The Impact of *Hajj* on The Society of Bangladesh

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**Abstract**

Millions of Muslims from around the world including Bangladesh pour perform *Hajj* every year. Being the largest gathering of the Muslims, the *Hajj* has got immense socio-economic and cultural impacts on every Muslim society as well as Bangladesh. *Hajj* develops a unique symbol of unity, equality, universality, co-existence, brotherhood, indiscrimination, peace and tolerance, through performing common rituals, among the individuals, societies and nations belonging to different races, castes, ethnicities, colors, and languages, which create differences in everyday life of human beings. Bangladeshi *Hajjis*’ views towards women are more positive as gender interaction is a natural part of *Hajj*, while it is uncommon in the country. The positive teachings of *Hajj* particularly of pure *Aqidah*, produced several revolutionary movements in Bengal such as the *Faraidi* movement of *Hajji Shariatullah* with the aim of purifying Muslim society from superstitious *Aqidah* and practices. *Hajj* works as a social platform of getting together for Bangladeshi people at Makkah and Madinah. *Hajj* has developed the private tour operating industries in Bangladesh to facilitate the *Hajjis*. Transaction of billions of dollars takes place commercially during *Hajj*, while many commodities are exchanged informally. The *Hajjis* enjoy a very special dignity and status in the society of Bangladesh. *Hajj* creates an inter-cultural amalgamation combining various elements of different cultures particularly of Arabian. *Hajj* increases knowledge of the *Hajjis* both experimental and theoretical through various means. Bangladeshi *Hajjis* consider *Hajj* as the preparation for death; and thus, try to remain isolated from the worldly activities and observe the religious duties strictly. This transformative property enables the *Hajjis* to pursue a more purified life and they become a model of spirituality and religiosity. *Hajj* not only moulds the *Hajjis* into sincere and practicing Muslims, but also the society at large with their honesty and piety. Thus, *Hajj* brings immense impacts on the society, economy, education, religiosity and culture of Bangladesh. This chapter is aimed at analyzing the socio-economic and religio-cultural impacts of *Hajj* on the society of Bangladesh. It also included the perspectives of the society with a view to better understanding the influence of *Hajj* on the *Hajjis*, non-*Hajjis* and the society at large.

**Keywords:** *hajj, society, economy, culture, impact, bangladesh*

**A. INTRODUCTION**

The *Hajj* or Pilgrimage to Makkah is one of the five *Arkan* (fundamental pillars) of Islam. It is *fard* (mandatory) for every able-bodied adult Muslim man or woman who can financially afford the trip at least once in a lifetime (Al-Qura’n 3: 96-97). It takes place during the Islamic month of *Dhu al-Hijj*. This *Ibadah*
(Worship) is promised to have the best and unique rewards. Thus Hajj-i-Baitullah (Pilgrimage to the House of Allah) has become a spiritual longing of every Muslim. Following the divine instruction, Hadrat Ibrahim (AS) introduced Hajj making the Ka’abah its center (Al-Qura’n 22: 26-27) and later Prophet Hadrat Muhammad (SAAS) made it mandatory following the Qura’nic instruction. Since then the Muslims (believers) from far and near began coming to Makkah every year to perform Hajj. With the global population increase and the expansion of Islamic religious faith in different regions of the world over the centuries, the number of Hajjis (pilgrims) also increased accordingly. Millions of Muslims from around the world pour into Makkah every year to perform Hajj. The number of pilgrims for Hajj in Saudi Arabia during the last 92 years has increased by approximately 2,824%, up from just 58,584 in 1920 to 1,712,962 (1.713 million) in 2012 (Shah, 2015).

The history of Hajj from Bangladesh is as old as the advent of Islam. Many Muslims of this country visited Makkah to perform Hajj since it came in contact with Islam particularly after the establishment of Muslim rule in this land in the early 13th century. ‘Nur Qutb-ul-Alam, for example, performed Hajj several times in the 15th century. With an intention to perform Hajj, Mughal prince Shah Shuja left Dhaka with the members of his family to go to Makkah via Arakan. Hajji Muhammad Mahsin performed Hajj in the 18th century. Hajji Shariatullah also visited Makkah with the same purpose. During the British period, the Muslims of Bengal went to Hajj by ship via Mumbai (Ali S. A., 2017). Now a days, nearly one hundred thousand Muslims go to perform Hajj from Bangladesh every year, the 4th largest Muslim country (Muslim population by country, 2017) in terms of population containing 8.4% of global Muslim population (Top Ten Countries with Largest Muslim Population, 2017). The number of Hajjis from Bangladesh in 2015 was 1,01,758 (Hajj Package 2015, 2017).

The Hajj congregation- as the largest gathering of the Muslims to take place on a regular basis in the world (Person, 1994, p. 1) has got immense socio-economic and cultural impacts on every Muslim society irrespective of their country affiliation. As the Holy Qura’an states: “They may witness advantages for them and mention the Name of Allah.” (Al-Haj: 28, 2017) The word ‘منافع’ - advantages’ widely includes all the socio-economic and cultural
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virtues in every society of the world. It is the great assembly of Muslim nation in a single forum. As a result of unity of opinion and unanimity arising from believing in one Allah (SWT) and being the followers of one Guide Book- the Holy Qura’an and one Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), all Muslims stand in a single rank facing the Qiblah and go around a center with a single aim. It thus develops a unique symbol of unity, universality and social cooperation by creating mutual understanding among the nations.

The Hajj not only moulds the millions of pilgrims who perform Hajj every year, but also greater numbers of their friends and relatives who share experience of Hajj through them after their return. The socio-cultural and economic significance of Hajj is determined not only by the fact that it is one of Islam’s five pillars, but by a range of particularistic factors which include local values, the pilgrim’s subsequent attitudes and conduct, and the web of relationships in which they are embedded. No doubt, the society of Bangladesh has also largely been positively influenced by the institution of Hajj. Our study shows that Hajj brings immense impact on the society, economy, education and culture of Bangladesh, most importantly the spirituality of the Hajjis as well as of the society at large.

B. SOCIAL IMPACT

Bangladesh is a country of Muslim majority with 89.7% of the total population, while the Hindus constitute 9.2%, Buddhist 0.7%, Christian 0.3%, Animist and believers in tribal faiths is 0.1% (Population Census 2011, 2017). Every year thousands of Muslims from Bangladesh make pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah for Hajj and return home with new religious spirit, fresh Islamic teaching and most importantly pure Islamic Aqidah. The spirit of Hajj everyday leaves diverse impacts passive or active on the individuals, family and society of Bengal as well. The positive teachings of Hajj produced several revolutionary movements in the history of Bengal such as the Faraidi movement led by Hajji Shariatullah and the Tariqa-i-Muhammadiya movement led by Meer Nisar Ali alias Titumir. Both of them started the reform movements after their return from Hajj. Hajji Shariatullah (1781-1840) of present Shariatpur district (Shariatpur named as such after the name of Hajji Shariatullah; formerly it was under the Madaripur sub-division of Bangladesh),
made a pilgrimage to Makkah in 1799 to perform Hajj, which privileged him with the opportunity of staying there and receiving education in that international centre of Islamic culture. It prepared him for the great role to be played by him in his later life. Hajji Shariatullah stayed there for 20 years and studied religious doctrines under Shaikh Tahir Sombal. In 1818, he returned to Bengal having well equipped himself with Islamic learning. Hajji Shariatullah found the Muslims of Bengal practising many local superstitions which appeared to him grossly un-Islamic. For historical reasons the Muslims of Bengal had been following many indigenous customs, rituals and ceremonies which were far removed from Islamic principles. These mainly infiltrated into the Muslim society from the contemporary Hindu society because of their close contact. People here used to ascribe superhuman powers to the Sufis and Pirs such as giving life to the dead, being present at several places at a time and foretelling the future. Because of these, people considered the shrine of a Pir as a place of pilgrimage. They offered fruits, flowers etc. at their tombs, illuminated them at night and thus the culture of worshipping shrines of the Pirs widely spread in the Muslim society. Tazia- Observing the Ashura procession in the holy month of Muharram in a noisy and clumsy way, participation in the Hindu festivals of Durga Puja, Ratha yatra (Purana-inspired religious processions) and so forth are also mentionable in this context (Khan M.-u.-D. A., History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal, 1965, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii). The Muslims of Bengal thus steeped themselves in the superstitions and vices of the Hindus. Inflamed with a burning desire to reform the Muslim society of Bengal, Hajji Shariatullah tirelessly addressed the social gatherings for preaching the pure doctrine of Islam indoors and outdoors, in village after village, district after district, which ultimately assumed the form of an Islamic reform movement. The objective of the movement was to purify the Muslim society of Bengal from the superstitious Aqidah and practices and induce the Muslims of Bengal to follow the true teachings of Islam. The movement popularly came to be known as the Faraidi Movement (i.e. the movement for establishing the fundamentals of Islamic Sharia’h).

The term Faraidi was taken from the Arabic root-word Fard meaning obligatory duties enjoined by the Islamic Sharia’h. The Faraidis were, therefore, those who aimed at enforcing the obligatory duties of Islam. The movement
emphasized on the five fundamentals of Islam, strict observation of Tawhid (pure monotheism) and condemned all deviations from the original doctrines as Shirk (idolatry) and Bid’at (sinful innovation). Numerous rites and ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death were declared haraam (forbidden) such as Chuttee, Puttee, Chilla, Shabgasht procession, Fatihah, Milad, Urs, worshiping the Pirs, Taziah during Muharram etc. These practices were either described as Shirk or Bid’at. Hajji Shariatullah stressed on justice, social equality, and the universal brotherhood of Muslims.

The Faraidi movement spread with extraordinary rapidity in the different districts of Bengal, particularly where the Muslim peasants were oppressed by both the Hindu Zamindars and the European indigo-planters. The Zamindars used to impose different kinds of illegal taxes above normal land-tax, such as tax for such Hindu festivals as the Kali Puja, Durga Puja etc. They had even banned the slaughter of cow, especially on the occasion of Eid-ul Adha. Hajji Shariatullah directed his disciples not to pay the illegal taxes and thus there was a contentious relation created between the Faraidis and the Hindu Zamindars. Through continuous involvement with the Hindu Zamindars and the European indigo-planters, this religious reform movement gradually developed into a socio-economic revolt. Faced with such an effective Islamic revivalist movement, the Zamindars and the indigo-planters persecuted the Faraidis ruthlessly through officially condoned acts of violence and terror. Hajji Shariatullah had also to face severe opposition from the conservative local Ulama who had scant knowledge of the original Islamic practices and thus they wanted to preserve the existing traditional order. But the Faraidi movement won rapid popularity. On the death of Hajji Shariatullah, his only son Muhsinuddin Ahmad alias Dudu Miyan who returned from Makkah in 1837 after completing education and Hajj, took charge of the movement in 1840 (Khan M.-u.-D. A., Dudu Miyan, 2017). Under his leadership, the Faraidi movement turned into a strong and powerful agitation, assuming an agrarian character. He followed a policy of aggressive resistance instead of passive mobilization. Bengal Police estimated that Dudu Miyan had about 80,000 followers (Iqbal, 2011, p. 66), while Alexander Forbes, editor of the Bengal Hurkaru, calculated it at 300,000 (Iqbal, 2011, p. 66). During the 1857 Sepoy mutiny, Dudu Miyan had been arrested and after his release
he passed away in 1862. The number of followers of the Faraidi movement seemed to continue to grow steadily during Dudu Mian’s son Noa Miyan’s time. But after the death of Noa Miyan in 1884, the movement seems to have gradually lost its original spirit and influence (Iqbal, 2011, p. 69). The successors to the Faraidi did not prove equal to the caliber and ability of Hajji Shariatullah and Dudu Miyan. So, this lack of strong leadership and the vigorous attacks of the Zamindars and the opposition from the rigidly conservative Ulama brought about the decline of the movement and thus it has lost much its social and religious effectiveness. Hajji Shariatullah and Dudu Miyan may be characterized as Islamic revivalists, social reformers and peasant leaders (Khan M.-u.-D. A., Islamic Revivalism, 2010, pp. 176-205). For more than fifty years, the movement dominated the history of that territory, striving to create among the rural peasantry a genuine Islamic order. The movement turned into one of the most prominent anti-colonial socio-religious and economic movement in Bengal in the 19th century. The Faraidi movement witnessed the power of Hajj in creating the original spirit of Islam in the mind of the Hajjis and also shows how revolutionarily it could impact the society of a country like Bangladesh.

The similar movement is the Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya [the way advocated by the Prophet Muhammad (SAAM)] Movement in Bengal led by Sayyid Mir Nisar Ali alias Titu Mir (1782-1831) of 24 Pargana district of present-day West Bengal. This Islamic revivalist movement was originally founded by Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (1786-1831) of Rai Bareli of Uttar Pradesh of India in the early 19th century which got momentum in Bengal by the efforts of Titu Mir. Its aim was to establish the code of life advocated by the Prophet Muhammad (SAAM) with the interpretation of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAAM). This movement had started in northern India and reached Bengal during the 1820s and 1830s.

Titu Mir’s family claimed to be the descendent of Hadrat Ali (R). Titu Mir went to Makkah for Hajj in 1822 and there came in close contact with the great Islamic reformer Sayyid Ahmad, the exponent of Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya movement. He was motivated by the idea of Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya and after returning home from Makkah in 1827, Titu Mir started preaching the idea of Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya among the Muslims in the districts of 24 Pargana and Nadia. He advised them to purify their activities from practising Shirk and Bidaat, and inspired
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them to follow the Islamic way of life. His movement initially aimed at socio-
religious reforms, elimination of the superstitious practices such as Saint-worship,
erecting shrines and many others which resulted due to the close contact of the local
Hindus with the Muslim society. The perspectives and objectives of the Faraidi
movement and the Tariqah-i-Muhammadia movement are almost similar. However,
one difference was that Titu Mir from the beginning emphasized on the idea of Jihad
in Islam and got involved in conflict with the oppressive Zamindars while Hajji
Shariatullah initially followed the policy of avoiding conflict with the Zamindars.
Titu Mir got a very devoted and organized group of Muslim peasants who had been
oppressed by the local Hindu Zamindars. Soon he and his followers were involved
in conflict with several local Hindu Zamindars because of the Zamindars’ sectarian
attitude towards the Muslims and the imposition of illegal taxes on them. Titu Mir
formed a Mujahid force and trained them in lathi and other indigenous arms under
the command of his disciple Ghulam Masum. The increasing strength of Titu Mir
alarmed the Zamindars and Englishmen who attempted to take united stand against
him. Being instigated by the Zamindars, Mr. Davis, the English kuthial (factor-
owner) of Mollahati and Alexander, the collector of Barasat, advanced against Titu
Mir with their forces, but they were beaten back and had suffered a severe defeat.
Titu Mir built a strong bamboo fort at Narkelbaria in October 1831 and recruited
Mujahids and provided them with military training. The number of Mujahids rose to
nearly five thousand. Having completed his military preparation Titu Mir declared
himself Badshah (king) and urged upon the people to participate in jihad against the
British. He soon established his control over the districts of 24 Pargana, Nadia and
Faridpur. Several local Zamindars had to pay tax to Titu Mir instead of the English.
An English contingent was sent from Calcutta, which again suffered severe defeat in
the hands of the Mujahids. Subsequently Lord William Bentinck sent a regular army
against Titu Mir under Lieutenant Colonel Stewart consisting of 100 cavalry, 300
native infantry and artillery with two cannons. The Mujahids with traditional arms
failed to resist the English army equipped with modern arms and took shelter inside
the bamboo fort. The English opened fire and destroyed the fort. There was heavy
casualty on the side of the Mujahids. Titu Mir along with many of his followers fell
in the battle (19 November 1831). Titu Mir’s movement began as a socio-religious
reform movement but the then socio-economic circumstances compelled it to be characterized as an agrarian one. No doubt, the teachings of Hajj and consequent realizations highly influenced Titu Mir for such a purification movement which later on turned into a revolutionary movement (Khan M.-u.-D. A., Islamic Revivalism, 2010, pp. 141-162).

Hajj undoubtedly leaves huge virtual impact on the personal, familial as well as the social life of the Bangladeshi Muslims. In Bangladesh, the people generally think to perform Hajj at the late age or late middle age. It is believed an optimum time to undertake Hajj. Several types of thinking characterize this realization of Bangladeshi Muslims regarding Hajj. It is believed that pilgrimage to Makkah is a Muslim’s last significant act preparatory to death. So, after completing all the worldly responsibilities, he or she would go to Hajj as a beginning of his journey to the next world. It is believed that a pilgrim should leave for Hajj only when all other debts have been discharged and all family matters including other social obligations have been settled. Similarly, old scores should be resolved, money should be set aside for the care of the family, and all children should be married prior to his departure for Makkah. It is also sincerely believed that the money spent for Hajj should not be borrowed from others but should be from the savings accumulated from Halal (legal) employment, so that in the event of a pilgrim’s death there will be no outstanding financial or material debts. In this sense, after fulfilling all worldly responsibilities, the pilgrim departs for Makkah with a clear conscience, and there he will be completely purified from all his/her worldly indulgences. With such a realization of end journey and preparation to die or return home, many pilgrims bring with them the Ihram (two plain white sheets of cloth) which they wore in Makkah during Hajj, so that they can use these as their shroud. In order to make their life worthwhile, the pilgrims desire to die either in Makkah while performing Hajj, or after returning home as a Hajji. Thus, Hajj is understood among the Muslims of Bangladesh as signaling the end to the material existence. And after their return, the Hajjis earnestly try to remain isolated from the worldly activities so that he or she would not be involved in sins or indulgences again, for it might cause harm to his purified life through Hajj. The spirit of performing Hajj in the early age is almost absent among the average Muslims in the society of Bangladesh and even among the Ulama too.
In the society of Bangladesh, the Hajjis enjoy a very special dignity. Historical accounts on Hajj also suggest that Hajj confers social prestige and legitimacy (Donnan, 1989, pp. 205-216) (Yamba, 1995) (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990). One who performed Hajj is later on addressed as Hajji, which is a very respectable title for anyone in the community. The Hajjis are generally addressed as ‘Hajji Saheb’ (the honorable pilgrim), and their names are written with the dignified title ‘Al-Hajj’. This title indicates that he/she performed the great job Hajj and thus he/she would be given dignified address and thus be honored. Sometimes the real name of a person overlapped under the title ‘Hajji Saheb’. The Hajjis are believed as purified personalities and an accepted slave (Maqbul Bandha) to the Almighty Allah. Because Allah (SWT) specially accepted him or her to be His guest and thus he or she is accepted by the Almighty Allah. Not only the Muslims but even the non-Muslims also show respect to them as purified ones. In every meeting or public gathering, the Hajji is given special place of honor. Thus, Hajj mostly improves the social status of a Muslim after Hajj. This change becomes remarkable both in the manner in which the pilgrim should now behave with others as well as by the honor which others should show them. Everyone should behave quietly and respectfully with the Hajjis in their company, avoiding topics of conversation or styles of expression which could be considered discourteous. The Hajjis are given priority for the socially honored positions, for example the chairmanship/membership of a school, college, Madrasah or Mosque, or its governing committee, as well as the chairmanship or membership of different local governmental/non-governmental bodies etc. Another person could also be selected, but only after expressing unwillingness by the concerned Hajji. The opinion or advice of a Hajji is honored by all. The businesses or social services run by a Hajji, are also considered to be more reliable than those of others with the belief that they could not cheat or harm the clients; rather they be more honest in their dealings. Such changes of status open up new areas of influence for the Hajji, such as in adjudicating disputes, the settling of marriage negotiations, leading prayers in the mosque etc.

An aspirant Hajji is spontaneously invited by his/her relatives and neighbors immediately after his/her decision to make pilgrimage to Makkah for Hajj. Hosting the would-be Hajji at least for one meal is considered as a very meritorious job as
he/she is hosting the guest of Allah (SWT). Many people usually accompany him/her to the airport or departure place and also receive him/her after arrival at the station. Everyone feels proud who could handshake or hug the Hajjis.

Hajj brings significant changes in the daily life of the Bangladeshi Hajjis. Hajjis are expected to be more religious and honest in their daily activities. It has also been observed that after performing Hajj, a Hajji usually tries to observe all the religious duties and obligations strictly not only in his/her personal life but also in the family-related and social activities. For example, the women who didn’t observe Purdah (Islamic dress code for a woman) before Hajj, she rarely ignores Purdah after Hajj. Similarly a Muslim who was in the habit of taking bribe, making interest-based transactions, or such kind of unfair and illegal means before Hajj, he/she usually tries to avoid these kinds of activities after Hajj for the fear that it may damage his/her purification attained through Hajj. One who did not wear beard previously would hardly remove beard after Hajj. The Hajji regularly prays five times a day, and avoids cheating or stealing or disturbing anyone. Even the Hajji abandons morally dubious pursuits and bad habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, different types of games such as ludu (the board game), daba (chess) etc. It is believed that a Hajji can never tell a lie; rather he/she always tries to speak the truth. A Hajji makes a demonstrable effort to change his behavior in line with the desire which society associates with Hajj. This positive change at individual level of a Hajji, undoubtedly impacts the society; because the individuals are the basic units of a society. The Hajji encourages the members of his family and others to follow religious principles of Islam. In some cases in rural Bangladesh, it has been found that some Hajjis would not go out of home for 40 days as a beginning of his purified life. A Hajji not only protects himself by leaving usury-bribe or such kinds of unfair means, but also saves many others from involving in these social corrupt practices. However, it is important to stress here that people’s expectations of a Hajji’s behavior are also positively very high. It is expected that the life of a Hajji clearly be a model of spirituality and religiosity through prayer coupled with his/her concern for others, his/her judicial participation in social affairs and his/her behavior with those whom he comes into contact. They generally abstain from life’s frivolous as well as morally suspect pursuits. Rarely a Hajji gets involved in social corrupt practices in Bangladesh. If a Hajji is observed
getting involved in corrupt practices, it is generally believed by the mass people that his/her Hajj has not been acceptable to the Almighty Allah (SWT) and such people stand diminished both spiritually and in the eyes of their fellows. Sometimes the image of Hajj has exceptionally been manipulated by some secular or even communist political leaders who practically do not believe in the spirituality of Hajj. They perform Hajj with the intention of using the image of Hajj to earn social respect, confidence of the mass people and focusing him/her as a religious personality and thus gain his/her own ambitious leadership. So, it may be said that everyone does not perform Hajj with pure Niyyah (motive). In short, if a Hajji maintains the spirit of Hajj, then he/she is a that true Hajji; if he/she does not maintain the spirit of Hajj, then he/she is a worse person. It means in the society of Bangladesh, the social and spiritual value of Hajj depends not only on divine judgment but also on public opinion. Hajj thus, changes the philosophy of life of a Hajji and the Hajji is spiritually transformed, which leaves a long-lasting impact on the family as well as the whole society. Hajj has certain transformative properties, which enable the Hajjis to pursue a more spiritual life and leading them to a better understanding of Islam. This change and purified life style of Hajjis creates the sense of honor in the mind of others towards them as well as influences others to make pilgrimage. Thus, Hajj brings a positive and remarkable change in the life and society of the Bangladeshi Muslims as a force of Islamization.

From the socio-global point of view, thousands of people go to perform Hajj from all over the country (Bangladesh) as well as from other parts of the world having differences of races, colors, and speaking different languages. They mix across the lines of ethnicity, nationality, sect, and gender that divide them in everyday life. Even Bangladesh has more than 41 regional languages (Bangladesh, 2017) whereas the world as a whole has thousands of different languages. Although the Hajj rituals last five days, many pilgrims stay longer. Most of the Hajjis from Bangladesh spend 40 days worshipping in the cities of Makkah and Madinah. Each ritual component of the Hajj is performed simultaneously with well over two million participants. All the people, despite their diverse demographic attributes, wear the same unstitched clothes known as the Ihram, come together at one place, and follow the same rituals, affirm a common identity by performing common rituals, exhibit unity, equality and
discipline as well as neglecting the sense of differences among human being on the basis of wealth, race, creed, language and region. *Hajj* engenders substantial mixing across national, sectarian, and gender lines in an atmosphere that emphasizes equality and unity. *Hajj* expands people’s vision and makes them accommodate and leave their biases first at the holy places and then this mutual harmony is perpetuated after one experiences life away from worldly affairs, embracing one’s true identity symbolizing submission of one’s will to the will of Allah. As a participant in a global platform with thousands of people of different race, locality, origin and color, *Hajj* increases the desire for universal brotherhood, peace and tolerance in the mind of the *Hajjis* towards others, both Muslims and non-Muslims. *Hajj* helps to integrate the Muslim world, leading to a strengthening of global Islamic beliefs and a sense of unity and equality with others who are ordinarily separated in everyday life by sect, ethnicity, nationality, or gender, but are brought together by means of *Hajj*. This reflection has been observed among the *Hajjis* of Bangladesh in several social affairs. For example, as a respected person, the *Hajji* is usually being asked to mediate in disputes among different groups or individuals, resolve family quarrels, offer advice, attend marriage negotiations, lead the social activities etc. In many social conflict resolutions, it is found that the decisions of *Hajjis* are mostly more positive than the opinions of non-*Hajjis*. The *Hajjis*, thus play an important role in creating peaceful co-existence among different socio-religious groups in the society. Because as their own affairs have already been put in order, the *Hajji* can deal with other people’s affairs more neutrally and altruistically being free from self-interest. This evidence suggests that *Hajj* increases tolerance and positive views towards both Muslims and non-Muslims; Thus, the *Hajjis* positive attitudes contribute to the communities’ co-existence and harmonious relationships among different ethnic and religious groups in the country. The feelings of unity and equality brought about by *Hajj* extend across all artificial lines. *Hajj* offers Bangladeshi *Hajjis* a novel opportunity to interact also with the members of the opposite gender in a religious setting, and to observe cross-gender interactions among Muslims from different nations too. In Bangladesh, interaction between men and women who are strangers is uncommon. Women rarely go to mosque and when they do, they typically pray in a separate area from men. But gender interactions are a natural part of the *Hajj*. Men pray alongside women during
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Thus, Hajjis’ views towards women and their rights in the society are more positive. They also express greater concern about women’s quality of life in Bangladesh relative to other countries and about crimes against women in the country. Here Hajjis are also more likely to support girls’ education and female participation in the professional workforce than the non-Hajjis.

Hajjis gain experience-based knowledge of the diversity of Islamic practices and beliefs, gender roles within Islam, and, more broadly, the world beyond Bangladesh. Hajjis are also exposed to a degree of religious diversity within the recognized schools of thought, in a religiously sanctioned context in which all are accepted. Hajjis update their beliefs most positively about nationalities as they are likely to interact with frequently. Since followers of different schools of Islam pray together in a congregation at Makkah, this often leads to mixing of religious practices and diversities.

There is a tendency of performing Hajj more than once among the economically solvent Muslims and particularly the Ulama, Pir and Aulia. For example, Shah Meer Muhammad Akhtar of Chittagong visited Saudi Arabia 29 times to perform Hajj and Umrah, (Khan M. A., 2011, hal. 100) Shah Maulana Mohammad Abdul Jabbar visited Makkah and Madinah 33 times for Hajj and Umrah, (Nadwi, 2012, p. 67) Maulana Hafez Ahmad performed Hajj six times (Chowdhury, 2007, p. 42). They usually encourage others to perform Hajj and advise them from their own experience (Jabbar, 2012, pp. 30-33). Prof. Dr. Abdul Quader, who performed Hajj 11 times, said in an interview with the author that there are two reasons behind performing Hajj more than once, one is love for Ka’abah and another is the sense of purification. No Muslim can deny the attraction of the holy Ka’abah, especially one who visited it once. Moreover, some Hajjis undertake the Hajj several times mainly for others such as their parents or relatives or others who are unable to do so because of ill-health, or as they died without performing Hajj. It is believed that while this pilgrimage by proxy certainly earns the prime rewards (sawab) for the person in whose account it is performed and he is purified by this Hajj, it also confers blessing (sawab) upon him who undertakes it. In this kind of cases, experienced Hajjis are chosen with priority.
There are about five million Bangladeshi migrants working in Saudi Arabia. The Hajjis, whose relatives are living in Saudi Arabia, take the time of Hajj as an opportunity of their meeting with them. Even many Bangladeshi people, who live in different countries of the Middle-East and North Africa, use the occasion of Hajj as an opportunity to meet the Ulama, Shaikhs or relatives and family-members who come from Bangladesh. Thus, Hajj works as a social platform of getting together for Bangladeshi people at Makkah and Madinah. The Ulama and Shaikhs also use this opportunity to meet their disciples and visit different historical and spiritual places of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East (Khan A. U., pp. 100-116). Not only at Makkah, but also several Hajj agencies of Bangladesh back at home regularly arrange Hajji Reunion programs. For example, Hajj-i-Baitullah Hajj Kafelah, a leading Hajj agency in Chittagong headed by Giasuddin Talukdar, a professor of Chittagong University, regularly arranges Hajji Reunion program every year. This program brings the opportunity for Hajjis of different localities to meet together and share their views. Such programs create spiritual reawakening among the Hajjis and remind them about their glorious times spent in Makkah and encourage them to keep the promises that they had made during Hajj with Allah (SWT). Thus, the spirit of Hajj is renewed and it leads to purified life whole the year through.

C. Economic Impact:

The earliest Arab-Bengal relation was mainly based on commercial activities. It is assumed that the relation was established probably soon after 2800 B.C. After the advent of Islam, early Arab Muslim traders had established trading contact with the costal lands of Bengal. There were major settlements of Arab traders scattered along the west and south coast of the Indian Sub-Continent including Bengal, with similar facilities extending into the chain of Islands at the South China Sea and the Philippines (Nizami, 2009) (Hourani, 1951). The Arab Muslims settled in these coastal regions and the Arab settlers in Chittagong region had gradually grown to be a compact and influential community and had in course of time organized an independent principality of their own comprising the coastal belt of the Chittagong and the Noakhali Districts (Haq, 1948, p. 17). Some indirect references in the writings of Arab Geographers (such as Silsilt-ut-Tawarikh by Sulaiman, Kitab
al-Masalik wal-Mamalik by Ibn Khurdadbih, Mu’jam al-Buldan by Yaqut, Nuzhat al-Mushtaq by Al-Idrisi) strongly record a flourishing trade contact between Arab and Bengal (Karim, 1985, pp. 31-33) (Ali M. M., 1985, pp. 33-34). The great admixture of Arabic words and phrases in the local dialect of Chittagong also supports the theory of early Arab settlements. Many social customs also preserve the Arabic tradition. This early contact is evidently supported by archeological discoveries such as coin discovered at the ancient Buddhist site of Paharpur in Rajshahi district dated on 788 A.C (Dikshit, 1938, p. 87), and two others at the site of Mainamoti in Comilla district (Khan F., p. 11). It indicated to a strong trade relationship. They traded in various delicious and valuable items as rice, sugar, aloe-wood, medicinal-wood whose leaves produced bitter juice, cotton cloths such as Muslin (very fine cotton garments), ivory, rhino horns and otter skins, horses, perfumes, spices, Persian luxurious items and many other commodities. This trade contact led to the emergence and expansion of Islam in Bengal. The social condition of the then Bengal with strict caste and sub-caste system was also in favour of the expansion of Islam. The teaching of social equality, justice and simplicity in Islam impressed the lower classes of Hindus and Buddhists and they gradually became converted and flocked into the fold of Islam (Khan M. A., 1965, p. 83). Being one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam, Hajj attracted the converted Muslims and their descendants to perform it. To visit the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah has been a keen desire among the Muslims of Bengal. So it is believed that the Bengalee Muslim merchants who went to Arabia for trade, naturally performed Hajj. At the same time, who went to Makkah for Hajj, also had some trading concerns. They carried several local items to Arabia when they travelled to Arabia for Hajj and brought Arabian items with them when they returned home. Thus, from the beginning Hajj has economic implications or trading concern.

Until the 18th century, Hajjis from Bengal as well as India had the option of travelling to Makkah either by overland caravans or by sailing ships. Most of them preferred to go by the sea routes, primarily through the Red Sea, and occasionally through the Persian Gulf and rarely through the land routes. During Mughal rule, several ships undertook the voyage, providing free passage and provisions for the pilgrims. There were three ships called the Rahimi, the Karimi and the Salari for the
cost-free transportation of the pilgrims. The contemporary traveller John Fryer Keane (Hajji Mohammed Amin) mentions that these pilgrim ships weighed between 1400 to 1600 tons and often carried 1700 pilgrims each. They used various Deccan ports on the east and the west coasts for Hajj sailings such as port of Surat in Gujarat, which was described as Bab-ul-Makkah or the Bandar-e-Mubarak (blessed port). They used to send regular charity to Makkah and appoint Amir-i-Hajj for the pilgrimage. During 984-989 A.H. (1576-1582 A.C) the Akbar’s Amir-i-Hajj carried more than Rs 600,000 in money and goods to be distributed to the people of Makkah and Madinah as charity, along with thousands of khilats (robes of honour) and expensive gifts for the Sharifs of Makkah. In 1659 A.C Badshah Aurangazeb sent presents worth Rs 660,000 to the Sharif of Makkah. During the British rule, Hajj continued to get regular attention. The famous tourist agency Thomas Cook and Son was appointed in 1885 as the official travel agent of Hajj with the responsibility of streamlining the pilgrimage trade. In 1927, a 10-member Hajj Committee was constituted headed by D. Healy, Esq., which provided services to the pilgrims. During the World War II, when the number of Hajjis reduced, the Saudi government used to appoint Mutawwifin and Muallims since 1941 so that they could canvass for pilgrims. During Pakistan period (1947-1971), the trend was still continued.

No doubt, Hajj has diversified economic implications on the society of Bangladesh. It impacted a lot on the private tour operators of Bangladesh to facilitate Hajjis of the country. The operators offer all kinds of supports to the Hajjis within the country as well as in Saudi Arabia. It includes air travel, bus travel, accommodation, food and all kinds of logistic supports in Saudi Arabia. In 2015, 106550 pilgrims performed Hajj from Bangladesh (Hajj Bulletin, 2017). The expense for package one was 3,54,745 BDT and for package two was 2,96,206 BDT. It may be estimated that the average cost was around 3,00000 BDT and the estimated total cost was (3,00000X 106550= 31965000000 BDT = 443958333 $). Most of the money is spent for air travel and accommodation in Saudi Arabia. Because of this huge amount of activities around Hajj, a good number of private tour operators has developed schemes to undertake the Hajj activities and it generates profit also for the Hajj agencies. There are about 1000 private Hajj agencies in the country presently working in the field (List of Hajj Agencies of Bangladesh, 2017). The pilgrims can
travel only by two airlines i.e. Biman Bangladesh Airlines and Saudi Arabia Airlines. Around Hajj activities transaction of billions of dollars take place commercially and thus Hajj has become an important concern in the economy of Bangladesh.

The Hajjis travelling from Bangladesh traditionally take different types of essential items along with them, such as cloths, essential medicine, etc. to use during their stay in Saudi Arabia. Sometimes they take several Bangladeshi popular food or gift items for their relatives or friends living in Saudi Arabia. Simultaneously, they bring many popular Arabian items for Bangladeshi family members and friends when they come back from Hajj. These include Arabian dates, drinking water of Zam-Zam, perfume, prayer-rug etc. It is traditional in Bangladesh that the Bangladeshi Hajjis after their return entertain their visitors with the water of Zamzam and the Arabian dates. Sometimes they use to offer in gift prayer-rug, perfume, cap etc. among the closest friends and relatives. Few Hajjis, particularly women members sometimes bring with them Arabian gold mainly for their use or for their sons’ or daughters’ wedding. Thus, during Hajj, many commodities are exchanged informally between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh through the hands of the Hajjis. Though it has economic values, in most of the cases these have rarely been conducted for commercial purposes.

About three million Bangladeshi migrants work in Saudi Arabia (Arab Versus Asian Migrant Workers in the GCC Countries, 2016), while the Bangladeshis living in this country unofficially are estimated to be around two million. They are involved in different types of business in the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah particularly during Hajj. Garment items, Arabian dates, Food items, Prayer-rug, cap, perfume, Miswak (teeth cleaning twig made from the Salvadora persica tree known as Arak in Arabic) play items for kids etc. The Hajjis buy these items for their relatives and friends at the home. It is assumed that the Bangladeshi Hajjis spend around 1000$ during their stay at Saudi Arabia for buying such types of gift items. Thus, huge amount of commodities are exchanged between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia during Hajj. Though thousands of dollars are spent by the Bangladeshis Hajjis on the occasion of Hajj, simultaneously thousands of dollars also returned to the country because of this business run by the Bangladeshi traders in Saudi Arabia.
D. Cultural Impact:

Hajj being practised every year by thousands of Muslims belonging to a variety of ethnicity, culture and language together has undoubtedly been resulting in inter-cultural amalgamation combining various elements of different cultures particularly of Arabic. Hajj brings the unique opportunity of interaction among the Muslims of different nations, sects and culture. Bangladesh is not an exception in this case as thousands of Bangladeshis perform Hajj every year. It brings diverse cultural impact on the society of Bangladesh.

For example, in the society of Bangladesh the Hajjis after returning home from Hajj usually begin to wear Jubbah (a long outer garment resembling an open coat, having long sleeves, and worn especially by the Arabian Muslims) in preference to western fashions. They also use head-covering Keffiyeh or Shemaghs (a traditional square cotton scarf generally used by the Arabian men to cover their heads) at least occasionally such as during the time of performing Jumuah prayer in the mosque. Thus, Arab dress culture becomes dress culture of Hajjis in Bangladesh. It has been considered as a symbol of dignity identifying a Hajji. Several Arabian and Islamic cultures which have randomly been practised among the Arabian people such as hospitality to the guests, charity to the needy people, giving gifts, helping the disable etc. influence the minds of Hajjis. The Bangladeshi Hajjis after their return try to follow these practices in their daily life. The beards of the Hajjis are carefully groomed and trimmed. Traditionally, the Hajjis in Bangladeshi society are unquestionably respected by everybody irrespective of socio-religious or political groups. They usually use the honorific title ‘Hajji or Al-Haajj’ before their name.

Bangladeshi society tends to associate Hajj with men rather than women, since very few women perform Hajj comparing to men. A female pilgrim would become a local celebrity in the village area. The female pilgrims rarely use the title ‘Al-Haajj’ or ‘Hajjiya’. It also varies based on age. In Bangladesh society, it is believed that age brings seniority, and etiquette demands that young defer the old. Consequently, young person who performed Hajj would not be given equal status and respect associated in general with having performed Hajj. It is thus socially problematic for a young pilgrim to claim the status of Hajji and it is observed among the young Hajjis in Bangladeshi society that they are not used to using the title ‘Al-
Haajj’, or even the people also usually do not address a young Hajji as ‘Hajji Saheb’ or do not show equal respect towards them as to the old aged Hajjis.

In Bangladeshi society, several in-house programs are arranged in honor of the person who decides to perform Hajj. These programs are organized by his friends, relatives and neighbours and are generally followed by lunch or dinner. It has been believed to be an honorific act to find the opportunity of feeding the guest of Allah (SWT), the selected person of the Almighty Allah (SWT). Sometimes, these types of programs turn into family and relative’s get-together. Like any other party, food is the prime course of these programs too, and of course Would-be Hajjis are the chief guests. Though, there are no official statistics or survey, it can easily be said that a would-be Hajji on an average attend at least 10 to 15 pre-Hajj feast programs before departing for Hajj.

To see off an aspirant-Hajji is a unique feature in the society of Bangladesh. Close friends and family-members go with intending pilgrims to the airport to see him off. Huge rush is seen in the airports on the occasion of the departure of the Hajj flights. In the village areas, seeing-off an intending-Hajji is a big event. Family-members, friends, villagers, relatives and neighbors gather hours before the departure of the intending pilgrims’. They are bidden good-bye with tears from their residence. Then they are taken to the nearest railway or bus station in the form of a big procession. The number of greeters gets reduced at railway or bus station, and only close family-members and friends accompany the intending pilgrims on their way to the airport to avail themselves of their Hajj flights. They stay with the intending pilgrim or even outside the airport until the flight takes off. Upon their return, the same exercise is repeated. They are received by their close family-members, and friends at the airport, and later on the same railway or bus station, the same huge crowds are there to welcome them.

Sometimes, the families and friends who missed the chance of inviting the would-be Hajjis before their Hajj, arrange such programs after their return from Hajj. Hajjis briefly share their Hajj experiences with the friends and relatives and influence them to visit the holy cities in the post-Hajj programs. The Hajjis entertain the visitors generally with the drinking water of Zam-Zam and Arabian dates. The water of Zam-Zam and Arabian dates are believed to be symbols of Barakah (blessing).
Many of them eat or drink it with the hope of being cured of their illnesses. The *Hajjis* entertain close relatives, friends or dignified guests with some special gifts brought from Makkah. The special gifts include Prayer-rug, Arabian perfume (Atar), prayer-cap, Arabian *Jubbah*, beads (tasbih), *Miswak* (teeth-cleaning twig made from the Salvadora persica tree). Distribution of gifts of *Makkah* by a *Hajji* has been the most attractive feature of post-*Hajj* programs.

Many *Hajjis* in Bangladesh with the sense of preparation for death bring with them the cloths of *Ihram* (two plain white sheets of cloth) which they wore in Makkah during *Hajj*, so that they can use these as their shroud. Or they bring different sets of cloths being washed with the water of *Zam-Zam* for use as their shroud. They try to bring the part of the *Gilaf* (covering cloth) of *Ka‘abah* to use it with their shroud. Sometimes, they bring mud of the grave of *Jannatul Baqi* to use it in their graves. It is believed that this wearing and mud may cause *barakah* or safety from the dangers in the graves after their departure from the worldly life.

With the expansion of modern and westernized trend in Bangladeshi society, these particular cultures around *Hajj* and its social impressions are gradually declining. Now, many people particularly young people of the country do not show additional respect towards *Hajji* only on account of being a *Hajji*; rather they observe the reality and their practical life. They think that sometimes it is possible to become a *Hajji* with the usual symbols but without any inner transformation. Anyone can wear the right clothes, trim his beard, and call himself a *Hajji*, but this does not suffice for his complete piety. Now people make judgments about the practical honesty and piety not with the symbols only. The person using the symbols without practical honesty is treated as a ‘*Hajji* in-name only’. Thus, *Hajj* being practised among the Muslims of Bengal for centuries, has been exerting socio-cultural impacts on the various strata of the society.

E. Educational Impact

*Hajj* increases knowledge of the *Hajjis* both experimental and theoretical through various means. Primarily, whenever a person desires to perform *Hajj*, he/she simultaneously tries to learn the ways of performing *Hajj* correctly. The intending *Hajji* learns it either by way of studying the books written on *Hajj* or from a learned
person (Alim). He/she also tries to gather experience from the persons who already performed Hajj. On the occasion of Hajj, a good number of small booklets containing the rules of Hajj is published in Bangladesh by the Islamic scholars. Sometimes these books are distributed free of cost by the rich persons as a gift to the intending Hajjis, or they buy it from the markets. The Hajj agencies in Bangladesh also distribute the Hajj guidelines among the intending Hajjis and arrange pre-Hajj training programs to make their Hajj a meaningful one. The main objective of such training programs is to guide, and train the intending Hajjis as to how perform the Hajj correctly. They also teach the intending Hajjis the techniques to avoid the rush during Hajj. Bangladesh government also arranges Hajj training program for the intending Hajjis. These programs begin with recitation from the Holy Qur’an followed by Na’at (songs of to praise for Prophet Mohammad (SAAM). The speakers are mainly Islamic scholars (Ulama) and experienced Hajjis. They deliver speech about their Hajj experiences, important features of Hajj, the rules and regulations (Faraaiz and wazibaat) of Hajj, the ways to perform Hajj perfectly, locations of important places in the Haramain, legal requirements in the country, laws of Saudi government which must be followed by a Hajji during the Hajj and other sensitivities of the land, which need to be respected. With the help of projector and other devices, the trainers inform the intended pilgrims about procedure and mandatory requirements of Hajj. These training sessions usually last longer than any other session of a pre-Hajj program as the intending Hajjis are interested to know as much as they can about their scheduled journey. Food is served at the end of the training sessions.

After the training programs, the intending Hajjis devote themselves into studying and learning Hajj rituals in details until they perform Hajj. During their stay at the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, the Bangladeshi Hajjis gather knowledge from different types of lectures and practices of global Muslims particularly of Arabia. Several Arabian scholars arrange religious discussion programs in the Masjid- al-Haram compound, where Bangladeshi Hajjis participate and acquire knowledge there about several important Islamic issues and practices. These lectures mainly focus on the importance of having pure Aqidah (faith). Bangladeshi Hajjis, who because of historical perspectives observed several bida’at (sinful practices) in Bangladeshi society, receive exclusive knowledge of pure Aqidah, and thus they can
realize by comparison that many practices that they had performed earlier were originally not supported by Islam. This realization reflects on their practices after Hajj. But one disadvantage of these lectures that has been marked by Professor Dr. B.M. Mofizur Rahman, who has performed Hajj several times (Rahman) is that as these lectures are conducted in Arabic language, majority Bangladeshi Hajjis do not understand them and obviously they cannot get full benefit. Though there are some lectures with Bangla translation arranged by the Hajj agencies or some Bangladeshi association in Saudi Arabia, major lectures have no translation facilities into any other languages. As majority Bangladeshis does not understand Arabic language, they cannot get benefits from them. He also remarks that as the verses of the Holy Qura’an and the Ahadith of Prophet (SAAM) hung on the walls of Masjid al-Haram in Arabic, most of the non-Arab people cannot understand the meaning of these verses and Prophetic traditions. If these lectures could be translated into other major languages and incorporated on the wall posters, it could be better understood by the world Muslim community including Bangladeshi Hajjis. Many organizations like Rabeta al-Alam al-Islami arrange many Islamic programs, where lectures are given by world-famous Islamic scholars, from which the Hajjis enrich their knowledge about Islam and world Muslim communities of different countries. Hajj conference also takes place every year. The Hajj agencies of Bangladesh also arrange many educative programs which include important lectures by Bangladeshi/Bangla-speaking Islamic scholars. Many Bangladeshi students studying in different universities of Saudi Arabia arrange different types of educative and instructive programs for the Bangladeshis Hajjis specially emphasizing on those issues which are closely related to the social conditions and perspectives of the Bangladeshi Muslims. By participating in these varieties of programs, the Hajjis of Bangladesh enrich themselves with important knowledge of Islam, understand the diversity of global Muslim community, exchange their views, and come into close contact with the famous Islamic scholars of different countries. Thus, one kind of enhancement of knowledge and exchange of views widely take place among the Hajjis of Bangladesh.

Many Arabian Shaikhs voluntarily arrange a good number of intellectual discourses in different venues and mosques during Hajj, where Bangladeshis Hajjis also participate. Professor Dr. AKM Shahed (Rahman), who performed Hajj in 2013,
remarks that he participated in these types of several programs and Shaikhs also gave him some books. He got benefits from these discussions and remarks that these were very thoughtful, effective as there mainly focused on pure Islamic Aqidah. Sometimes, Bangladeshi students studying there promptly translate the lectures of Shaikhs into Bangla for the better understanding and easy communication. He suggests multi-lingual translations for greater benefit of the Hajjis coming from different language backgrounds.

Many Bangladeshi Ulama go to perform Hajj every year. They also attend different discussion meetings and cultural programs where they deliver valuable speech mainly arranged by the Bangladeshi migrants in Saudi Arabia in honor of Bangladeshi Hajjis. Professor Dr. B.M. Mofizur Rahman Al-Azhari (Rahman), a renowned Islamic scholar of Chittagong, Bangladesh who went to Hajj for third time participated in two such programs in 2015 and in six programs in 2014 in the presence of hundreds of Bangladeshi migrants and Hajjis. Dr. AKM Abdul Quader (Rahman), a professor of the University of Chittagong performed Hajj more than five times and every year he participated in several programs and also delivered speech. He estimated that in Makkah during Hajj Bangladeshi migrants arrange more than 100 such religio-cultural programs. Many such Bangladeshi Islamic scholars as live in different European and other countries also deliver speeches before the Bangladeshi Hajjis during Hajj in these kinds of programs. Thus, it may be said that as during Hajj Bangladeshi Hajjis get a very rare opportunity to listen to the speeches from world famous Islamic scholars, undoubtedly it contributes to increase their knowledge about Islam in general and Hajj in particular. It makes them conscious and enlightens them with global thinking.

Many educated people of Bangladesh who got Arabia to perform Hajj every year, naturally take the opportunity to bring many books from Saudi Arabia particularly the religious and historical books. The Ulama and the people who understand Arabic language usually bring the books for personal use as well as for libraries of their institutions. H.M. Ataur Rahman Nadwi (Rahman), who performed Hajj second time in 2015 brought sixty kgs of books during his departure from Makkah, Dr. Masudur Rahman (Rahman), also couriered about 100 kgs of book from Makkah when he visited that sacred city. He brought the books particularly on Tafsir,
Hadith, Fiqh and Arabic language particularly for kids. Professor Dr. AKM Abdul Quader also observed that during several lectures arranged by Arabian Shaikhs, he and many other participants were presented many books. Thus, many Arabic books on Islam are brought to Bangladesh by the Hajjis every year. So, Hajj not only enhances the knowledge and perception of the Hajjis, but also increases the opportunity of learning Islam from original sources for non-Hajjis of Bangladesh.

F. Religio-Spiritual Impact:

Hajj is a phenomenon of the spiritual journey of the Muslim devotees and the stages of their servitude to Allah the Almighty. The essence of Hajj is the journey towards the Almighty Allah (SWT) and the external acts of Hajj, devoid of presence of the heart, are not considered as worship. Thus, Hajj, as a religious obligation and spiritual act, undoubtedly leaves immense religious and spiritual impact not only on the mind of the Hajjis or non-Hajji Muslims of Bangladesh, but also the entire Muslim society of the country. As following the custom of Bangladeshi Muslim society, all worldly obligations of a Hajji have almost been discharged before performing Hajj, a Hajji after his/her return from Hajj is subsequently free to pursue a more spiritual life. It is sincerely believed that a Hajji after completing Hajj will receive special Rahmat (mercy) from the Almighty Allah (SWT) and his worldly problems would be solved easily (Choudhury, 2005, p. 86). Spiritually, the Hajj works as a way of transition and transformation for the Hajjis from a materialistic life to a very spiritualistic one. A Hajji, who performed Hajj correctly, is believed to have returned from Makkah free from sin ‘as clean as a new born baby’. Images of birth are seen in the returning Hajjis and their feelings. Almost all the Hajjis emphasize on the necessity of being exonerated by the Almighty Allah (SWT) from the accumulated sins of their life. In this sense a Bangladeshi Hajji sees the Hajj as a rite which marks the transition from a sinless life to a blessed death. Closely connected to this idea of spiritual rebirth and purification is the expectation of a moral transformation in the returning Hajjis. Everyone in Bangladeshi society expects those who have been to Makkah for Hajj to come back spiritually rejuvenated, displaying a new enthusiasm for the religious life. The Hajjis often describe their Hajj experience in terms of changed inner or spiritual states. Again and again Hajjis tell
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about how they felt themselves transformed by means of Hajj as recounted by Dr. Helaluddin Noman who performed Hajj in 2015. To quote him here:

“When I went to Makkah for Hajj, I was happy and felt very blessed to see the Holy Ka’abah. After my return, I felt very keen to see the house of Allah (SWT) again and again. This feeling could not be expressed exactly in words. It is an eternal and spiritual love.”

Mrs. Razia Begum, who performed Hajj in 2013, described her feelings as:

“I cried when I was returning from the holy mosque of the Prophet (SAAM) and Baitullah. I felt as if I lost my parents or my sons and daughters. It is an attraction forever. Still I cry whenever I see these holy places on the TV screens. Every moment I feel to be there, I feel as if I left my ever-known places. It changed my whole thinking. After every prayer, I pray to Almighty Allah (SWT) to be able to go there again. I remember every time the days I spent over there. Before Hajj I prayed towards Ka’abah and during Hajj I saw the Ka’abah. And after returning home, whenever I stand for prayer that lively Ka’abah has appeared in front of my eyes. It is an indescribable feeling.”

Hajj undoubtedly brings a tremendous change in the philosophy and attitude of the Hajjis towards life and livelihood. As Dr. Helaluddin Noman described that he can never think to do something inconsistent with the Islamic Sharia’h though in minor issues. Hajj made him stronger than before to be dependent on the Almighty Allah (SWT) in every issue of life. Hajj creates a happy mood and cheerful attitude in the mind of Hajjis and thus Hajjis feel better in everyday affairs of their daily life. These psychological transformations and spiritual change are manifested in the daily activities, realm of prayer and other kinds of religious activity of the Hajjis in Bangladeshi society. Md. Abu Shama, who performed Hajj in 2013, illustrated it well when saying thus:

“When I went to Makkah for Hajj and saw everything with my eyes, touched with my hands, prayed at the premises of the Ka’abah, I am thinking very differently. My heart says, stay here forever and never leave it.”

Because of historical perspectives as well as lack of alertness on the part of the Bengali Muslims, many socio-cultural practices infiltrated from Hinduism and Buddhism into the Muslim society of Bangladesh. Many superstitious practices are
prevailing in the society such as worshipping the Pir/Awlias, decorating their graves/shrines, constructing prayer houses on the graves of Pir/Awlias, seeking their help, believing in their spiritual power after their death, offering food and flowers in the names of Pir/Awlias, using amulets etc. When a person who had practised previously these infiltrated alien cultures or any Bida’at, and now goes to Makkah for Hajj, he observes there a very pure practice of Islam which is entirely free from such kind of Shirk and Bida’at. Every Muslim in the society of Bangladesh unquestionably believes in the purity of the practices of Islam at Makkah and Madinah. This practical experience creates a permanent change in the devotional practices of a Hajji. Thus, the Hajjis who had the habit of such kind of Shirk and Bida’at practices, they sincerely abandon it after performing Hajj. The superstitious beliefs for decades vanish permanently as a result of performing Hajj once. It is undoubtedly considered as a revolutionary change in the religious affairs of Bangladeshi Muslim society. Many people who were worshippers of graves of the saints previously after Hajj their minds turn towards pure Tawhid, as Professor Dr. AKM Shahed remarked. He gave examples of several people from his own village who brought radical changes in their beliefs and practices after Hajj. Remembering his father’s Hajj history in 1983, Dr. AKM Shahed recalled that before his father’s journey to Makkah, he concluded all kinds of economic transactions with the people from the belief that it might be his last journey. It was believed an eternal journey and preparation for next life. It leaves positive spiritual impact not only on the life of the Hajji, but also on his/her family members as well as the society to a great extent. Thus, Hajj can change the philosophy of life of a Hajji by changing individual’s inner state, beliefs and preferences, and subsequently he could be spiritually be transformed by performing Hajj. Thus, Hajj brings a positive and remarkable change in the life and society of Bangladeshi Muslims as a force of Islamization.

Hajj inspires a Hajji to be a better Muslim in both faith and practice than before. It encourages regular participation in practices which they unambiguously identify as Islamic and in this sense is seen as part of a process of Islamization among them. Hajjis are more likely to undertake obligatory and supererogatory (nawaﬁl/optional) prayers such as Salat-ut-Tahajjud, Qu’ran recitation regularly etc. They become regular attendants in the mosques to perform five times prayers,
observe obligatory and non-obligatory fasting and follow Islamic principles strictly in the daily affairs of their individual, family and social life. The female Hajjis are never seen to ignore Purdah. The male Hajjis rarely shave their beard as it goes against the Sunnah of Prophet (SAAM). They try to avoid all kinds of unfair, unethical and un-Islamic means in their everyday activities. Even the Hajji forsakes morally unsound habits such as smoking etc. They rarely do cheat, tell a lie or break a promise with others in their social affairs. The Hajjis inspire their fellow brethren and family-members to follow Islamic religious principles in their lives. Thus, in the society of Bangladesh, life of a Hajji has ever been a model of spirituality and Islamic religiosity.

In the interviews with the Hajjis of Bangladesh, it has been found that generally they performed Hajj after completing almost all worldly responsibilities. And after their return from Hajj, they are subsequently free to pursue a more advanced spiritual life. However, this does not mean withdrawing from the world completely. Rather, it simply means that they can now do more spiritual activities. The Hajjis of Bangladesh use this care-free time in observing non-obligatory prayers either in their houses or in the mosques.

Most probably majority of the Hajjis do some religious self-commitment during Hajj which they observe in their post-Hajj life. It increases their devotion to religious practice, honesty in social affairs and induces them to more tolerance and benefaction towards the different social groups as well as pure belief consistent with the Holy Qu’ran and Sunnah. Hajjis in Bangladeshi society usually become more tolerant to the people from different religious groups, sects, and to members of the opposite gender outside their family. Hajj increases experience-based knowledge about global diversity of gender, color, region within the Muslim Ummah and most importantly diversity of opinion within Islam. This knowledge leads them to interact broadly with other groups.

Thus, it may be concluded saying that Hajj, being an Islamic religious obligation inculcates Islamic religiosity and inner spirituality of the Hajjis of Bangladesh as often reflected through their practical dealing in all through the rest of their life after Hajj. They become more meticulous in their religious observances, more honest in their social affairs, more trustworthy in their interactive attitudes,
more reliable in their family commitments, more confident in themselves, and most importantly every moment they remain ever ready to meet their beloved Lord Allah (SWT) with a purified life and a heart bedecked with the jewels of absolute surrender to His will.

G. CONCLUSION

Hajj is the most complete worship and the most comprehensive act of submission before the Almighty Allah (SWT). Hajj is hope for humanity wounded by the deadly blows of materialism and robbed by both atheism and polytheism. Hajj disciplines the human being, teaches Tawhid, purifies his soul, creates unity with other fellow-believers without arrogance, prepares the mind for death, ushers in a feeling of humbleness, and – most importantly – strengthens the faith of a true believer in Him. Hajj has an enormous impact on the life of Bangladeshi Muslims in all respects as the social and religious sentiments run side by side. Hajj not only transforms individual life of the Hajjis but also collective beliefs and practices of the society that spread universal Islamic values. Every year thousands of Bangladeshi Muslims; male and female, perform Hajj. This huge number of Hajjis with the teachings from Hajj and diverse experiences is exerting positive influence on the different aspects of society. Hajj is the most vivid manifestation of believing in and practising Tawhid (belief in a single Deity of Allah). The Hajjis practise true Islam with pure Aqidah (beliefs) during Hajj, which contribute to the spread of ‘True Islam’ among the Muslims of Bangladesh who have been practising many social rites having relation to or shade of Shirk (polytheism) and Bida’at (sinful innovation) because of historical, and socio-cultural interaction with the non-Muslim religious groups. The Hajjis work for social peace and wider tolerance towards every social group irrespective of gender and religion as based on the Islamic teaching of justice and equality. Hajj offers the most evident and effective lesson of equality and brotherhood for mankind. It induces a shift from localized beliefs and practices towards global Islamic practice, increases tolerance and peaceful inclinations, and leads to a more favorable attitudes toward others particularly women. Hajj eradicates such vices as racism, murder, casteism, regionalism, nationalism etc. and permanently annihilates polytheism from the minds of the Muslims who gather
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around the Holy Ka’abah to submit themselves before the will of Almighty Allah (SWT). Hajj also helps spread some Arabian culture into the Muslim society of Bangladesh. The Hajjis in the society of Bangladesh enjoy a position of special respect (Ali S. A., 2017). It also contributes to the spread of Islamic knowledge primarily at the individual level of the Hajjis as well as at the collective level to an appreciable extent. Several commodities are exchanged unofficially between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia during Hajj, which facilitates the trading concerns with the prospect of a rise to a very remarkable level. Spiritually, Hajj undoubtedly represents the essence and spirit of Islam, complete devotion towards the Almighty Allah (SWT), self-sacrifice, equality, and indiscrimination on the basis of color, race, caste, wealth or power. It not only moulds the Hajjis into more sincere and practising Muslims, but also the society at large by their honesty and piety. Hajj is a coveted preparation for the next life as it leads to a spiritual reawakening and improves social status. It betrays their perceptions of denial of the everyday class, gender, and ethnic inequalities. Hajj creates the unity of thoughts and acts by performing divine injunctions and consolidating the pillars of social justice. The Bangladeshi Muslim’s keen attraction to the Holy Ka’abah and the great assembly of the Muslim Ummah during Hajj in a single place for performing a series of common religious acts, rites and rituals evidently create mutual understanding, unity in thinking and tolerant attitude towards others. The most important factor of understanding is the equitable teachings of Islam that bridge the gaps, bring hearts together, create a link between the east and the west, and make the black and the white, the Arabs and the non-Arabs feel sympathy for one another. Above all in the context of the society of Bangladesh, it may confidently be said that Hajj turns a Muslim a better Muslim to the least and this is so way mean contribution of Hajj one of the most fundamental pillars of Islam.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


