

Transformation of Bangladesh Society: The Role of Religion

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Abstract : Context: The role of religion in the transformation of Bangladesh society has been significant since 1975. There has been a rise in religious presence, particularly Islam, in both private and public spheres supported by the state apparatuses. In 2009, a 'secular' political party came into power for the second time since independence and initiated the modernization of religious education systems. This research focuses on the transformation observed among the educated middle class who now prefer their children to attend modern, English medium madrasas that offer both religion-based and secular education. Research Aim: This research aims to investigate two main questions: a) what motivates the educated middle class to send their children to madrasa education? b) To what extent can it be argued that Bangladeshi society is transforming from its secular nature to being more religious? Methodology: The research applies a combination of primary and secondary methods. Case studies serve as the primary method, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the motivations of the educated middle class. The secondary method involves analyzing published news articles, op-eds, and websites related to madrasa education, as well as studying the reading syllabus of Aliya and Qwami madrasas in Bangladesh. Findings: Preliminary findings indicate that the educated middle class chooses madrasa education for reasons such as remembering and praying for their departed relatives, keeping their children away from substance abuse, fostering moral and ethical values, and instilling respect for seniors and relatives. The research also reveals that religious education is believed to help children remain morally correct according to the Quran and Hadith. Additionally, the establishment of madrasas in Bangladesh is attributed to economic factors, with demand and supply mechanisms playing a significant role. Furthermore, the findings suggest that government-run primary education institutions in rural areas face more challenges in enrollment compared to religious educational institutions like madrasas. Theoretical Importance: This research contributes to the understanding of societal transformation and the role of religion in this process. By examining the case of Bangladesh, it provides insights into how religion influences education choices and societal values. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures: Data for this research is collected through case studies, including interviews and observations of educated middle-class families who send their children to madrasas. In addition, analysis is conducted on relevant published materials such as news articles, op-eds, and websites. The reading syllabus of Aliya and Qwami madrasas is also analyzed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the education system. Questions Addressed: The research addresses two questions: a) what motivates the educated middle class to choose madrasa education for their children? b) To what extent can it be argued that Bangladeshi society is transforming from its secular nature to being more religious? Conclusion: The preliminary findings of this research highlight the motivations of the educated middle class in opting for madrasa education, including the desire to maintain religious traditions, promote moral values, and provide a strong foundation for their children. It also suggests that Bangladeshi society is experiencing a transformation towards a more religious orientation. This research contributes to the understanding of societal changes and the role of religion within Bangladesh, shedding light on the complex dynamics between religion and education.

Keywords : madrasa education, transformation, Bangladesh, religion and society, education

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