

Bangladesh was born in 1971 premised on a secular and democratic ethos as paragraph 2 of the preamble of the first constitution of Bangladesh which was adopted on November 4, 1972 accepted 'nationalism', 'socialism', 'democracy' and secularism as state principles. But "soon after its birth, the political history and politics of Bangladesh found itself within the twists and turns of majoritarian politics. Through the Eighth Amendment to the constitution on 7 June 1988, Islam was declared as the state religion of Bangladesh (Article 2 Clause A) with the provision that other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony. Since then the minority community (**largely Hindus**) face discrimination and continuous atrocities and violence as reported by many scholars and world bodies. It is also documented that the political process and the political parties were a major source of discrimination against minorities. Hindus are being marginalized in Bangladesh. The statistics showed the declining of Hindu minority gradually from 1947 to 2011 in Bangladesh. According to Bureau of Statistic. But our perception this statistic is not ok. Above all I am showing it----

Census Year	Muslim	Hindu
1901	66.1	33.0
1911	67.2	31.5
1921	68.1	30.6
1931	69.5	29.4
1941	70.3	28.0
1951	76.9	22.0
1961	80.4	18.5
1974	85.4	13.5
1981	86.7	12.1
1991	88.3	10.5
2001	89.6	09.3
2011	90.0	08.5

Hinduism is the second largest religious affiliation in Bangladesh, covering more than 9% of the population, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics for 2011 Bangladesh census. In terms of population, Bangladesh is the third largest Hindu state in the world after India and Nepal.

Ever since the birth of Bangladesh, the Hindu population grew only marginally and their relative share in the total population declined considerably. According to the 2001 census, the size of Hindu population was 11.6 million which means since the past 27 years only, 1.7 million population was added yielding a 0.6% annual average growth rate. Therefore, the share of Hindu population to the country's total population declined from 13.5% to 9.2% during the same period and by 1.79% since 1991, whilst the relative composition of Christians and Buddhist population did not change.

Further, the Hindu population declined to 8.2 percent in the country with annual growth rate coming down to 0.05 percent between 2001-2011 and it is projected that in 2051 the share of Hindu population will decline to 3.7 percent.

### **History of Violence against Hindus:**

A history of bloodshed against Hindus prevailed even before independence of India and the violence against Hindus was a common phenomenon in today's Bangladesh because Hindus were historically religious minority. Since 1947 the violence against Hindus in then Pakistan and now in Bangladesh is a continuous phenomenon and followed religiously by the majority of Muslims irrespective of political parties.

The innumerable incidence of atrocities against Hindus like killing, rape, slaughter, forcible annexation of properties, burning of houses, abduction and conversion to Muslim

are taking place and in considerable number of cases the violators are the cadres of various political parties irrespective of whether they are ruling or are in opposition. According to an estimation, 475 persons belonging to the minority community are migrating from Bangladesh daily (Azad, Executive Director, Amity for Peace, Bangladesh).

After the 1947 genocide, Hindus were persecuted the most in 1971 due to which large scale migration of Hindus to India took place. According to estimates, at the time of Bangladesh Liberation War, almost 3,000,000 Hindus were butchered in one of the biggest genocides of the century. An article in 'Time' magazine dated 2 August 1971, stated "The Hindus, who account for three-fourths of the refugees and a majority of the dead, have borne the brunt of the Muslim military hatred (Wiki, 2014). According to BBC (9 March 2013) "Official estimates say more than three million were killed and tens of thousands of women raped during the Bangladesh war of independence. The aim of the violence, Hindu leaders allege, is to grab land and other property. As a result, they say, many Hindus are fleeing to India to escape harassment, intimidation and violence (BBC, 9 March, 2013).

### **Attack/Violence on hindu minority in recent years:**

"We left our house in 1971 as the Pakistan army and Razakars set fire to our village. And we are passing through the same ordeal in 2014," lamented Bishwajit Sarkar of Malopara village in Abhaynagar, Jessore (The Daily Star, January 2, 2014).

Soon after the voting ended in Bangladesh, the Hindus had to face the ire of the activist of Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-Shibir. Hindu houses have been looted, vandalized and burned in several places like Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, Lalmonirhat, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Jessore (The Daily Star, January 7 2014).

According to the New Age, “Miscreants attacked Hindu localities, temples and business establishments in Jessore, Satkhira, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Chittagong, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Dinajpur, Netrakona and some other districts after the national elections (New Age, January 11, 2014)”.

In Noakhali District several Hindu homes and temples came under the attack of the Islamists. They attacked the Hindus in nearby Tongipar and Aladinagar villages. They vandalized eight Hindu households and looted all the valuables including money and jewellery. The temple of Bhuiyan house in Tongipar village was vandalized. Six people were injured in the attacks (February 2013).

On 18 March, 2013 more than 150 armed assailants attacked and vandalised the Pabla Sarbajanin Kalibari Temple in Khulna city’s Banikpara around 9:30pm. After blasting incendiaries, they ransacked the houses and shops of Hindus in the area.

In Lakshmipur District, five Hindu-owned jewellery shops were looted and one Hindu temple attacked and looted in Chandraganj. On 28 February, 2013 in the afternoon Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir activists attacked the Hindus in Chittagong District. In Banskhali Upazila, the attackers set fire to Hindus houses in Dakshin Jaldi area of Jaldi Union. 20 houses were gutted. 16 Hindus were injured in the arson, two of the died. A 65-year-old Hindu was killed in the attacks. On early morning of 5 March at around 2-30 a.m., the Sarbajaneen Magadeshwari Mandir at East Rupkania of Satkania Upazila was torched. At around 3:30am the Khetrapal Temple was burned to ashes and money from donation box was looted.

On 23 February 2014, The Daily Star, a national English newspaper, published a summary report submitted by the Police authority to the country's High Court. According to this

report, around 160 incidents of attacks and atrocities on Hindus took place in 21 districts after the January 5 parliamentary polls causing loss of Hindu properties worth Tk. 4 million. Such atrocities included injuring Hindu people, damaging their houses, temples and business establishments and setting them on fire, and looting valuables causing a loss of around Tk. 40 lakh in 70 of those attacks.

According to Dhaka Tribune, the violence against Hindus in these areas erupted due to the refusal by Hindus to boycott the election imposed by Jamaat-Shibir activists of Prembag, Chanpadanga, Bahirghat, Beledanga and some adjacent areas. The mayhem continued for two-hour by exploding 250 bombs, vandalization of one hundred houses etc. “The Jamaat-Shibir men resorted to their newly adopted technique of inciting their followers by lies. Around 4 pm, they made phone calls to their activists and students of the local madrasa, telling them that five of their activists had been killed in a clash with Malopara villagers. Jamaat-Shibir activists poured in from nearby villages – Baliadanga, Jagannathpur, Deyapara, Joldanga, Basundia, Dhakuria and Bangram – and attacked Malopara (Dhaka Tribune, January 7, 2014)”.

According to reports, almost five hundred Hindu families of Gopalpur village were affected in these classes and became homeless. Besides this, at least 350 houses and 50 shops of five villages, including Pritampara, Sahapara, Profullahpara, Telipara, Madhabpara and Ajaypara of Kornai village were damaged, set ablaze and looted (The Daily Star, January 7, 2014). The Hindus were also attacked and looted in the strongholds of Jamaat-Shibir and Jamaat-BNP like Satkania, Loahagara and Banskhali upazilas Kaunia upazila of Rangpur and Nandigram upazila in Bogra (The Daily Star, January 7 2014). According to Dhaka Tribune (January 7, 2014) “Even homestead trees – coconut

and banana – were burnt or chopped down and cowsheds were burnt, too. Idols in the houses were vandalised. Everything else was looted”.

On 29 January 2014, 20 Hindu families of Satkhira district got threat letters to leave Bangladesh where it has been written that “time has come to leave your homes immediately, and this time you have been told nicely. But the next time there will not be any niceities. (Dhaka Tribune Correspondent, January 29, 2014; Satkhira Correspondent, January 29, 2014 published in Hindu Existence, January 29, 2014)”. According to BD News 24.com (January 10, 2014), two Hindu housewives were sexually abused in Manirampur Upazila in Jessore in the post-election violence against the minority community. They held the men hostage and sexually abused the two housewives. The sexual abuse and rape against Hindu women is also reported by International Business Times (February 19, 2014).

A large number of Hindu temples are also burnt, vandalized and looted frequently. According to reports, the Kali temple at Narayanpur village under Ramganj in Lakshmipur, Satdoha Langta Babar Ashram and Shri Radha-Gobinda Mandir were either looted or torched (New Age, January 11, 2014; The Hindu, January 8, 2014). Besides these, the Kali temple at Battola and Kachubunia and the Durga temple of Ikri Union have also been attacked. The daily Ittefaq reported that “The members of the Hindu community are living in stark fear. Two people were killed in Gaibandha and Joypurhat (January 9, 2014)”. But according to International Business Times (February 19, 2014), “At least two dozen people were killed” in the violence. According to Ittefaq, The Hindu houses were set on fire in the Boalia village of Sukash union, Kushumba union of Joypurhat, Kuptola union of Gaibandha Lalmonirhat and Senpara of Shafinagar, Satkania, Loahagara and Banskhali upazilas and many of the Hindus are injured due to the violence against them.

The year 2013 also witnessed a large scale and widespread violence against Hindus in Bangladesh. All forms of violence triggered against minority Hindus on 28 February 2013, on behalf of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir soon after the death sentence given to Hossain Sayeedi, the Vice President of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the International Crime Tribunal and the government of Bangladesh held Jamaat-e-Islami for the violence (Wiki, 2013). “In some cases allegedly aided by Bangladesh National Party supporters, struck terror in the hearts of Hindus (News Bharati, March 03, 2013)”. Expressing concern over the violence, the US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan Mozena said “The United States is sad about the loss of lives and property and concerned about the attacks on Hindu temples and homes (The Daily Star, March 12, 2013; clickittefaq, March 11, 2013)”. Even after these wide spread violence, the attack against Hindus continued for the whole year. On November 3 2013, Bonogram bazaar in Santhia upazila, about 40 kilometres from Pabna sadar, the Hindus were attacked. The attack was allegedly launched by the main opposition party, BNP, and its crucial ally, Bangladesh Jammata-e Islami, the largest Islamist political party (atstoneinstitute, November 21, 2013). According to Hindu community leaders, more than 50 Hindu temples and more than 1,500 Hindu homes were destroyed in 20 districts in 2013 alone.

### **Cause of attack/Violence on hindu minoroty:**

The larger objective of these kinds of violence and attack is to grab the land of Hindus. According to Jyotrimoy Barua, a Supreme Court lawyer in the capital Dhaka, “When we say it’s just political, it legitimizes the violence, Most of the people’s houses they are burning are poor. If you burn their house, they will leave the country, and you get their land.” “The Vested Property Act remained in force until 2001, allowing the government to

expropriate “enemy” (in practice, Hindu) lands. Over the course of its existence, the government seized approximately 2.6 million acres of land, affecting almost all Hindus in the country (IRFR, 2012)”. Once the land is acquired, the influential and political people used to grab those lands and most of the Hindu families in Bangladesh is affected by this law. “Many Hindus continued efforts to recover land lost under the act. The Vested Properties Return (Amendment) Bill of 2011 obligates the government to publish lists of returnable vested property through gazette notification within 120 days. Subsequently, Hindu leaders submitted applications to reclaim previously seized vested property and requested an extension to prepare further applications. The Vested Property Return (Second Amendment) Act of 2012, passed on September 18, gives an additional 180 days for interested parties to submit applications for adjudication (IRFR, 2012)” but in practical these return act has not been enforced properly. According to Barkat et al (2008), in most of the cases, the beneficiary of these vested properties are the influential political people of different areas across political parties.

According to Jyotrimoy Barua “The violence isn’t just perpetrated by Jamat-e-Islami. In other provinces, opportunistic leaders have been accused of using divisive communal sentiments to enrich themselves. “In some constituencies, all the parties are tussling from the same group of voters — if anyone loses, he blames the Hindus (Time, January 14, 2014)”.

### **Forcefully grabbing the land of Hindu minority in Bangladesh:**

It has been a long period of 43 years. Yet Hindus in Bangladesh remain vulnerable to attacks by anti-liberation forces. Hundreds of Hindu families who fled their homes following post-poll violence in different districts are scared to return as the administration

could not ensure their security. Villagers also reported that some people of BNP and Jamaat-Shibir also try to grabbing the land of hindu minority of the locality.

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council general secretary Rana Dashgupta said villagers from Goyalpara and Babupara villages at Chandipur union under Parbotipur upazila in Dinajpur district had come to them seeking help last year. The villagers alleged that 55 families, of which members of 40 families were Khayitro, were living and cultivating 25.78 acres of land at Chandipur Mouza inherited from their ancestors. Since 2002, local leader Emdadul Islam Chowdhury and his followers were trying to grab the land forcefully by filing false cases, they said. The villagers also alleged Emdadul was trying to grab the land with backing of local lawmaker and primary and mass education minister Mostafizur Rahman. The villagers alleged that time to time Emdadul with his men tried to take crops from their land, attacked the village women and steal cows. Ain O Salish Kendra executive director Sultana Kamal said the villagers were not able to live their daily life, including sending their children to schools and cultivating land, due to harassment. When they protest they are harassed and cases are filed against them.

Allegations have been raised against a ruling party leader at Golachipa Thana of Patuakhali district of occupying lands of minority families and assaulting the family members. The victims informed that they could not file case at the police station as the ruling party leaders had maintained 'good terms' with the police (Daily Dinkal, July 11, 2012).

September 11, 2012 on Saturday evening, the incident occurred at Baptist Mission Road. Khan Sons, a leading industrial group of the country, hoisted new territorial wall on the Church grounds. Influential Awami League leader and Commissioner of the area Shafiqul Alam Gulzar and hundreds of ruling party men helped the industrial group's employees, to

complete the occupation (Daily Jugantor, September 10, 2012; and Daily Prothom Alo, September 11, 2012)

A local Awami League leader Chunnu Mia at Pabna had forcefully occupied land of a Sanjay Biswas. Sanjay Biswas is a Christian (Kaler Kantha, July 30, 2012)

In a press conference organized by ALRD on 8 January 2016 in Dhaka, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) presented the results of an investigation conducted in October 2015 on the allegations of land grabbing by the lawmakers in Thakurgaon District. General Secretary of the Vested Property Act Protection Movement Advocate Subrata Chowdhury said that the local ruling MP has already grabbed a portion of land of minorities in Thakurgaon's Baliadangi upazila along the Indian border. He added that the Thakurgaon-2 MP and his family have set up a 106-acre tea garden, 'Ranbag Islami Tea Estate Company,' in the border of the upazila where the 35-acre lands of some 10 Hindu families are located. Despite the local MP's denial of the accusations, rights advocates demanded a judicial probe to the allegation. They urged the authorities to take actions against the people involved in the land grabbing and violence.

Subroto Chowdhury, general secretary of Vested Property Act Resistance Movement, presented the summary of their report at the programme. He alleged that the police and locals had remained silent during the attack in Baliadangi area last year. He said around 8-10 people were injured in the attack. Later Akuram moved to India with his family members. Subroto claimed that the MP and his followers made the attack to evict the local Hindus with an intent to use their land for the newly-established Ranabagh Islam Tea Garden.

Sree Jotirmory Saha belongs to a Hindu community that has lived in Birgonj, Dinajpur for hundreds of years. On his return from Russia, where he had gone for work, he found that his land had been seized. Where his house once stood, local Muslims built a mosque.

Awami League MP Dabirul Islam has been accused of grabbing land belonging to some Hindu families at Thakurgaon's Baliadangi Upazila bordering India. Locals said that when they try to protests are harassed by the MP's men.

In recent years, Bangladesh's minorities, especially Hindus and Christians, have become the target of threats and attacks from land grabbers.

### **Forcefully conversion of Hindu minority to Muslim:**

More than two and half months elapsed while police failed to rescue the Minority Hindu School girl – Ms. Shilpi Rani Das (15 yr 9 m) and the kidnapper – a Muslim School Teacher – Dost Mohammad Khan was not suspended from school at Barhatta Pilot Girls High School of Netrokona District nor arrested by the Police of Bangladesh (May 23, 2015 ). Police were neglected to rescue the girl nor did the Officer-in-Charge of the respective police station take any initiative to arrest the kidnapper (married person with two children).

In another case, Ms.Shymoli Rani Dey (16) adolescent Hindu girl was abducted on 17.04.2015 from Hajepur-Tilagaon UP within Kulaura Upazila of Moulvibazar District by 1) Rubel Meah (25) son of Barik Meah, 2) Zaglu Meah (23) son of Rois Meah 3) Barik Meah (50) and 4) Begum Bibi (45) wife of Rois Meah. Shymoli Rani was forcefully converted to Islam by swearing affidavit on 19.04.2015 and the actual name of the girl was changed to “SABINA AKHTAR”.

The same type abduction, forceful conversion and marriage of Hindu girl by Muslim perpetrators were found the case of Ms Kona Rani Bepari D/O Shri Bikash Chandra Bepari, residents of Village: Shingra Bunia, p.s. Patharghata, District- Barguna,

Bangladesh. Kona Rani (18yrs), a Hindu adolescent College girl was abducted for forceful conversion to Islam on 14.03.2015 from Patharghata – Barguna District and she been rescued by Bangladesh Minority Watch from the Court Custody on 29.04.15.

Though the international media had a little watch upon the gross humiliation of Minority Hindu and other non-Muslims in Bangladesh including dreadful violations upon the minority girls and women in Bangladesh, the Hindu Existence tries a little caring for it. Abduction to forceful conversion, molestation to rape, forceful marriage to murder all these are looming large to the frightened minorities of Bangladesh, as ruling party (Awami League) or the opposition (BNP) are faithful to Islam not to Humanity.

Another outrage upon Hindus in Bangladesh has come to light. Ms. Eti Rani Acharjee (15), a minority Hindu schoolgirl has been kidnapped for forceful conversion to Islam on 23.08.2014 from Kaiyempur – Kasba Upazila of Brahmanbaria district. The Hindu girl, Ms. Eti Rani Acharjee, daughter of Moni Acharjee (45) and Shova Rani Acharjee (39), who is a minor girl of only 14 years 9 months of age, was abducted on 23rd August 2014 at about 3 p.m. and reportedly forcibly converted to Islam.

### **Vested property law harassment:**

For five decades now, the law has been used as an effective, abusive tool to relieve minority communities of their properties.

Hindus, who still make up about nine percent of country's 160 million people, have been the primary target of the law.

An estimated 1.2 million Hindu families have been directly affected by the law and the estimated loss of properties under it is worth US\$55 billion, according a national study titled "Deprivation of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh: Living with Vested Property", by three development and rights groups.

“The VP law created a permanent vicious circle that led to a constant, forcible mass exodus of Hindus to India, breakdown of Hindu families, socio-economic and political

repression, destruction of communal harmony and the rise of religious fundamentalism and extreme poverty”, said Abul Barkat, an economist and chief researcher of the study, still the only detailed research ever done on the of adverse impacts of the black law.

With departure of the British from Indian subcontinent, the zamindar system, used by the British to regulate land lease and taxation, was abolished under the East Pakistan Acquisition and Tenancy Act.

“Before 1947, most of the zaminders were Hindu and their lands and properties were confiscated by the state with the law. Industries, factories and tea estates owned by Hindu businessman were snatched away. The middle class and lower-class Hindus, those who were spared, came under attack when the EPA was introduced,” said Dasgupta.

Researchers believe the law has contributed to the massive diminution of the Hindu population in what is now Bangladesh.

“Before and after 1947, tens of thousands of Hindus fled to India to escape political and sectarian violence. Even in the following decade, many fled over safety and security concerns. After 1965 and 1971, much of the large-scale Hindu migration, about 70 to 80 percent resulted from the abuse of the EP or VP law,” Shamsul Huda, executive director of the Dhaka-based Association for Land Development and Reform, told ucanews.com.

“The EP or VP has created an atmosphere of social insecurity for Hindus, especially torture and abuse of Hindu women for properties made their lives extremely troublesome,” he added. “Sometimes, it seemed like an ordinary act of terrorism and sexual assault when Hindu people had their homes attacked or their girls raped, but it was a systematic strategy to instill a sense of insecurity among them, to force them to leave their homes and migrate to India.”

During 1971, Hindus accounted for 50 percent of Faridpur’s population, and today, it stands at 20 percent, said Bhubotosh Basu Roy, 62, a local Hindu leader, who is also a victim of the VP law.

**Hindu properties continue to be' vested'- a recent observation:**

Nearly two lakh Hindus have lost 22 lakh acres of their land and houses during the last six years, a Dhaka University Professor Abul Barkat says. At the current market price, the value of the 22 lakh acres of land (one acre roughly equals three bighas) that the Hindu families were displaced from is Tk 2,52,000 crore, which is more than half of the country's gross domestic product, he says. Some 12 lakh or 44 per cent of the 27 lakh Hindu households in the country were affected by the Enemy Property Act 1965 and its post-independence version, the Vested Property Act 1974. Prof. Barkat points out that 53 per cent of the family displacement and 74 per cent of the land grabbing occurred before the country's independence in 1971 .

About 1.2 million households and 6 million people belonging to the Hindu community have been directly and severely affected by the Enemy/Vested Property Act. The community has lost 2.6 million acres of its own land in addition to other moveable and immovable property. The approximate money value of such loss (US \$ 55 billion) would be equivalent to 75 per cent of the GDP of Bangladesh (at 2007 prices). The EPA/Vested Property Act has compelled Hindus to break family ties. Stress and strain, mental agony and a fuelling of religious fundamentalism have been the offshoot. The deprivation led to the growth of a communal mindset in what had been a historical secular climate and context.