas, khankahs of the country along with information about the religious organizations, is underway. The project has set up two servers with the addition of three hundred and forty-eight computers, eighty laptops, and thirty-four multimedia projectors. Under the project, the imams of mosques of the country are provided with computer training and internet management training. To introduce retirement allowance on the Islamic Foundation, the Islamic Foundation Employee Regulations were formulated in 2014 (Farooq, 2019, p. 7). As a result, the long-standing demand of the Islamic Foundation officials and staff have been fulfilled.

5.2.14. Digitalization of the Qur'anic Website in Bangladesh

The Holy Qur'an is a fulfilling life provision for the entire human race. It is a message of human rights, justice, equality, peace, brotherhood, and interfaith harmony. The Holy Quran

Sharif has been digitalized at the expense of Tk. 74.10 million through the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the personal interest and direction of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2012 also inaugurated the Holy Qur'an's website 'Al-Quran: Digital' on August 10 of that year. The Quran has been revealed in Arabic. Many people in Bangladesh cannot read Arabic; many learn to read the Holy Quran in Arabic, but they do not understand the meaning. Along with Arabic, it is easy to understand and listen if there is a Quranic reading system, Pronunciation, and translation in Bangla and English. The website of the Quran in Bangladesh has been digitized primarily for this purpose (Firoja, 2013). It allows anyone from any part of the world to download, read and recite the Holy Quran along with transliteration, translation, and pronunciation in Arabic, Bangla and English through a variety of websites, internet, and information technology.

5.2.15. Re-Introduction of the Mosque and Maktab-Based Education

During the rule of Muslim rulers in India, education, and religion were inseparably involved. According to UNESCO's Studies on Compulsory Education, published in 1954, "Education and religion were considered very close during the Muslim rule." During that time, Muslim children were trained in the teaching of the Holy Quran. According to historian AR Mallick, "Reviewing the history of the Muslims of Bengal shows that when a child was four years four months and four days, his education began. Through a special ceremony, some verses of the Holy Quran were recited to the child. The children used to repeat it. This was an essential custom of every Muslim family (Mallic, p. 149). Referring to the contribution of Muslim rulers in spreading madrasa education, Fazlur Rahman mentioned, According to W Adam, during that time, it was straightforward to get an education without pay. At that time, every mosque was the central attraction of the Muslim people. Moreover, the madrasa was associated with the mosque (The Bengali Muslim and English Education, 2011, p. 140).

However, this mosque-based education continued to disappear with inevitable consequences in the changing social order. There was a kind of suspicion among the devout Muslims about it. Hopefully, the Awami League government has revived this mosque-based doctrine. During the last ten years, under the mosque-based Children and Mass Education Program project, pre-primary and moral education has been provided to forty-six lakh and eighty thousand children through twenty-six thousand pre-primary education centers. The Holy Quran has been taught to thirty-one lakh and twenty-nine thousand children through seventeen thousand and four hundred Quran centers. Moreover, literacy and religious

education have been provided to one lakh and sixty-nine thousand older people through seven hundred and sixty-eight adult education centers. (ICLDS, 2017).

5.2.16. The Modernization of Hajj Management and the Record Number of Pilgrims Performing Hajj

Under the personal guidance of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, a five-year national Hajj policy has been formulated to manage Hajj. Besides, the database of Hajj pilgrims, the online visa, the establishment of 'Bangladesh Plaza' at Jeddah Hajj Terminal, and the facilities for Ashkona Hajcamp have been increased. Since 2009, the number of pilgrims has increased by almost three steps as the quality of service and the return to discipline in Haj management. Under the personal guidance of Sheikh Hasina, a five-year national policy was formulated in 2010. Four lifts have been set up at Hajkamp's dormitory in Ashkona at twenty million TK. The plaza was rented at Jeddah Hajj Terminal, considering the convenience of pilgrims in 2011. For this, Bangladesh became the first in South Asia under the management of Hajj in 2010-2011 (Swadeshkhabar, 2018).

5.2.17. Raising Public Awareness of Solving Terrorism and Social Problems through the Scholars

Imam conference, Dawati Mahfil, Khatib Conference, Muballig Training, Mass Teacher Training, Meeting, Seminar, and Opinion Meeting has been organized to raise public awareness on the issues of militancy, terrorism, and social issues through the scholars of Ulema, Pir-Mashaykh, Khatib-Imams. Besides, books are distributed, and documentaries are displayed. Half a million copies of books on terrorism and social awareness are distributed free among the imam, religious person, and social leaders of mosques across the country (Firoja, 2013).

6. Hinduism and the Awami League

Approximately ten percent of the population in Bangladesh are Hindus. Some sources confirm that Hindus have traditionally supported the Awami League because of their more secular political vision. (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2005). The nationalism mentioned in the four principles of the constitution of Bangladesh was based on every religion, caste. They will take every nation's rights. It was also said that the father of the nation, Bangabandhu. Furthermore, that is why all religions in Bangladesh can work together. The Awami League

government has taken measures to implement such mosque-based education where religious and pre-primary education is provided. At the same time, the government has taken steps to construct the temple. (Daily Ittefaq, 2019). The temple-based children and mass education programs have been started in the temples of every Upazila under the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust. According to the report of 2019, ninety-one thousand and two hundred fifty people are being taught pre-primary, primary, aged, and religious texts through 6450 temple-based educational centers across the country. The government has made the same law for Hindus, like the 'Heba Act' regarding the donation of the Muslim community. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on this law that the government had made the law so that members of the Hindu community can transfer wealth to the nearest people without paying any taxes (Tipu, 2016).

In the last five years, the government has trained twenty-five thousand five hundred and eighty-one Hindu Pandits and three thousand and forty-three officers and employees to enhance the skills of Hindus across the country. The government has enacted the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust Act, the Christian Religious Welfare Trust Act, and the Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust Act. As a result, this trust is being used for the welfare of the helpless, weak and afflicted people of Hindu people (Tdnbangla, 2019).

The government has also legislated for Hindu women to get property in inheritance; in this case, it has been done for all religions. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government is also making separate donations from the Prime Minister's Welfare Fund to celebrate religious festivals of all religions, including Hindu Puja. Therefore, Dhakeswari Temple is the largest temple in Bangladesh. For six decades, the Hindus have sought various assistance from the government to build the temple. Because of that, Sheikh Hasina visited Dhaka's Dhakeswari Temple on 15 October 2018. In line with their demands, the government donated 1, 5 bighas of land for the construction of the largest temple. In addition to the temple, he declared a land worth Tk 1 crore as donate to the Hindus (Tdnbangla, 2018).

7. Christianity and the Awami League

There is about 0.3 percent of Bangladesh's population is Christians. Bengali Christians are recognized as an exemplary minority community in South Asia and are generally high profile. Their socio-economic status is excellent. The number of followers of Christianity in Bangladesh is not very high. Even then, in Christian-populated areas, ordinary families celebrate the event in a very peaceful way. The administration and law enforcement agencies

use various methods to ensure the celebration of happiness. Asked how the majority of Muslims or others are responding to such a celebration or celebration of Christians in the area, Father Maxwell Alexander Thomas said that in Bangladesh, people of all religions are like one family. He also said that the Pope had recently visited Bangladesh, which was also reflected in the festival (Hasnat, BBC, 2017). There are Catholic churches in Dhaka, Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Khulna, Chittagong, and Rajshahi. Christian missionaries established many schools, hospitals in Bangladesh. For this, they received help and support from the Bangladeshi government.

7.1. Establishment of the Christian Religious Welfare Trust

In 1983, the Christian Religious Welfare Trust Ordinance was issued. Twenty-six years after that, the Awami League government established the much-anticipated Christian Religious Welfare Trust on fifth November 2009. The government has established an office for the Trust from November 2011 at Tezkunipara, Tejgaon, in Dhaka. Five staff have been appointed temporarily to manage the activities of this trust. The government allocated Tk five crore in favor of trust on August 29, 2011. The money-endowment fund has been kept as a permanent deposit to the bank. The activities of the Trust are being run out of interest on a fixed deposit. This law has been called the Christian Religious Welfare Trust Act of 2018 (Bangladesh Gazette, 2018, p.2).

The aims and objectives of the Christian Religious Welfare Trust, 2018 will be able to maintain religious Churches and provide financial support to the administration, take necessary steps to protect the sanctity of the Church, as well as the functions of the trust, will be for the religious welfare of the Christian faith (Bangladesh Gazette, 2018).

8. Buddhism and the Awami League

Buddhism has a huge role to play in the evolution of life, traditions, and culture of Bengal. Buddhism is the third most prevalent religion in Bangladesh, and Therabism is prevalent among the Buddhists in this country. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information and Statistics, about 0.7 percent of Bangladesh's population is Buddhist at present. About sixty-five percent of the Buddhists live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where Chakma, Marma, and Tanchongara also lives. Along with Chittagong, thirty-five percent of the native Bengali Barua lives. Buddhists also live in different areas of Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka, Barguna, and Patuakhali (Tipu, 2016).

8.1. Establishment of the Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust

The Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust is an autonomous state that is responsible for the welfare of the Buddhist community in Bangladesh. Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust was established in 1984. It was placed under the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The trust received 30 million takas from the Awami government for its 2012 budget. Its vision is to promote the religious welfare of the Buddhist community. The government had allocated a fixed deposit of Tk 1 crore in 1984. The activities of the Trust started from the dividends received from the said funds. From the beginning till 2008, the permanent deposit was Tk 3 crore. The Awami League government allocated a fixed deposit fund of Tk four crore from 2009 to 2015 years. As a result, there has been a total of Tk 7 crore in fixed deposit funds. (Bangladesh Gazette, 2018). This trust aims to assist the Buddhist religious community in its overall welfare, assist in the reform, development, and development of Buddhist religions, celebrate various religious festivals and take necessary actions to fulfill this ordinance, including the development of Buddhist religious education and culture (Amir, 2013).

At the national level, the Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust has been playing an essential role as a bridge connecting Buddhists with the government. Since the ruling Awami League took power, various religious festivals of the Buddhist, the community have been celebrating with proper national dignity and religious sentiment. On "Buddhist Purnima," the main religious festival of the Buddhist community, the great President and Prime Minister of Bangladesh exchanged greetings with the leaders and people of the Buddhist community (Bangladesh Gazette, 2018).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina makes a unique contribution each year from the Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust's relief and welfare fund on the occasion of Buddha Purnima. The Awami League government has given a special grant of Tk 20.47 million from the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund from 2008 AD to 2016 AD. To reach the benefits of information technology, the Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust has launched its web site (www.brwt.gov.bd) to share digital information through the implementation of the current government's "Vision-2021" (Bangladesh Gazette, 2018).

The pagoda-based pre-primary education project is being implemented to educate Buddhist children from the financial year 2014-2015 and to make them religious and morally competent citizens. There are a thousand educational centers in Chittagong, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar districts. In these education centers, two thousand

children are playing a significant role in promoting education by studying regularly. The implementation of this project has created employment opportunities for hundreds of Buddhist religious women and men (Akbar, 2013).

9. Small Ethnic Groups and the Awami League

The Awami League government signed the historic Chittagong Hill Tracts peace agreement on December 2, 1997, ending the bloody war of twenty-two years among remote mountainous villages. This agreement brought peace to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. After the Awami League government took power in 2009, the implementation of the unconstitutional clauses of the peace treaty and the development of the people of all levels, including the small ethnic communities in the Hill, were implemented. Through the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution, the government also gave constitutional recognition to the people of the small ethnic communities in the Hill. This agreement is considered as a significant milestone in maintaining the harmony of the hill-Bengalis.

Conclusion

For hundreds of centuries, people of different ethnicities, especially Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians, have been living peacefully in peace and harmony together. In continuation of that, responding to the call of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971, the people of all communities including Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians, united and participated in the great liberation war, gave a brilliant example of communal harmony. Bangabandhu founded secular Bangladesh by adding the principles of secularism to the constitution of Bangladesh. Therefore, Bangabandhu has given equal rights to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, and religion through the constitution of Bangladesh. For this, the contribution of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in establishing communal harmony will be written in the history of Bangladesh forever. Bangabandhu's three-and-a-half-year rule and the remarkable contribution of the Awami League government in three terms led by Bangabandhu's daughter prime minister Sheikh Hasina in establishing religious liberalism is a single example in the contemporary world. However, the present Awami League government under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina has been working relentlessly to maintain cordial harmony between all religions by prioritizing the principle of religion, whatever the state, everyone. The Awami League government has taken various active steps in the service and upbringing of other religions, including Islam.

The government has already been praised for its various initiatives for the development of religious structures, including mosques, temples, pagodas, and churches in various parts of the country. For that reason, in this country, people from Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist and Christian communities have been performing their religious activities peacefully from the place of association.

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