IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

MASTER THESIS

BETWEEN STATE AND RELIGION: THE MARGINALIZATION OF ALIYA MADRASA STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH

RUHUL AMIN

THESIS SUPERVISOR

PROF. RAMAZAN ARAS

ISTANBUL, 2021

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by

RUHUL AMIN

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology

THESIS SUPERVISOR

PROF. RAMAZAN ARAS

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

Thesis Jury Members

Title - Name Surname	Opinion	Signature
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University:

Date of Submission Seal/Signature

ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname:

Signature:

ÖZ

DEVLET VE DİN ARASINDA: BANGLADEŞ'TE ALİYA MEDRESESİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ÖTEKİLEŞTİRİLMESİ

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Bu sosyolojik ve antropolojik çalışma, Aliya medrese öğrencilerinin kırılgan durumlarını günümüz Bangladeş'inde incelemektedir. Bangladeş'te Medrese eğitimi, 1971'deki bağımsızlıktan bu yana, her zaman çekişmeli siyasi tartışmaların merkezinde yer almıştır. Bu bağlamda, bağımsızlıktan sonra, laiklik, anayasanın temel direği olarak tanıtıldı ve laik bir ulus inşa etmek için uygulandı. Bu sebeple dini yapı ve kişiler, özellikle de medrese eğitimi, komünalist, ulus karşıtı ve ilkel olarak algılandığı için siyasallaştırıldı ve düşmanlaştırıldı. Bu nedenle Aliya medrese eğitimi 1985 yılına kadar marjinal olarak kaldı ve laik devlet tarafından tanınmadı. Aliya medresesi 1985 yılında kısmen tanındıktan sonra, her ne kadar medrese talebeleri devlet üniversitelerine ve devlet işlerine girmeye başlasa da tarihsel olarak laik söylemin hakim olduğu devlet ve üniversite otoriteleri medrese öğrencilerinin kabulü için bazı ek şartlar koymaya başladı.

Konulan bu ek şartların bir sonucu olarak, yüz binlerce medrese öğrencisi devlet üniversitelerine kabul edilmedi ve eğitim durumları nedeniyle devlet işlerinden reddedildi. Diğer bir deyişle, devletin destek verdiği tarihsel olarak inşa edilmiş yabancılaştırıcı söylem medrese öğrencilerinin devlet işlerinde çalışma fırsatını engelledi. Böylece, medrese öğrencileri, devlet üniversitelerinde ve kamusal alanda şiddete maruz kalarak ulus karşıtı ve komünal unsurlar ile damgalanıyorlar.

Bahsedilen kırılgan durumları incelemek için, bu araştırma günümüz Bangladeş'inde medrese öğrencilerinin ötekileştirilmesi ve dışlanmasının anahatlarını çizerek, soybilimsel ve antropolojik bir yaklaşımla öğrencilerin yaşanmış deneyimlerini tarihsel bir bağlamda anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bu tez aynı zamanda Bangladeş Devlet şiddeti ve ayrımcılığı, Aliya medresesinin sosyolojik ve antropolojik tartışmasına da katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aliya Medresesi, Yapısal Ayrımcılık, Damgalama, Şiddet, Korku, ve Kayıp Jenerasyon.

ABSTRACT

BETWEEN STATE AND RELIGION: THE MARGINALIZATION OF ALIYA MADRASA STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH

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This sociological and anthropological work traces Aliya madrasa students' vulnerability in contemporary Bangladesh. Madrasa education has been at the center of contentious political debate in Bangladesh since independence in 1971. After independence, secularism was introduced as the central pillar of the constitution and applied to build a secular nation. Meanwhile, religious especially madrasa education was antagonized, politicized, and perceived as communalist, antinational, and primitive. For this reason, Aliya madrasa education was marginalized, not even recognized by the secular state until 1985. After being recognized partially in 1985, when Aliya madrasa students started to enter public universities and government jobs, the public university authority, with the blessing of the state, which is historically dominated by the authoritarian secular discourse, began to put several extra conditions for admission of madrasa students.

As a consequence of these extra conditions, hundreds of thousands of madrasa students were denied admission in public universities, and rejected from a government job for their educational background. Nevertheless, this secular state-sponsored historically constructed alienating discourse has cost madrasa students the opportunity to get government jobs. They are subjected to violence in public universities and the public sphere, stigmatized as antinational and communal elements.

In order to study the above phenomenon, this research draws up the trajectory of otherisation and ostracization of madrasa students in contemporary Bangladesh and tries to connect historical trajectories with their lived experiences through a genealogical and anthropological approach. This thesis aims to contribute to the sociological and anthropological discussion of the Bangladeshi secular state, violence, discrimination, and the Aliya madrasa.

Keywords: Aliya madrasa, Structural Discrimination, Stigmatization, Violence, Fear, and Lost Generation.

DEDICATION

To my parents

Abul Hashem and Shahida Begum

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Broadly, there is a saying in my region of Bangladesh that the story you are telling is in fact a life experience of your own. For this reason, this thesis depicts my lifelong experience of experiencing and observing the predicaments of Aliya madrasa students in contemporary Bangladesh. Hence, this demonstrates the discrimination and violence that millions of Aliya madrasa students and I have repeatedly encountered in our daily lives.

I am incredibly thankful to my interviewees, the present and former Aliya madrasa graduates, for coming out, talking to me and candidly sharing their life experiences. It is not often that this happens because it is taboo in Bangladesh to talk about state-sponsored violence and discrimination especially among the Aliya madrasa and in the Muslim community. During my fieldwork, many of my interviewees told me that the reason behind not talking about how they are subjected to discrimination and violence is their future. They didn't want to jeopardize their future concerns. However, the notorious attitude of being silent is now changing with people, especially young Aliya madrasa students, coming out and taking to social media to reveal their predicaments.

My deepest gratitude goes to my advisor Professor Ramazan Aras, a pioneering scholar who knows very well how to push his students to pursue unique research projects. In the beginning, my idea was to work on Bangladeshi 'illegal' workers here in Istanbul. But professor Ramazan Aras opened new windows for me, encouraged me incessantly, and pushed me to work on the Aliya madrasa and how the Aliya madrasa graduates students are subjected to violence and discrimination in contemporary Bangladesh. Throughout this journey, his guidance and patience were invaluable. Without his constant efforts and contribution, this work wouldn't be in the light. Nevertheless, I am highly thankful to Professor Ramazan Aras for allowing me to be his student in my undergraduate and graduate studies. His opinion, thoughts, and memory will be cherished and dictate my life forever.

I want to thank my thesis jury members, Prof. Dr. Nurullah Ardıç and Asst. Prof. Ali Kaya. Despite being so busy, they read my thesis and asserted several changes. Thank you so much.

I would also pay gratitude to Alev Erkilet, Recep Şentürk, Talha Köse, Nursem Keskin Aksay and Emin Yaşar Demirci. Throughout my course work, I had the chance to benefit from their thoughts and experience. Meanwhile, I want to pay my gratitude to Heba Raouf Ezzat, who helped me to view the Muqaddimah by Ibn Khaldun from a new perspective by linking it with contemporary European thoughts.

I am incredibly grateful to my friend Ahmad Sabbir for his valuable comments. His vast experience on the violence in public universities and the construction of Bengali secularism and how its works against madrasa students always provides food for thought for researchers. Meanwhile, I am also thankful to Toha Salim for connecting me with some of my interviewees and former Aliya madrasa graduates and for the enjoyment he provided in playing table tennis with an amateur like me during the intense thesis writing period. While writing the construction of secular Bengali nationalism, my discussion with Mohammad Hossain helped me immensely. Thank you so much for being so supportive and helpful. At the same time, without their sagacious friendship my four year stay in Istanbul would not have been easy. I would also like to thank Abdirashid Diriye Kalmoy, a friend of both diverse reading and great patience, for his valuable comments. I want to pay my thanks to Salma Al- Zamal and Jamie B. Turner for their time and friendship. I want to thank Esra Kalyoncu,the Ibn Haldun University's librarian, for allowing me to use the library during the pandemic. She was extremely tolerable and friendly. Sometimes she offered tea and snacks while I was writing my thesis. This year, I met with a promising British young man named Usama Vania. He always impressed me with his generosity. Thank you for reading my thesis and helping me with final editing.

The fieldwork was not full of flowers. It was time-consuming and vicious because many people didn’t want to talk despite knowing me through their friends. Finally, I want to thank Ibn Haldun University for their financial support throughout this journey, especially for providing me with the, Scientific Research Project Fund (BAP) research fund.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BAL	Bangladesh Awami League
BCL	Bangladesh Chhatra League
BJ	Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CU	University of Chittagong
DU	University of Dhaka
ICS	Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir
UGC	University Grants Commission

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The story of Mizanur Rahman

It was the 13th of July, 2014, the World Cup football final matchday. The final was between Argentina and Germany. I had a chance to watch the final match with my Turkish and Bangladeshi friends in Besiktas square, a popular district of Istanbul. Most of the people around us, especially the Turkish people and a few foreigners, did not hide their support for the German national team while I and my Bangladeshi friends were supporting Argentina. Vendors from different nationalities were selling water, cigarettes, and cold drinks around the crowd. During halftime a young man, who was a vendor, approached me holding several cold water bottles in his hand and two bags on his shoulders; one full of water and one full of cigarettes. He called me by my name and asked me in Bangla (which is my mother tongue) how I was doing and whether or not I recognized him.

Whilst I was trying to remember him, the vendor, Mizanur Rahman, told me how we met in Bangladesh in 2009, at the University of Dhaka (DU), during the submission of the undergraduate admission form to DU. I completely failed to remember him. Then he told me how we met in the Supreme Court square of Bangladesh with several of our friends when a group of madrasa students was submitting a petition to the Supreme Court on behalf of thousands of Aliya madrasa students to revoke the Dhaka and other public universities' decision to not admit Aliya madrasa students in certain departments despite the madrasa students being eligible to study in those departments. Then, suddenly, I remembered him. I couldn't resist hugging him. Nevertheless, I was shocked to see Mizanur as a vendor in Istanbul while he was supposed to be at the study table like many other students of Bangladesh. Perhaps it was the most astonishing day of my life. Psychologically I was devastated to see Mizanur's present situation.

After the final match, we went to a café with my Bangladeshi and foreign friends. There I asked him with respect and compassion how he ended up here in Istanbul with his present occupation. Leave it, please tell me what you are doing here in Istanbul, Mizanur asked me. He was not feeling okay talking in front of my friends, especially the Bangladeshi friends. The next day we met in the same place, and I had the chance to listen to his experience. Mizanur told me that despite his excellent score in the university entrance exam he was denied to enter into the International Relations department and was instead offered to study in the department of Law in DU. Despite this, Mizanur had a passion for international relations and wanted to be a diplomat. Eventually, he ended up going to the University of Chittagong (CU), a prominent public university in Bangladesh, and got admission into their International Relations program. At that time, in 2009, the International relations department was open for madrasa students. While he was in his first year of study in CU, he was brutally beaten by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL)[1] because of his religious dress like long jubba and cap. BCL members accused him of being a member of Bangladesh Islami Chhatra shibir (ICS)[2] despite having no political affiliation. After being brutally beaten, he left the university dormitory and started to live in Chittagong city which is around a 25 kilometers distance away from the CU campus.

While Mizanur was living in Chittagong city, he earned money by tutoring to support his family who were incomeless, and meanwhile was also preparing (for the second time) for another university admission exam. During this time, police arrested him without any charge and demanded five lacks taka (around six thousand US Dollars). He was unable to provide that amount of money and the Chittagong metropolitan police division sent him to the district court with the accusation of being a suspected member of a terrorist organization. Police took him on Ten days remand. He was tortured, beaten, and hung from the ceiling fan for several hours. Erik Edston provides a meaningful study where he showed how Bangladeshi police use “police baton, rifle

[1] Bangladesh has a long history of students politics. Almost every single political party has their own student wing. Bangladesh Chhatra League is the student wing of Bangladesh Awami League, a a secular political party in Bangladesh. For details on the student politics in Bangladeh see, Patwary, Md Enayet Ullah. “Recent trends of student politics of Bangladesh.” *Society & Change* 4, no. 4 (2011): 67-78.

[2] Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir student is a student wing of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, a conservative political party of Bangladesh. For details on the politics of Jammat-e Islami, Upendra Kumar. “Religion and Politics: A Study of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami.” *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities* 7, no. 5 (2017): 146-165.

butt, wooden cane, hot water bottle, roller, iron bar, knuckles, knife, needle, razor, bayonet, sword, gas" (Edston 2005, 19) to torture people.

Bangladesh police have a long egregious history of torture and killing (Ramakrishnan 2013; Mia 2020). Police torturing in Bangladesh enjoys "cultural impunity" (Rafiqul and Solaiman 2003), and state torture became a "normal mode of governance" in Bangladesh (Sluka 2010, 4). The Bangladeshi political ethos, known for its notorious activities, including killing and torturing opposition political parties, provides blank immunity to the police department and judiciary to control the opposition political parties. For this reason, police got associated with extra-judicial killings by using the legal shields of Bangladeshi law (Aziz 2015, 135). The government has supported this cultural impunity and legal shields of the judiciary, no matter who is in power.

Nevertheless, by using all of this unconditional support, Bangladeshi police established a chain to earn money and established a "gray zone" (Al-Bulushi 2021, 2) by using their police power to hunt dissident and oppositional political parties[3]. This expedition of a hunting opposition member of the political party dissident made Bangladeshi police one of the most corrupted institutions in Bangladesh. For this immense corruption, torture and killing, Bangladeshi police lost the trust of the Bangladeshi people. Mamun rashid and Fatema johara showed that only 14.2 percent of people in the capital, Dhaka, 13,2 percent in the rural areas, and other urban areas, only 20 percent of people trust the police in Bangladesh (Rashid and Johara 2018, 138).

After spending almost two years in prison, without any charge, Mizanur left prison with the help of his friends who managed to pay the demanded ransom of the Bangladeshi police. Whilst Mizanur was in prison, he lost his admission to the CU, and after leaving he did not have the financial means to study in a private university which is quite expensive in Bangladesh. Despite his release from prison, police started to come to his home demanding more money. Socially he was criminalized, financially he was broken, and psychologically he was traumatized. This inhumane situation forced Mizanur to decide to leave Bangladesh to save himself and his family. First, he went to Oman by ship from Chittagong port, illegally. From Oman, he moved to Iran

[3] This is a phenomenon that has been used by sociologists and anthropologists to describe a space between war and peace where both state and nonstate actors are engaged to make their own business.

and from Iran he entered Turkey by foot. He lived in Van, a southeastern city of Turkey, for around three months and then he moved to Istanbul with other Afghani, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants, where we met.

The vicious life experience, as a madrasa student, of Mizanur Rahman is not different from thousands of madrasa students in Bangladesh. Almost every madrasa student, if he and his family is not associated with state supported secular political party, has to go through a more or less inhumane experience. Throughout time, the pattern of discrimination and violence has changed but did not end. The acts of criminalizing madrasa students as members of Taliban and other terrorist organizations, anti-national, people belonging to Pakistan and not Bangladesh, fundamentalists who don't belong to the historical Bengali tradition, have accelerated after 2001, when the American led 'War on Terror' started. Like the international media, the Bangladeshi media started to portray madrasa students, broadly the pious Muslims and their lifestyle especially their dress the traditional long white Panjabi and religious caps, keeping a beard, the Burka for women, akin to terrorist groups and the Taliban. The way of life and the religious symbols became open to discussion to criminalize the Muslim's life (Rafi 2017; Hatem 2003; Yaqoob 2008; German 2008). The hate against pious Muslims was sponsored by the secular state and state apparatuses especially media, both in print and visual media. I have discussed this issue in chapter five.

Whilst media were representing pious Muslim as the Other, black soul of Pakistan, most public universities who enjoy autonomous policies, historically dominated by secular ethos; this secular ethos has been constructed by othering Islam and Islamic Institutions, chronologically started to put barriers in terms of not admitting Aliya madrasa students. Thousands of madrasa students, men and women, were denied admission into prestigious departments including English and Bangla literature, gender studies, International relations, development studies, and journalism. This structural discrimination in public universities started from the late nineties and endured until the academic session of 2017-2018. However, on the national level, structural discrimination started long before, after the Independence of Bangladesh, in 1971. After independence, Bangladesh was declared as a secular state and adopted a secular constitution and a secular education system. The religious education system

was deprecated. The Aliya madrasa degree was not recognized by the Bangladeshi state until 1985.

Aliya madrasa provides four particular degrees, Dhakil, Alim, Fazil, and Kamil. Dakhil is equivalent to Secondary School Certificate, Alim is equivalent to Higher Secondary School Certificate, Fazil is Bachelor of Arts, and Kamil is equal to Master's Degree. In 1985, the Dakhil and in 1985 Alim were recognized. The Fazil and Kamil degree respectively were not recognized by the Bangladeshi state until 2006.[4] It appears that between 1971-1987, no madrasa graduates worked in the Bangladeshi bureaucracy because their madrasa degrees were not recognized. The whole Muslim community was out of government jobs. After the recognition of 'Dakhil' and 'Alim' in 1987, a small group of people started to get admission to public universities and subsequently got jobs.

Broadly, since the 1980s, Bangladesh started to enter the globalized economy and apply neoliberal economic policies; the World Bank, the International monitory fund (IMF), and other international financial organizations helped Bangladesh adapt quickly to the liberal economy (Muhammad 2006; Chowdhury 2011; Nuruzzaman 2004). As a consequence of this globalized economy, the export-oriented garments manufacturing sector was booming (Rock 2001). To work in this sector, a huge number of people started to move to the city in search of a job (Afsar 1994; Huq-Hussain 1995).

To gain a place within the new economic opportunities, Muslim family members, especially the young madrasa students, started moving to big cities from rural areas and bringing their families after a particular time. Consequently, this internal migration and other factors like the rise of 'political Islam' made madrasa students knock on the door of public universities in Bangladesh during the late nineties. At that time, the madrasa students were getting admission in the departments such as Islamic history, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu language and literature. At that time, among the pious Muslim community, the university education was understood as being against 'Islamic' education and its values among Muslims. Nevertheless, broadly speaking

[4]"History of BMEd T. Course," Bangladesh Madrasha Teacher's Training Institute, http://www.bmtti.gov.bd/site/page/14beae99-1d79-4de3-876c-1d9b0eac27e1/-

those who did go to universities, used to get admission in the aforementioned departments. For this reason, generally pious Muslim families were not eager to send their kids to public universities for higher education. During my fieldwork, many of my interviewees told me that their parents, especially their fathers, did not go to public universities because of their strict secular ethos.

Within these circumstances in the late nineties, the madrasa student started to become more visible in the public sphere of Bangladeshi universities. The rise of political Islam during 1980-1990 was also a substantial movement (Hasan 2012, 6-10) that accelerated the madrasa students to become more connected with the public sphere and political issues. Broadly, this development of madrasa students leads to a considerable qualm in the secular agencies of the Bangladeshi state. They, especially secular powers in public universities, introduced several conditions or policy mechanisms to keep Aliya madrasa students away from higher education. Despite having equivalency and recognition, thousands of madrasa students were still denied admission to public universities during 1980- 2000. After 2000, the structural barriers started to come out on the horizon. In my fourth chapter, all these structural discrimination mechanisms have been described and analyzed.

Within the discriminated structure, those who got the chance to study in public universities were bullied and beaten because of their educational background and traditional dress-up, and sometimes for their political association with conservative political parties. During my study of anthropology at Jahangirnagar University (JU), one of the leading public universities in Bangladesh, known for its secular lifestyle and sole agent of secularism in Bangladesh, I have witnessed several discriminatory and hateful events against madrasa students. There was displeasure, anger, and agony among secular students against madrasa student presence in the secular university campus. Very often, this displeasure transforms into physical violence. Ever since I got the chance to study in the department of anthropology at JU, I have always pursued to investigate the cause behind the anger directed against a particular religious group of people, madrasa students. The anger and hate have a historical background and a colonial legacy (Membe 2003; Kalman 2010; Morrock 1973; Challand 2020). Without this colonial context, a legacy of the approximately 200 years long British rule in the Indian subcontinent, and the rise of madrasa education as an inevitable part of Muslim

life in South Asia since the arrival of Islam, it would be difficult to envisage how this hate, discrimination got institutionalized.

1.2. A Brief History of Islam and Madrasa education in South Asia

After the emergence of Islam in Arabia in 610 CE, the Indian Subcontinent began to be influenced by Muslim power during the 7th century. "By the mid-seventh century Muslim armies had reached the Hindu Kush, and by 711 an Arab dynasty had established itself in the northwest of the Indian Subcontinent, the area defined by the lower delta of the Indus River, which was then still known by its Arab name, Sindh" (Metcalf 2002 3-4). Muhammad Ibn Qasim, an Umayyad army general, conquered the Sindh in 711 CE (Francesco 1965, 286). After the conquest of Sindh, Ibn Qasim did not stop, he moved and conquered the city of Debul, Nirun (modern Hyderabad), and the Muslim force also captured the towns of Kiraj and Bhelman, near today's Gujrat, one of India's largest cities (Tanvir 2007, 222-223). Muslim rulers worked to proliferate Islamic knowledge within the conquered territory as it was their religious responsibility.

With the conquering of Sindh, a new epic era of Islamic education came on the horizon within the Indian Subcontinent. A considerable number of Arab scholars started to move and live in Sindh and its surrounding cities. Meanwhile, they began to establish madrasa to spread out Islamic education (Sikand 2005, 95). Throughout the time under the Umayyad Caliphate, these cities became home to Islamic knowledge. During Sultan Mahmud's tenure, a Turkish-origin Persian emperor, the Northern part of India came under the rule of the Ghaznavids. Sultan Mahmud was known for his fond love of literature, education, and history. He established a university in Ghaznavid (Leiser 1986 17). For this reason, scholars from Arab regions started to move there due to turmoil in the Middle East, where students received a scholarship; that university had a museum and a considerable number of faculties (Bosworth 1963, 134).

The eleventh century was a golden age for Islamic education. The first madrasa was established in Baghdad, institutionally, in 1065 as a knowledge production institution by Nizam al-Mulk, the Persian vizier to the Seljuk Empire. (Berkey 2010, 43). Around the Seljuk Empire, an extensive number of madrasas were established by Nizam al-

Mulk (Makdisi 1961, 1; İhsanoğlu 2020, 173). In terms of teaching authority, these madrasas were independent. They didn't have to take permission from a central authority like in medieval Europe, where the church used to give teaching authority (Makdisi, 1970: 260). For this reason, the madrasas became a place for producing thoughts and knowledge to keep harmony in society. The emergence of madrasa influenced and shaped the European renaissance as Mehdi Nakosteen states, "The works of hundreds of translators not only enriched and created or enlarged many Western universities but brought about the Western Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" (Nakosteen 1984, 42). Nevertheless, the rise of Nizamiyya madrasa in the Seljuk Empire shaped the Islamic education system in the Indian subcontinent. By following the Nizamiyya madrasa model, the madrasa tradition in South Asia started formally in the thirteen century with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (Bano, 2013, 914).

The Delhi Sultanate, made up of five dynasties, ruled an extensive part of India from 1206 to 1526. Every dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate showed tremendous appreciation and interest for madrasas and Islamic education. The first madrasa of the Delhi Sultanate was introduced by Shams-ud-din Iltutmish (1211- 1236) in the beginning of his tenure, and the name of the madrasa was 'Madrash-I- Muizzi (Riaz 2008, 58). Muhammad bin Tughlag (1324-1351) established 1000 madrasas only in Delhi (Sikand 2005, 95). At the same time, the Hauz Khas madrasa was established by Firuz Shah in Delhi in 1352. Within a short period the Hauz Khan madrasa "become one of the foremost institutions of Muslim learning in the Sultanate and one of the largest and best equipped seminaries in the Islamic world" (Welch 196, 167). The faculty of these madrasas was the leading Islamic scholar who flew from central Asia and the Middle East due to the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate.

These madrasas' main aim was to materialize Islamic knowledge among general people and educate people for a state job and become knowledgeable subjects. The main subjects taught in these madrasas were 1. Grammar (etymology, syntax, and rhetoric), 2. Literature, 3. Logic, 4. Islamic Law and its principles, 5. Qur'anic commentary, 6. Hadith, 7. Mysticism, 8. Scholasticism (Nayyar 2003, 219). At the same time the Sultans patronized 'ulama' to establish madrasa in different parts of the Indian Subcontinent, and some of the 'ulama' were from Iran, central and west Asia

(Sikand 2005, 95, 96). At that time, in the court and the administration, the presence of ulama was conspicuously visible (Ahmad 1970, 2). Above all, women's education distinguished this era from others. With the empires support and the patronage of wealthy Muslims, madrasas and maktabas were flourishing, Female students used to memorize Quran and study other subjects; Ibn Battuta, the famous Muslim traveler states, "One of their qualities is that they all know the great Qur'ān by heart. In the city, I saw thirteen schools for girls and twenty-three for boys; the likes of which I had not seen elsewhere" (Ibn Battuta, 1976, 179). The Umayyad Caliphate introduced madrasa and Islamic institutions in the Indian subcontinent. These institutions, the madrasas, and maktabs got transformed from a seed to a juvenile tree under the Delhi Sultanate.

Under the Mughal Empire, established by Zahīr ud-Dīn Muhammad Babur (1526), the Indian subcontinent went under unassailable stability, including the termination of foreign aggression and the conclusion of internal conflict. This essential political and social stability helped madrasa education to flourish around the empire and get institutionalized. Ali Riaz outlined two reasons that helped madrassa education become a burgeoning institution under the supervision of the Mughal Empire. First, "The political stability owing to the consolidation of power at one center, resulting in a centralized bureaucracy; and second, the growing influence of the ulama vis-à-vis the Sufis as the dominant religious figures" (Riaz 2008, 61). Under the Mughal empire, the madrasa education "was diffused by the three-fold means of (a) Maktab and Madrasas, (b) Mosques and monasteries, and (c) private houses which resembled the university or higher education" (Ojha 1950, 234).

The founder of the Mughal empire, Zahīr ud-Dīn Muhammad Babur, the pioneering figure of institutionalized education in the realm by establishing and providing state support to new madrasas. Babur was himself a writer, and his famous contribution to world literature is the Baburnama. Nrendra Nath Law states that almost all the Mughal Emperors took much interest in the education of the people and diffusion of learning (Law 1916, 190). After Babur, Akbar (1556 - 1405) established "department dispensing state patronage to educational institutions", Jahangir (1606 - 1627) introduced a law that if a rich person or traveler died without an heir, his or her wealth

would be spent to repair for the madrasa, Emperor Shahjahan (1627 - 1658) established the imperial college of Delhi (Riaz 2008, 62).

Akbar was one of the most controversial and reformist emperors of the Mughal empire. During his tenure (1556- 1405), he brought an extensive reformation in almost every sector of the empire; education being the most significant one. From the beginning of his tenure, Akbar dreamed of a united Indian subcontinent under the Mughal Empire where every religion would have equal rights and opportunities. For this reason, Akbar abolished jizya – a tax that was to be payed by Non-Muslim who were living under Muslim rulers in 1564. At the same time, Akbar also lifted the ban on erecting temples around the empire (Kuczkiewicz 2011, 77).

Simultaneously, Akbar also established the educational institute and madrasa where non-Muslims were allowed to study. Akbar brought fundamental changes in the madrasa syllabus. A new syllabus was introduced, the old one, prepared by Nizamiyya madrasa in Baghdad, was eradicated. According to the new syllabus

> Every student was then expected to study arithmetic, geometry, ethics, agriculture, astronomy, physiognomy, economics, civics, logic, and medicine, and the higher science were divided into three distinctive parts, the theology, The higher sciences were divided into Ilahi (theology), Riyadi (comprising mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, and music), and Tabi'i (physical sciences). History was important. In studying Sanskrit, students were to learn Vyakarana (grammar), Vedanta (philosophy), and Patanjali (Yogism) (Nayyar 2003, 220).

These fundamental changes made the madrasa and other Islamic institutions irreverent. Akbar also introduced ‘Persian’ as a state language. Consequently, the royal court and Mughal elites, and the royal family started to adopt Persian as their primary language (Alam 1998, 324). While these fundamental changes were happening in the sphere of education, Akbar introduced a new religion called Dīn-i-Ilāhī, ‘Religion of God’ in 1582. The Dīn-i-Ilāhī was a new religion “intending to merge the best elements of the religions of his empire, and thereby reconcile the differences that divided his subjects” (Nur 2017, 79). The ‘The Dīn-i-Ilāhī was a combination of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. The main intention of Akbar was to consolidate the Mughal empire and give feelings to non-Muslims, including Hindus and Christians, that they were living in their land under a ruler of that they could identify as their own. All these developments marginalized ‘Islam’ and its place in the empire especially among the other religious groups. The ulama lost their social status,

absolute authority to define religion, their jobs, and the influence of Islam's place in society was bygone (Ahmad 1970, 7)

During the tenure of Aurangzeb (1658-1707), reforms also took place, but the reforms were to consolidate Islam, Islamic ethos, and Islamic institutions around the empire. Aurangzeb reinstituted Islamic law in the empire, reduced alcohol consumption, sale of wine, and promoted morality and righteousness. For this reason, until today, Aurangzeb remains the most controversial man in the Indian subcontinent (Truschke 2017, 66, 77). Meanwhile, the ulama' regained their status in the empire, religious institutions like madrasa returned to their previous position. At this time, the development curriculum, Dars-i- Nizami, was applied to Farangi Mahal madrasa. The Farangi Mahal madrasa was established by a group of ulama; the house was given by Emperor Aurangzeb. During this time, with the precise support of emperor Aurangzeb, the Farangi Mahal madrasa became one of the central Islamic institutions in the Mughal empire. In addition, the Dars-e- Nizami became a widely accepted curriculum for all other madrasas. The Dars-e- Nizami curriculum included diverse subjects such as Grammar/syntax (Sarf/ Nahw), Rhetoric (Balagha), Philosophy (Hikmat), Logic (Mantiq), Theology (Kalam), Jurisprudence (Fiqh), Principles of jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh) (Robinson 1998, 153).

With the death of Aurangzeb (March 3, 1707), the decline of the Mughal empire coincided with the rise of the British as a colonial power in India. However, the contribution of Mughal ulama and especially Aurangzeb to institutionalized madrasa education and the Dars-e- Nizami curriculum, was a phenomenon, and this phenomenon has been dictating the madrasa education until today in south Asia despite several political, religious, and social changes, ruptures and transitions.

After the collapse of the Mughal empire, the fate of Islamic education changed. During the British colonial era, madrasas, like other educational institutions, became state apparatuses (Althusser 2014, 485) of controlling the lifestyle of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. By controlling education, the British colonial power intended to establish a new identity that would be loyal to the British empire as Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), a member of the supreme council of the East India Company from 1834 to 1838, known for his educational reforms, stated;

> We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions who we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect. (Macaulay's Minute on Education, 1835, 14).

Macaulay's statements provide a clear position of the aim of the colonial British education system. During the rigorous British colonial rule, madrasa education became more political and connected with rebellion against British colonial rule. Both parties, the British and the Muslims wanted to make sure that they were maintaining their influence on society with their political presence and control. This phenomenon significantly shaped the nature, scope, and role of madrassas in colonial India. Firstly, the colonial administration's policies toward education, secondly, the endeavors of Muslims to locate their position within the changing political structure after the demise of the Mughal Empire, and thirdly, the rise of identity politics within the Muslim community in India (Riaz 2010, 76).

With these circumstances, during the British colonial power, madrasa education and Muslim identity were perceived to be a political identity, inspired by the Mughal empire and Islamic ethos. Interestingly, despite having political affiliation, the madrasa was not homogenous, were only Muslim students used to study. Many Hindu students used to study in madrasa at that time, especially those who intended to work in the judiciary. (Gupta 2012, 26). The role of the battle of Plassey (1757) is vital to understand this identity formation, struggle and incessant revolt against British colonial power. In this war the governor of Bengal, Mirza Muhammad Siraj-ud-Daulah, commonly known as Siraj-ud-daulah, was defeated by the British army. The battle of Plassey was not a simple battle as it was a paradigm shift battle that contributed vastly to starting British colonial rule in some parts of the Mughal empire. After this battle, the British colonial force started to capture other parts of the Mughal empire and in 1858, the Mughal empire was officially dismissed (Edwardes 2017; Chakravarti 2020; Lyer 2014).

To gain control over Muslim's lives and produce generations of Muslims loyal to the British colonial power, the British colonial power attempted to establish an independent educational institution for the Muslim community in Bengal. The Calcutta Aliya Madrasa was established in 1780 by governor-general Warren Hastings (Kochahar 2011, 10). Kochahar (2011) also states that the establishment of the

Calcutta Aliya Madrasa was because a group of people from the Muslim community requested the British colonial power to establish an institution. Nonetheless, Amit Kumar Suman arguing that "the establishment of Calcutta madrasa shall be seen in the larger context of the role played by colonial education in the spread of colonialism itself" (Suman 2020, 4). However, we can see how this observation could be mistaken upon closer inspection. After the battle of Plassey (1757) Bengal was captured and governed by the British, their language being English, whilst madrasa education was taught in Persian and Arabic and as such the ulama' and madrasas were considered to be enemies of the Raj because of their incessant resistance against the British army. For this reason, there was a need to establish a new religious institution that could educate the Muslim community by cooperating with the British colonial power. For this reason, the establishment of Aliya madrasa was seen as a mechanism of the "cultural project of control" (Izgi 2015, 91) over Muslim life and the institutions that dictate Muslim life.

In the beginning, the newly born Aliya madrasa system accommodated an inclusive syllabus. The Aliya Madrassa aimed to include Dars-e-Nizami, the madrasa curriculum developed by "Mulla Nizem al-din Muhammad (d. 1748), the founder of the Farangi Mahall family of scholars in Lucknow in northern" (Zaman 1999, 300). By this time, Aliya madrasa went through several reforms, the most conspicuous of which came in 1823, when British colonial powers introduced European science; although the attempt failed, the British did not stop (Kochahar 2011, 15). Despite resistance from the Muslim community and even some British official themselves (Zaman 1999, 300) , the British colonial power continued interfering and they seized control of making syllabuses for the Aliya madrasa and what would be studied in the classroom. Most importantly, the medium of studying was changed. "In 1826, English courses were introduced at the elementary level and then in 1850, a major reorganization resulted in the establishment of two separate departments within the madrassa: Arabic (the senior department) and the Anglo – Persian (the junior department)" (Banu 2013, 915). This reform had an immense influence on the students of the madrassa who were coming from the very elite class of Muslim society. With this curriculum, the senior group had the opportunity to study Arabic and junior students got the chance to get in touch with English from an early age.

The most extensive reforms came after a few years when the British attempted to change the language of the state and higher courts. The British replaced Persian with English as the official language and medium of the higher courts of law in 1835, and the regional language became the medium of the lower courts in 1837 (Riaz 2010, 78). Undoubtedly this decision resulted into the worst Muslim period under British rule. There were several factors but the most important factor was a religious one. At the time, Persian was perceived as a language of religion alongside Arabic and hence a threat to British rule. Following the change, Muslims lost their trust in British rule. Despite this macabre situation, the British came out with other reforms that destroyed the whole traditional structure of the Muslim community in United India, and those reforms swept up the dreams of getting government jobs for thousands of young Muslims who knew Arabic and Persian. In 1837, when Governor-General Henry Hardinge declared that only those with Western-style education and knowledge of English were eligible for governmental employment or for a career in public life, the utility of Persian ceased immediately, and the employability of madrassah-educated youth became almost non-existent. Robinson also depicted this situation in his writing stating that: Madrasa education went utterly irrelevant in terms of the demands of the employment market when the Persian language was replaced with the English language in 1837 (Robinson 2007, 235).

While the British colonial power attempted to take control of the entire Islamic education system, there was active resistance from the ulama and Muslims against this takeover. The colonial education system was constructing a new kind of Muslim identity that was compliant to the British colonial power, against the tradition of Islamic ethos and lifestyle. For this reason, to keep Islam and the lifestyle of Muslims unassailable and revitalize Muslim communities and their space in the society (Tuna 2011, 545), ulama started to establish madrasas around the Indian subcontinent, Darul Uloom Deoband (1867), Nadwatul Ulema (1894), Darul Uloom Mazahirul Uloom, Saharanpur, and many others (1898), (Nayyar 2003, 224; Haque 1975, 271-275; Winkelmann 2005, 21-22). These madrasas did not take any government funds in contrast to the Aliya madrasas which were totally dependent on British funding. Interestingly, being far away from religious ethos was seen as the leading cause of the predicament of the Muslim community at the time, and only through correctly understanding the Quran and Hadith could moral purity be realized for the purposes

of preventing the destruction of the Muslim community. This thought broadly defined Sunni Islam in India (Metcalf 2010, 94) and the Indian subcontinent. What we have witnessed here is that, broadly speaking, the madrasas during the colonial period were developing in two different directions. The first one involved the Aliya madrasa spreading out with colonial power and funding. The second one involved the Deobandi tradition without any state funding as Barbara Metcalf described "financially, the school was wholly dependent on public contributions, mostly in the form of annual pledges, not on fixed holdings of waqf, pious endowments contributed by noble patrons" (Metcalf 1978, 112). At the same time, the Deobandi tradition encouraged its followers to not be associated with the state as Robinson states "deoband offered was a way of being Muslim with as limited a relationship as possible with the state" (Robinson 1988, 4). Now the question is how institutions run without state financial and other assistance which have a history of incessant rebellion against British colonialism. Actually, at that time, the Deobandi tradition developed a strict contract with general Muslims in the Indian subcontinent and provided them with both religious and spiritual assistance to get in touch with "pure Islam' as Metcalf states "the Deobandi ulama, in contrast, sought to create a body of religious leaders able to serve the daily legal and spiritual needs of their fellow Muslims apart from government ties" (Metcalf 1978, 212).

The British colonial power also established another four Aliya madrasas in the Muslim majority regions of Hugli in 1871, Dhaka, Chittagong, and Rajshahi in 1873 "to "realize the Muslim ideals of liberal education" (Zaman 1999, 301). Because the colonial power wanted to understand how Muslim education has worked, influenced, and dictated Muslim life, Timothy Mitchell states, "colonial power required the country to become readable, like a book" (Mitchell 1991, 33). After that, the number of Aliya madrasas started to increase. Whilst the institution of Aliya madrasas grew, the British Raj increased the financial support for them. With the financial support, the Aliya madrasa went through another curriculum reform in 1915 (Rahman 1977, 102, 115). With this curriculum reform, the English language became the mandatory subject by replacing Persian and Arabic. At the same time, this reformation included history, geography, and other secular subjects. Few Aliya madrasas rejected this reform and those who accepted were called reformed or new scheme madrasas. After the 1915 reformation, the Aliya madrasa was divided into two categories, the reformed or new

scheme madrasa and the old scheme madrasa (Riaz 2008, 72). After that Aliya madrasa went through several other reformations. With every reformation, the Islamic influence on the Aliya madrasa curriculum decreased. This reformation was misleading because the British colonial administration examined and administered educational systems in India through the prism of their own concepts and categories. However, the impact of such an approach was not confined to British understanding of education in India, rather it later shaped the way the ulama and the ruling class of Pakistan conceptualized and materialized madrasa reform as Zaman states:

> In their effort to understand and regulate the systems of education prevalent in India, to relate them to their own ideas of how education ought to be imparted and to what end, and to reform the local systems in view of their own perceptions, colonial officials routinely invoked what to them were familiar and often self-evident concepts and categories (Zaman 1999, 295).

So the British colonial power changed the whole idea of madrasa reformation in the Indian subcontinent by introducing the Western prism. Still today when secular elites talk about madrasa reformation they rely on the Western prism as the British did in the time of the colonial era. When the British left the Indian subcontinent, following the independence of India and Pakistan, the Calcutta Aliya madrasa moved to Dhaka.[5]

While the British took over the whole Aliya madrasa education system, from the very beginning, the British colonial power employed very divisive ruling tactics to take control over the Mughal empire. To facilitate this, The British colonial power, they started to rewrite Indian history where Muslims were considered as the Other. To establish a substantial distance between Hindus and Muslims, the British colonial power did every possible thing as prominent British historian Francis Robinson states "From the very beginning of the serious study of India in the eighteenth century, Warren Hastings and the orientalists around him-Jones, Halhed, Wilkins-thought of India in terms of Hindus and Muslims" (Francis 1998, 273). As well as the history writing process, Muslims were considered as Other and foreigner, the census was another weapon that antagonized Muslim and Islamic institutions during that time

[5] "Aliya Madrasa", Banglapedia : National Encyclopedia of Banglaesh, https://www.banglapedia.org/

and this was used by the British to marginalize Muslims and their existence in the Indian subcontinent. In the first census of British India, 1872, the people were counted by their affiliation with religion, tribe, and cities or villages. It was the first time in history when Hindus came to know that they are the majority and Muslims are the minority in British India. After that, the majority and minority war started. And this war gave British Raj an immense opportunity to appease the rebellion movement against British Raj (Walby and Haan 2012; Guha 2003; Samarendra 2011; Stewart 1951).

The British colonial policy of 'divide and rule' established a new kind of religious identity in both communities, and this newly formed identity was based on class which was generally western-educated bourgeoises including, Mahatma Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Rabindranath Tagore (Pernau 2013; Khare 1989). Specifically the British policies of 'divide and rule' fueled the fire of religious-based nationalism, and this religious nationalism also contributed to lasting British colonialism in some contexts. This is because the newly created aristocrats, both in Hindu and Muslim communities, wanted to make their own religious state. The British used this to sustain their rule and divide people based on religious affiliation.

With this kind of tortuous identity construction, dramatically shaped and reshaped by colonialism throughout history, after the liberation war in 1971, the newly born Bangladesh went through a rigorous secular state-building process that had little connection with the majority of people's concerns at that time. Authoritarian secular Bengali nationalists were in the power and wanted to establish a secular Bangladesh by othering Muslim identity. They excluded Islam from the Bangladeshi constitution and restricted Islamic education. All of their policies and nation-building processes antagonized the pious Muslim lifestyle and their institutions including Aliya madrasa and other religious educational institutions. I have discussed these historical developments of politicization and antagonization of Aliya Madrasa in Bangladeshi politics in chapter three.

So whenever we study the institutionalized hate and discrimination against madrasa students in Bangladesh, we need to remember that people like Mizanur Rahman were victims of that mechanism like many others, and we need to understand the complex

British colonial rule and their policies which established hate against the Muslim community and their institutions in the Indian subcontinent especially in the Bengal region and in Bangladesh.

However, throughout the fieldwork and post fieldwork duree, I have endeavored to stick to three particular objectives in this ethnographic study. The first objective is to explore the cause of discrimination and violence that Aliya madrasa students have faced in contemporary Bangladeshi society with a particular focus on the public universities. The second objective is to reflect on the lived experience of madrasa students, their struggle in public universities and in government jobs, in addition to how they deal with political violence and discrimination, and Islamophobic attacks. And the third and final objective is to offer an ethnographic account of madrasa students who were denied admission in public universities, subjected to physical violence and lynching, and how this structural and political violence led to the disappearance of a generation of madrasa students from the public sphere of Bangladesh.

The principal aim of this ethnographic study is to give diverse forms of voice to the discriminated and marginalized Aliya madrasa students who are subjected to violence and discrimination by the multifaced post-colonial contemporary Bangladeshi, which has been described as a "party state." (Suykens 2018, 891) . This post-colonial Bangladeshi state inherited the British colonial's divide and rule policies. However, this ethnographic study also aims to contribute to the study of the Bangladeshi state and the madrasa study in Bangladesh. By doing this, I will endeavor to show how the secularism is used as an ideological apparatuses in marginalization of Muslim by politicizing and antagonizing the religious institutions like madrasa in Bangladesh. In addition, this study also includes life stories which documents structural discrimination in the education and government job sector, and violence in public universities.

The second chapter of this work includes the methodology and ethnographic techniques that I have employed for this study. As a former Aliya madrasa student, both as an insider and an outsider, the question of my positionality played an important role in understanding the predicament of Aliya madrasa has also been discussed. Nevertheless, I have discussed the tortuous dynamic relationship between myself as

an interviewer and the interviewees, the Aliya madrasa students. Here I have demonstrated through discussion of the multiplex inter-subjective dynamics in my fieldwork especially during interview sessions; the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, the information sharing, and the trust issue.

In the third chapter, I have tried to depict the genealogy of politicizing and antagonizing madrasa education in the secular Bangladeshi state after independence in 1971. The politicization started immediately after independence by establishing a secular constitution in a 'Muslim majority country'. With the starting of Western, especially American imposed, 'War on Terror', madrasa education was antagonized in Bangladesh. Layers and multilayers have enmeshed this politicizing and antagonizing process.

The fourth chapter is divided into five subsections. The first subsectiondeals with discrimination against madrasa students. I have provided a historical overview on how the Bangladeshi secular state and their local representative, the university administration, discriminates against madrasa students in terms of getting admissions to Bangladeshi public universities despite having a good score in university entrance exams. The second subsection is describes the violence against madrasa students especially in public universities. The third section concentrates on Gender violence and Muslim women in public universities. The fourth section is describes the symbolic violence in the everyday lives of madrasa students. The last and fifth subsection discusses how madrasa students have been excluded from Bangladeshi nation state building and stigmatized as 'Pakistani', members of the Taliban, communalist and anti-national.

In the fifth chapter, I will discuss how generation after generation of Aliya madrasa students have been growing up with the fear of violence and discrimination in higher education, thr agony of being ostracized from mainstream society and the anxiety of not being employed in both the private and government job sectors because of their educational backgrounds and life styles. At the same time, I will also discuss how generation after generation of Aliya madrasa students lost their places in the public memory of Bangladesh. It seems as though they never existed.

In the concluding chapter, chapter six, I have depicted the world of Aliya madrasa students and how it is full of trauma, fear, and anxiety for the future. In this chapter, I have also provided a substantial picture of how Aliya madrasa students have been growing up in Bangladesh in 'Limbo'. They live a life between the shackles of the state and religious authority. The secular state is reluctant to give them governmental jobs, and the religious authority is unenthusiastic to give them a place in the religious arena because they don't have much authority in dealing with traditional texts. Nevertheless, this study examines the collective experience of violence and discrimination that Aliya madrasa students face in Bangladesh. This work examines the disparate genealogical relationship between secular state and religious institutions such as Aliya madrasa, subjective and collective experience of discrimination of Aliya madrasa students in higher education in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, this research also examines how a particular religious group of students has been subjected to state violence and discrimination in the job sector and how this everyday violence and discrimination construct and reconstruct their place in the society.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Fieldwork has been, and remains, the defining mark of the discipline of anthropology (Rabinow 2007, XI). During the fieldwork, the researcher gathers data by applying the anthropological methodology. This chapter will provide the research methodology and techniques that I employed in my fieldwork during the summer of 2018 and 2019 in Bangladesh, and spring in Turkey in 2020. At the beginning of this chapter, I will lay out a critical description of the discussion of the idea of fieldwork in the contemporary anthropological arena. I will also give a theoretical and conceptual analysis of my methodological approaches and the main reasons for choosing these particular methods for this study. Nevertheless, my fieldwork experience, difficulties and obstacles both in Bangladesh and Turkey, will also be addressed.

Additionally, I will discuss how the idea multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus 1995) has helped this research project to materialize a different but unique story of the violence and discrimination of the Bangladeshi state against Aliya madrasa students. Meanwhile, the idea of nativity (Narayan 1993), will also be discussed. Since I am a native of Bangladesh, conducting the fieldwork was not easy for me. People had the qualm to talk about their situation. Meanwhile, my native identity allowed me to get in touch profoundly with some of my interviewees. For this reason, this chapter also will trace my fieldwork experience, challenges, and silences.

Since independence, Bangladeshi society has gone through several dramatic changes such as the imposition of secularism while the vast majority of the population was Muslim and the disregard of religious education, especially madrasa education. By antagonizing and criminalizing madrasa education as a communalist and backward, the Bangladeshi states always portrayed madrasa education as anti-national. After the beginning of the war on terror, the process of making madrasa students enemies of the state accelerated. For this reason, whatever has been written about madrasa education is entangled with the question of security, extremism, and terrorism (Alam 2020, 1-2;

Borker 2018, 86). Nevertheless, whenever a crime has been committed by someone who has a madrasa education background, the madrasa education has been held accountable for the crime, not the person. At the same time, if a university or college student committed a crime, that has been seen as their personal crime (Salam 2019, 11). This making of the enemy is intended to feed Western narrative and discourse (Noor, Bruinessen, and Sikand 2008, 9-12)

This narration also produces and reproduces a similar discourse that raises questions about the compatibility of madrasa education under a secular nation-state like Bangladesh. This discourse criminalizes the madrasa students, especially in the Bangladeshi context. In the 'The Question of Aliya Madrasa in Contemporary Literature' section, I discussed the nature of the contemporary academic knowledge production on madrasa and how this knowledge production is politically motivated, partial, and orientalist. At the end of this chapter, I will briefly discuss the methodological limitations of this research as well.

2.1. Structuring and Constructing the Ethnographic Fieldwork

Contemporary anthropology has been known as a 'field science', especially socio-cultural anthropology. The particular reason behind this ground is the anthropological methodology of studying any specific society or phenomenon. In anthropological methods, researchers are expected to contemplate and to collect first-hand data from their chosen field. This data must include every perspective of that particular phenomenon contributing to society and human life. Margaret Mead notes that there is no other way to collect data as a prominent anthropologist, "We still have no way to make an anthropologist except by sending him into the field: this contact with living material is our distinguishing mark" (Mead 1961, 476). For this reason, the fieldwork data is central to anthropological studies since it reflects the studied phenomena.

Throughout my fieldwork and pre-fieldwork durée, I was thrilled with the idea of fieldwork and how it drives researchers into several interconnected roads. The notion of fieldwork provided me with an enormous scale of space where I had the chance to gather data from several different sources. After collecting data in every phase of my fieldwork, I was filled with suspicion and anxiety because I was worried about whether

this data would be sufficient to depict the current predicaments of Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh. This conflicting and dilemma-ridden situation has troubled me throughout the whole process of this research project. Nevertheless, the fieldwork data I obtained was crucial in expanding my understanding of the subject matter of my study.

In the colonial European anthropological understanding, the ethnographic journey of "an ethnographer is expected to thoroughly access the 'primitive' others' backstage without necessarily divulging too much of his or her own" (Jackson Jr. 2012, 493) perspective and previous knowledge. This definition of fieldwork could provide an actual depiction of colonial or Victorian anthropology and the intention behind the idea of Victorian anthropology. Nevertheless, like any other discipline in social science, particularly after the second world war the world of social anthropology started to change as Talal Asad states, "anthropology does not merely apprehend the world in which it is located, but the world also determines how anthropology will apprehend it" (Asad 1973, 12). Nevertheless, Non-European anthropologists, during the 1970 and 1980s, under the changing circumstances, have started to work and explore their societies. The exploration was based on rethinking, revising, and reassessing the fieldwork process and techniques. (Fahim and Helmer 1980, 644). The idea of 'Indigenous Anthropology' gradually started to question the traditional western anthropological practice that portrays nonwestern as the Other. Albert Memmi, a French-Tunisian sociologist, considered this new era, the rise of 'Indigenous Anthropology' as "For the oppressed to be finally free" (Memmi 1969, 181). Hence, my fieldwork experiences have allowed me to make the narratives of my interviewees central in my study, contrary to what was the norm, armchair anthropology in the Victorian Anthropology.

These changing anthropological methods, which produced knowledge that claims to stay far away from Eurocentrism and reflection of that particular society, changed the idea of fieldwork dramatically. Wardle and Blasco state that Ethnographic studies and the ethnographic method are dynamic analytical and research tools that produced actual knowledge and findings of human societies and communities throughout history, making ethnography a critical methodology (Wardle and Blasco 2011, 125). On this state, with the idea of ethnography, I would deal with several questions. Firstly,

what is ethnography? Secondly, with the fundamental limitation of fieldwork, how would I drown an ethnographic periphery to conduct my research?

According to Dick Hobbs, "ethnography is a research method located in the practice of both sociologists and anthropologists, and which should be regarded as the product of a cocktail of methodologies that share the assumption that personal engagement with the subject is the key to understanding a particular culture or social setting" (Hobbs 2006, 101). Here Hobbs emphasizes researchers' engagement with a particular culture and social setting. Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo describes ethnography as "the study of people's behavior in naturally occurring, ongoing settings with the focus on the cultural interpretation of behavior" (Watson-Gegeo 1998, 576). However, with this definition, Karen Ann Watson-Gegeois concentrates on a few particular phenomena. Firstly, the study of people's behavior should be in a serene and noiseless setting—secondly, the cultural interpretation. At the same time, British sociologist John David Brewer provided a fascinating definition that includes several aspects of fieldwork. Brewer states,

> Ethnography can be defined as the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' utilizing methods that capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting (if not always the activities) to collect data systematically, but without the meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer 2003, 99).

With this kind of composite understanding of fieldwork, I have tried to stick with the model Ramazan Aras and co (2013) developed for a meaningful ethnography. This model can give a conspicuous architecture of how to do ethnographic oral history projects. An interdisciplinary approach of oral history (Dunaway, 1996) with the penumbra of multi-disciplinary perspective, this method has compatibility with an ethnographic study of violence, fear, and discrimination in the life of Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh. The principal aim of ethnographic oral history is to document the past and the present in a vivid manner that captures people's life stories and experiences. For registering people's life experiences and stories of violence and discrimination, with the ethical boundaries and, languages, and recording techniques, I have followed the project design of Aras and co. (Aras et al, 2013).

Collected life stories and memories of fear, violence, and discrimination, with the context of time, state policies, and social context, must be studied with the data that

have been collected during the fieldwork. The collected fieldwork data must feed the final analysis and the scholarly output. Within this idea of fieldwork, participant observation is another method that helps a researcher collect more pure data and navigate their data in several ways. Participant observation is the central pillar of anthropology. H. Russell Bernard defines participant observation as involving 'getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives' (Bernard 2017, 342). During my fieldwork, I have tried to adopt Bernard's understanding of participant observation technique while I have interacted with interviewees, taking field notes, some of which I visited several times.

My previous experience had driven me to understand collectively, as a member of the Bangladeshi community, as an insider, people's agony of being discriminated against, ostracized from mainstream society and encountering incessant bullying. As a community member of this society, I was privileged to understand the people's gestures, body language, rituals, use of language, and the use of religious linguistic terms with specific political or religious contexts. With all these native experiences, I had developed a meaningful relationship with several segments of society during the summer of 2018. By spending a long time with them, hearing their stories and agony, I aimed to conclude the nature of my fieldwork. During my second phase of fieldwork, in summer of 2019, I had the chance to reach people who were particularly targeted by the government's law enforcement group, such as the police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), because of their dissident opinion and stance against the state.

2.2. A Multi-Sited Ethnography

Since the birth of modern anthropology, ethnographic tradition has been considered for a long time to produce holistic knowledge. This holistic knowledge production system defines current anthropology. Fieldwork is a consequential research methodology that opens analytical and inquiry space for anthropology, and hence it offers clues and exposure to studied subject matters, issues, and topics (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 2). At the beginning of the 18th century, European colonizers spread out worldwide and occupied a vast amount of land. Under their occupation, native and

indigenous peoples and communities were perceived as primitive or uncivilized, and their voices and narratives were marginal in the research outputs and analysis.

European anthropologists used this native, indigenous people, community as their laboratory for gathering data. After the second world war, the 'decolonizing anthropology movement' reformulated the idea of the 'ethnographic field' in anthropology. Within this transformed situation, Gupta and Ferguson proposed the inevitability of changing and redefining the idea of an 'ethnographic field.' According to Gupta and Ferguson, we are all in social spaces and capable of observing, detecting, reading, and analyzing situations. Therefore, we are never out of the field. While we are not out of the field, the fieldwork 'may be understood as a form of motivated and stylized dislocation' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 37). Surprisingly, however, Gupta and Ferguson consider a research area less as a field for collecting data than a site for strategic intervention (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 39). According to the idea of Gupta and Ferguson, the notion of field resembles a more interconnected, malleable, and wide-area not only with the multi-layered research locations but also within a broader and more diverse global context.

With the idea of the multi-lair of the field within the global context, the multi-sited ethnography can provide a holistic space for researchers. Multi-sited ethnography is an amalgamation of numerous interconnected fields. While the traditional ethnographic research approach proposes a confined field where researchers staying in the community for a particular period of time, multi-sited ethnography seeks to combine several sites, where researchers do not stay with the community, rather researchers travel and follow a particular topic, objects, artifacts, symbols or stories, to make a proper understating of that particular community and subject of study. Marcus has considered the multi-sited approach of ethnographic research methodology as self-consciously entrenched in a social and global context that is unique in its own ways (Marcus 1995, 96). Marcus defined multi-sited ethnography as which is

> Designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography. (Marcus 1995, 105).

Here, Marcus suggests investigating the relationship between metaphors, things, symbols, objects, and their connection with the people within the context of time and space. During my fieldwork in Dhaka and Istanbul, I followed the multi-sites fieldwork approach despite the critique that multi-sited ethnography might lead researchers away from the distinctive local perspectives, phenomena, and issues (Walsh 2004, 226). I have tried to talk with people who had experiences of state violence and discrimination but now living in different places, even abroad. This journey, from place to place, university to university, one district to another, helped me to understand their experience and their memory of violence. My ethnography took place in several districts in Bangladesh, including Dhaka, Bogura, Khulna, and Chittagong. In Dhaka, during the summer of 2018, I had a chance to stay with students studying in the Govt. Madrasah-e-Alia Dhaka, in a student dormitory named Allama Kasgori Hall, witnessing their daily lifestyle and struggles. I observed the daily prayers, played cricket, and participated in late-night discussions on many topics. During that time, I conducted 12 interviews; most of the interviews were between one and two hours in length.

After a year, during the summer of 2019, I connected with them through e-mail, social media, and over phone; I went back to Dhaka to continue my fieldwork. In this phase, these interviews were the continuation of the previously conducted interviews. During the second phase of the interviews, my interlocutors were more receptive and felt free to talk. It was a consequence of my efforts, both the first and second phases of fieldwork, to build confidence and, most significantly, the trust between the interviewees and me. During my stay in Allama Kasgori Hall, my informants, the students of Government Madrasah-E-Alia, Dhaka, showed interest in my research. Even some of my interlocutors wanted to see my research work before its publication. They were curious about how their narration was to be interpreted and represented. This curiosity comes from their life experiences. This is because previously many journalists talked to them in a seemingly friendly and open manner, but when they subsequently published their reports, it had nothing to do with the interviews.

I had an amazing time in Allama Kasgori Hall, the students were so generous despite their economic and political hardship. Their internal friendship can be a cause of strong jealousy for anyone. I have witnessed how they lend their money and sometimes dress

to their friends. I have never witnessed stingy behavior in their daily lives. They take care of each other and they don't have fear as Lila Abu-Lughod states by describing her fieldwork experience in Bedouins in Egypt that "the joys of a sociable world in which people hug and talk and shout and laugh without fear of losing one another. I hope that too comes across" (Lughod 1986, xiii).

In August 2019, I visited Bogura, northwestern district of Bangladesh, which is the place of another Government Aliya madrasa named 'Govt. Mustafabia Alia Madrasah', Bogura, for interviews. I received contact in Bogura from my previous interviewee, who was a student of Govt. Madrasah-e-Alia Dhaka. During my stay in Bogura, I participated in the regular classes and met with the faculty members of the madrasa. Three of the faculty members were a former student of Dhaka University who were an Aliya madrasa graduates. I stayed around a month in Bogura, did my interview and participant observation. In both cities, Dhaka and Bogura, I avoided conducting mixed group interviews. The main reason behind this conscious attempt was to avoid political contestation.

On the other hand, In Turkey, mainly in Istanbul, I conducted several interviews. These interviewees were madrasa students. These students are living in Turkey mostly for education. Some of them doing business. Meanwhile, some of them just came here to study and to avoid further political violence.

During my fieldwork, the most significant challenge I faced was conducting interviews and in-depth interviews sessions. In Bangladesh, conducting interviews was difficult because most of my interviewees lived with their families and simultaneously were either doing jobs or preparing for job exams. For this reason, sometimes, it was difficult to find a serene place for my interview. However, the situation was entirely different in Turkey. I conducted most of my interviews in Turkey in students' houses. The environment was friendly. We had considerable time to talk and exchange our thoughts.

Generally, anthropological research methods are known to maintain a sharp distinction between subject and object. This power structure defines the relationship between researcher and interviewee. To avoid a power struggle during the interview session, I tried to engage with the 'narrative ethnography' that was first used as an

anthropological method at the beginning of the 1970s. Narrative ethnography is an approach that provides the nature of the formed relationship between ethnographer and informant who are engaged in "ethnographic dialogue to create a world of shared intersubjectivity" (Tedlock 1991, 70).

The 'narrative ethnography' is holistic and includes work, life, and every other aspect that interplays in our everyday lives. For this reason, sometimes narrative ethnographers are known as native ethnographers, auto ethnographers or sometimes performance scholars (Goodall 2004, 186-188). Meanwhile, I am a former student of the Aliya madrasa; the idea of 'narrative ethnography' helped both my interviewee and me talk and share our thoughts and experiences. Some of the incidents were similar while some were not, but we were aware of violence and discrimination against Aliya madrasa students. Some of my interviewees wanted to know about my experience studying at Jahangirnagar University and how I survived violence as a madrasa student. Once, whilst I was describing a notorious political event involving a student named Zubair Ahmed[6], a student of the department of English, Jahangirnagar University, my interviewee told me that she was in the JU campus and witnessed the chaos of the notorious event. We can consider this interview as intersubjective interaction as Daniel Stern describes this intersubjectivity as "the capacity to share, know, understand, empathize with, feel, participate in, resonate with, and enter into the lived subjective experience of another" (Stern, 2005, 78). Sometimes this intersubjective interaction turns into an interview and counter interview as Sidney Mintz, a prominent American anthropologist, describes this interview and counter interview as an experience where "the ethnographer and his or her informant are interrogating each other" (Mintz 1979, 23).

In this ethnographic study, I interviewed 23 male and 8 female members of Aliya madrasa students. The interviews were between an hour to two hours long. 26 interviews were audio-recorded out of 31; Five of my interviewees refused to record their narration, three of them were women. Consciously, the home of the interviewee was my choice for an interview. The main reason behind choosing a home is that they

[6] When Jubair Ahmed was attacked and died after that day. I was a five minutes walking distance away from the spot where the incident took place. For details, Ashutosh Sarkar, Muntakim Saad, Zubair Killing: HC confirms death for 5 ex-BCL men, *The Daily Star*, January 25, 2018. https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/zubair-killing-hc-confirms-death-5-ex-bcl-men-1524808

will feel free to talk in their comfortable place. I wanted to feel them comfortable. Most of the interviewees live in Bangladesh now, except a few of them who resides in Istanbul, Turkey. My interviewees belong to a different social class but all graduated from Aliya madrasa. I contacted the interviewees through my previous connections. At the same time, two of the interviewees, both of them women, helped me to connect with a few others. Here I have used the snowball sampling technique. Through this technique, I had the chance to get connected with other people through my interviewees and those who had gone through the same experience. Patrick biernacki and Dan waldorf have defined it as:

> The method yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest. The method… is particularly applicable when the focus of study is on a sensitive issue, possibly concerning a relatively private matter, and thus requires the knowledge of insiders to locate people for study (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, 141).

I tried to closely follow the model that Ramazan Aras and co have developed for the interview questionaries' part (Aras et al. 2013). This model of questionnaires is well developed and inclusive and provides a clear path of conducting a meaningful interview by emphasizing interview location, cultural sensitivity, how to structure the interview, and the constructing techniques of questionnaires. Generally, I started the interviews by hearing the detailed life stories of the interviewees. In the first phase, I did not stop them until the interviewee wanted to take a break. In the second phase, I stopped them and asked a question if it was necessary. Several of my interviewees described the similar violent events that they experienced at the University of Dhaka and Jahangirnagar University. I was paying attention to details like their gestures, how they are moving from one narration to another, and the ups and downs of their voices. This process is known as 'thick description' in anthropology. The thick description helps researchers go beyond the scenario and unveil the interviewee's voice and their making of understanding to a particular phenomenon and event. Joseph G. Ponterotto describes thick description as something that "captures the thoughts, emotions, and web of social interaction among observed participants in their operating context" (Ponterotto 2006, 542). Throughout my fieldwork, I endeavored to go beyond the state-sponsored narration about madrasa students such as the accusation that madrasa students are anti- Bangladeshi, weak in English, black soul of Pakistan, and want a theocratic state. Instead, I have materialized how the madrasa students, as citizens in

contemporary Bangladesh, were subjected to violence, discrimination, and how they grew up in their motherland with fear and trauma.

Despite being an insider of the Aliya madrasa community, I restricted myself and gestures to minimize the appearance that I was aware of the situation of Aliya madrasa and the predicament of its students. From my understanding as a researcher, it was my responsibility to study their attitudes, behavior, worldview, surrounding environment, and way of life utterly while I was doing my fieldwork. I firmly believed that if my interviewees knew my experience with madrasa, they might have skipped a few phenomena. For this reason, I tried not to unveil my previous experiences even though it was challenging and laborious. Although sharing a common ground with interviewees is not unethical or something that could harm the researcher's objectivity, as Kirin narayan states, "I often share an unspoken emotional understanding with the people with whom I work" (Narayan 1993, 674).

Historically as a "child of Western Imperialism" (Gough 1968, 12) and a discipline that contributed to established the ideological frameworks of colonial racism (Lewis 1973, 583), western anthropology was expected to translate the 'Other' or 'Other Culture' to the western audience, especially to the British Monarchy. The expedition of study of other cultures and society, during the 1980s and 1990s by a group of anthropologists including Talal Asad, and Mary Louise Pratt, started to question the approach of Western anthropology (Claire 2006, 1). This discussion also relates to the debate on who is 'native', who is 'other', and what makes a person 'native' and 'Other'. After the Second World War, 1945, the idea of studying the Other, other culture, and society changed, and anthropologists started to explore their society. This transformation brought up the idea of studying their own society, or "anthropology at home" (Jackson 1987). Now, the question is whether there is there a clear distinction between native anthropology and non-native anthropology. More precisely, is there a clear distinction between the statement or position of native anthropologist and the position of a foreign anthropologist on the specific issues"? Aren't they both of the same type but different self-accounts?

In her work titled "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" Narayan discussed and raised questions, including how a native person is a native anthropologist and how a foreign person is an anthropologist from abroad. Narayan states that native

anthropologists can integrate their own experience in their research and anthropology scholarship by providing an extraordinary discussion of the self and its interconnection with other social statuses. Narayan argues that "enactment of hybridity in our texts; that is, writing that depicts authors as minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life" (Narayan 1993, 672).

Given the complex nature of 'selfness', Narayan also argued that the idea of the native or native informant is also a firsthand product of Western colonialism. The origin of the phrase native informant came in the time of colonialism, where native people were expected to provide exact information about their society, culture, etc, and whose opposite was a Western white anthropologist. Narayan argued that such a classification emerged because "there was little question about the "civilized" outsider's ability to represent "primitive" peoples, and so it was worthy of note when a person excluded from dominant white culture was allowed to describe his or her society" (Narayan 1993, 682).

Moreover, Narayan raises a significant question regarding the issues of 'insider' and 'outsider' positionality: "the extent to which anyone is an authentic insider is questionable" (Narayan, 1993, 672). Who is an "outsider" and who is an "insider" is a crucial and complex issue in anthropological fieldwork contexts. Beyond these name tags, every researcher has their own subject position in relation to his or her research subjects. Narayan argues that researchers need to "rethink connections throughout the fieldwork" since assumed subjection positions and relations are complex and intricate (Narayan, 1993, 676). In the context of my research, I had to be reflective about my own subject position as a male researcher who graduated from the Aliya madrasa, studied in a public university in Bangladesh where the secular ethos is dominant, and pursued graduate studies in a faraway foreign country. My own religious and class background would easily differentiate me from many of my interlocutors despite me being considered as an 'insider' normatively speaking. "Native" anthropologists are perceived as insiders regardless of the complex backgrounds" that they possess (Narayan 1993, 677).

One has to interrogate their subject position reflectively throughout the fieldwork. Many factors can differentiate the researcher and their subjects including gender to

religion, language, dialect, class, ethnicity, sexuality, mode of lifestyle, education, and even intellectual worldview. Hence name tags such as 'insider' and 'outsider' are just empty essentializing frames that do not reflect the realities on the ground. Narayan suggests that researchers should enact and acknowledge their own complexity and hybridity in a sincere and nuanced fashion (Narayan, 1993, 679, 682). Throughout my fieldwork in Bangladesh, I was conscious of the complex and multilayered subjective positions that I embodied. I could even observe how the fact that I was studying abroad made me privileged and accorded subtle respect and admiration from some of my interviewees. Hence as much as I could be considered an 'insider' researcher, I was framed and perceived through different lenses. Nevertheless, with my subject position as an 'insider' and by employing the both emic and etic perspective for research (Pike 1954), I have to acknowledge, despite its complexity, this has been beneficial for me throughout the fieldwork in a way unlike that of an 'outsider' researcher. Given the fact that the subject matter of my research was about violence, discrimination, and social exclusions, my subject position as a former student of the Aliya madrasa allowed me to access numerous testimonies and narratives about the experiences of being an Aliya madrasa graduate student in a Bangladeshi university and public sphere with traditional religious dress.

In my case of studying Aliya madrasas, state violence, and discrimination in my society, while multiple factors made me an insider, at the same time, some realities have been challenging my claim of being an insider. I finished my higher secondary education in madrasa over a period of 15 years of my life. But during the fieldwork, several people, especially those studying, the senior students of Aliya madrasa and those working in madrasa as a facultymembers having acquired sophisticated knowledge on contemporary Bangladeshi politics, maintained a precise distance from me. They did not find me 'pure enough' to be a part of them as a madrasa student. Perhaps my way of dress, speaking style, and studying in public university made them think that. Their stance about me reminded me Abu-Lughod' idea of "Halfies"- as described – "people whose national cultural identity is mixed by migration, overseas education or parentage" (Lughod 1991, 466). Therefore, sometimes there was a lot of qualm and reluctance in their gesture when I started to talk about discrimination, violence, local and national political pressure on madrasa. Owing to this fact, my long-nurtured feeling of being an insider of the Aliya madrasa community was dilapidated,

as Narayan states, “the extent to which anyone is an authentic insider is questionable” (Narayan 1993, 671).

On the other hand, after finishing my higher secondary education, I started my undergraduate studies in a public university without terminating my education in Aliya madrasa. This departure from madrasa towards a secular state university education might make one consider me as an outsider. This being said, a significant part of my research was dedicated to describing the rigorous discrimination, violence and torture faced by madrasa students in contemporary Bangladeshi public universities. My own experience, like many other Aliya madrasa students, is not different. For this reason, my own position in terms of insider or outsider is dilemma-ridden. To resolve this dilemma, I have used the concept of ‘reflexivity’ (Salzman 2002). Generally ‘reflexivity’ has been described as a process of examining both researcher and his or connection with the research objects as Roulston described reflexivity as “the researcher’s ability to be able to self-consciously refer to him or herself in relation to the production of knowledge about research topics” (Roulston, 2010, 116). Throughout my fieldwork, I took notes on my interviewees’ gestures, approaches to and how it connected with my research project. I have used all this material in my post-fieldwork period to analyze their narrations and stories.

Moreover, the rise of works such as Indigenous Anthropology (Fahim and Helmer 1980), Anthropology at Home (Jackson 1987), and James Scott’s extraordinary book “Weapons of the Weak” (1985) which talks about resistance as a tool of the analytical and ethnographic object have been very beneficial. These works provide us with a thorough understanding of the idea that native informants or the indigenous perspective have driven us to understand that all community members are indifferent hold a similar position in society. This notion of being similar is Eurocentric that requires to reformulation. Besides, every member’s age, occupation, education, family background, and economic status make them different from other members of society. This diversity is an obstacle for researchers to navigate in order “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world” (Malinowski 1978, 19). In terms of financial class division, for example, a number of madrasa students who belong to the upper strata of society, can study in private universities in any

department, go abroad with their family's financial support, or even gain political influence by virtue of their family status.

On the contrary, thousands of Aliya madrasa students live under the poverty line, dependent on rich people's donations for their housing, daily meals, and even for their dress. For this reason, the Aliya madrasa students are not homogenous, and there will be many similarities and differences as Narayan states, "given the multiplex nature of identity, there will inevitably be certain facets of self that join us up with the people we study, other facets that emphasize our difference" (Narayan 1993, 680). While Aliya madrasa students are diverse in terms of their social, financial and political standing (Ahmad and Nelson 2009, 59), during my fieldwork, I tried to avoid falling into the quicksand of religious diversity, including different national and regional religious sects, despite the diversity among Aliya madrasa students. It is generally well known that the vast majority of Aliya madrasa students follow Hanafi tradition and the Hanafi school of law.

2.3. The Question of Aliya Madrasa in Contemporary Literature

As a part of Islam, the madrasa is a dominant force as an educational institution and an entity that helps the understanding of life for millions of Muslims in South Asia, especially in Bangladesh. For this reason, the madrasa is not solely an educational institution; but rather an institution that maintains religious harmony, works as a media between Arabic text and Muslims (Messick 1992), and provides stability in society. However, foreign journalists and Western academics have tried to prove, especially after the terrorist attack of 9/11, that madrasas are producing terrorist and arsonist thoughts and ideologies. They started to scrutinize madrasas, which have a history of at least one thousand five hundred years, with the modern Eurocentric discourse. Depending on this Eurocentric narration, there has been a flood of academic and journalistic works about madrasas in recent decades in the Bangladeshi context. Most of these works are far away from understanding the world of madrasa especially Bangladeshi Aliya madrasas. Before digging into the present literature on madrasa education in Bangladesh, I would first like to state a few fundamental barriers in the study of madrasa in the contemporary Bangladeshi context.

Firstly, there is a vivid scarcity of proper academic works, especially on the Bangladeshi Aliya madrasa. A number of scholarly works have been done recently, especially after the 2000s, on madrasa education in Bangladesh but not specifically on the Aliya madrasa. Despite this, most of them have been accused of being partial, Eurocentric, and orientalist, such as Riaz (2008), Bhattacharya (2006), Rahman (2020) Barkat (2017). These researchers are armchair sociologists and anthropoglots like Victorians, writing on madrasa without doing the necessary fieldwork and without the proper understanding of the diversity of Aliya madrasa. The second criticism is the 'irrefutable' dependency on Western think thanks and literature. Western think tanks, including Belgium based The International Crisis Group, Washington based Brookings Institution, The National Bureau of Asian Research and many others with their local collaborators, are a group of secular and Eurocentric bourgeoisies who had the chance to study in the West, have produced a series of literature that only can feed only to Western discourse and narration of 'War on Terror', and have distorted madrasas role in society, representing it as a local hub of 'religious extremism, fundamentalism, and terrorism. For this reason, Western think tank reports and any other product have a solid inability to present an inclusive picture of Aliya madrasas in Bangladesh.

On the subject of Western scholarship, think thanks and their orientalist knowledge production of madrasa in South Asia, especially in Bangladesh, it is noticeable that their reports have left a tangible influence on academic knowledge production concerning the madrasa in Bangladesh. On June 25, 2000, just few months before the terrorist attack which targeted the United States and started of the so-called 'War and Terror', Jeffrey Goldberg, an American- journalist, published an article in New York Times named 'Inside Jihad U.; The Education of a Holy Warrior' (Goldberg 2000). In his article, Goldberg attempted to depict a Pakistani 'Haqqania Madrasa' situated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a north-west province of Pakistan along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border as a "Jihad Factory" and its teachers as a "Perfect Jihad Machines". Meanwhile, Goldberg attempted to understand madrasa with its size, student number, and connection with Taliban and militant groups. Goldberg states "There are one million students studying in the country's 10,000 or so madrasas, and militant Islam is at the core of most of these schools" (Goldberg 2000). At the same time he also attempted madrasa's and their regional and international connections. Moreover,

Goldberg's understanding of madrasa is yet another production of Western discourse on non-European social institutions. Goldberg's thoughts of madrasa, it seems, influence the successive academic works on madrasa that have been done following 9/11.

Whenever we talk about madrasa in Bangladesh, we cannot avoid the work of Ali Riaz, a pioneer of the study of madrasa in Bangladesh. Riaz produced extensive literature on madrasa education in South Asia in the last two decades, especially in Bangladesh. His works provide substantial space to navigate our understanding of how the study of madrasa in Bangladesh has been Orientalized with Eurocentric discourses and in doing so supporting the existing Western discourse on Muslim religious institutions. Riaz's controversial book titled "Faithful Education: Madrassahs in South Asia" (2008) depicts the metamorphosis of madrasa education in South Asia with both the historical and contemporary situation. He also traced how this madrasa has been connected with sectarianism, terrorism, and teaching sectarian political ideology. Riaz, like Goldberg, produced and reproduced Western discourse and 'War on Terror' narratives. Riaz's book has several limitations. The first limitation is, Riaz tried to understand madrasas with numbers and statistics. In his fourth chapter named "Bangladesh; A Tale of Two Systems" Riaz attempts to understand madrasa education in Bangladesh with numbers, mainly regarding their growth from 1972 to 2004, by providing several tables of growth and enrolment of madrasa in Bangladesh. This is one of the colonial approaches to understand a phenomenon with numbers and statistics (Appadurai 1993) rather than trying to understand it with regards to its social position and how these institutions construct and shape people's lives. Statistics might be useful sometimes in social science for quantitative research. This chapter described several reasons that contributed to the rapid growth of madrasa in Bangladesh, such as state ideology, Islamization, and the rise of political Islam and militancy (Riaz 2008, 134). At the same time, Riaz failed to study madrasa in Bangladesh as a social, educational, and in some context a religious institution, where approximately three million students are now studying now. In the same time establishing madrasa as 'a social movement' against the Bangladeshi state's continuous attempt to impose an authoritarian secularism.

The second criticism can be directed to Riaz's comparative analysis. Riaz attempted to provide a comparative study between Bangladesh, India and Pakistani madrasas. This comparative study provides an untenable endeavor to standardize madrasas in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. This study also minimizes the nuance of madrasa in Bangladesh because, as we all know, South Asia is highly diverse, every country has its own policies towards madrasa. For this reason, a comparative study to describe all this diverse phenomenon provided a misleading thought that ended up with orientalism and eurocentrism. Another most important phenomenon is the nation-state's role in dictating education policies. Nation-states are intervening and controlling our life in every possible way with their diverse state apparatuses (Althusser 2014). After 1947 in India and Pakistan, and after 1971 in Bangladesh, broadly, every country in South Asia developed their own mechanisms and education policies that vary between country and seek to establish strict control over the education system, especially on the madrasa education. Following independence, Bangladesh adopted an imposed secular constitution which rotated throughout the time (Bhuiyan 2017), India adopted secularism in their constitution 1975 (Yadav 2018), and in Pakistan from the outset, Islam was an unassailable part of the constitution (Iqbal 2009). With these constitutional developments, every country, since their independence, has developed its educational policies to restrain and in some context to extend madrasa education. For this reason, a comparative study is strongly unable, from my perspective, to provide an inclusive characteristic and situation of madrasa in South Asia, especially in Bangladesh.

The third criticism can be highlighted in the context of Riaz's severely limited knowledge about Islamic tradition and institutions. In his book, he defined Fiqh, as a production of knowledge, when in fact Fiqh itself is utmost diverse, as sectarian knowledge and as something that is teaching parochial jurisprudence and intolerance as Riaz states, "Fiqh is essentially sectarian, therefore the madrassahs that focus on fiqh are bound to teach a narrow and parochial version of religion and thus contribute to intolerance" (Riaz 2008, 226). On the contrary, Fiqh is the collective way to understand Islamic law; in Islam, broadly, the source of Islamic law is divine, and Fiqh helps Muslims to understand and interpret the divine law. Alalwani and co. defined Fiqh as:

> as the aggregate, considered perse, of legal proofs and evidence that, when studied properly, will lead either to a certain knowledge of a Shari'ah ruling or to at least a reasonable assumption concerning the same; the manner by which such proofs are adduced, and the status of the adducer (Alalwani et al. 2003 1).

Masooda Bano has attempted to describe the modernization of Aliya madrasa and its relationship with electoral advances and political party, especially with Jama'at-i-Islami of Bangladesh that is considered a 'political Islamist party'. Bano argues that 'Jama'at in Bangladesh has supported Aliya madrasas as opposed to the Qoumi madrasas' (Bano 2014, 930). However, this is a rather naïve approach to understanding Bangladesh's conservative political dynamics because many ulama in Bangladesh have their own madrasas and have always been opposed to Jama'at-i-Islami politically and in the field of religion. At the same time, several Aliya madrasas, especially those located Aliya in big cities, the secular political parties' student wings is controlling these madrasas. For this reason, dividing madrasas in terms of their political support would not be appropriate. Later she describes that the 'Qoumi madrasas are supportive of other Islamic parties that are more radical' (Bano 2014, 930). What we are witnessing here is, Bano as a researcher, taking a normative position to portray who is radical and who is more radical. This kind of normative position might break researcher's ethical stance.

While Masooda Bano is trying to understand how different 'Islamic political parties have supported madrasas,' Md Mizanur Rahman (2020) attempts to demonstrate how Aliya madrasas are aligned with Bangladesh Jamaat-I-Islami and how Aliya madrasa students are the member of Jamaat-I-Islami. He also claims that they want to establish an Islamic Bangladesh ruled by Sharia (Rahman 2020, 623). This is an extreme homogenous approach to understand Muslim society and their diverse education system where more than three million students have been enrolled. Bangladesh has been divided into eight regions. Every region has their own Islamic tradition and ethos. Aliya madrasa is not detached from these regional traditions and thoughts.

Like Ali Riaz, Rahman avoided discussing this diversity and attempted to establish a strong link between Aliya madrasas and with Jamaat-I-Islami and its student wings. Very precisely, Ali Riaz, Bano, Rahman, and many others have been studying Aliya madrasa with the connection of Jamaat-I-Islami despite their strong association with other mainstream secular party's student wings. This way of studying is highly

problematic. As a political party Jamaat-I-Islami is known to be a party who were against the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971. For this reason, in contemporary Bangladeshi secular oriented politics, Jamaat-I-Islami has been considered as 'anti- Bangladeshi', 'anti-national' and a 'defeated notorious power'. By proving academically that almost every Aliya madrasa student, more than three million students, and more than ten thousands aliya madrasa, are associated with Jamaat-I-Islami, they are trying to prove that these students are antinational, black soul of Pakistan and that they want a Taliban type of Islamic state. For this reason, like Ali Riaz and Bano, Rahman's study of the madrasa is getting in touch with Islamophobic stances and only feeding the Western discourse and 'War on Terror' narratives.

Another prominent economist in Bangladesh, Abul Barakat (2011), who is known for his stance against madrasa education in Bangladesh, attempted to study madrasa in Bangladesh with the political economy approach. There is a strong link between Ali Riaz and Abul Barakat's works. While Riaz is trying to investigate madrassas as sectarian and militant institutions, Barakat is trying to discover the economic sources of madrasas and how they have accumulated wealth and resources over the years. Both of them, Riaz and Barakat, have one common stance; their agreement on the militant character of madrasa students. Barakat as like Riaz, talked about the growth of madrasas in Bangladesh. Barakat argues that, a substantial number of Madrasa students are unemployed and they are wasting the Bangladeshi national resources. According to Barakat, the Bangladeshi government has spent $ 775 million for madrasas in 2008 (Barakat 2017, 157). Barakat considers is this amount of money to be helping to produce extremist who will be a threat to society.

Whilst there is a flood of orientalist approaches and arguments to studying Aliya Madrasas in Bangladesh, Mohammad Niaz Asadullah and Nazmul Chaudhury (2016) brought a different angle in terms of the study of madrasas in Bangladesh. Asadullah and Chaudhury argue that madrasa graduates reject the military rule in favor of democratic rule, but in the same way, they express their preference for Islamic rule (Asadullah and Chaudhury 2010, 215). At the same time, Asadullah and Chaudhury argue that Bangladeshi madrasa education follows a unique system. This unique system modernizes the madrasa education, hiring female teachers in madrasa who

graduated from secular state schools, and lastly, how madrasa reduces the gender gap by embracing a vast number of female students.

To conclude, the exciting thing is, during my pre and post fieldwork time, the scarcity of academic works on the predicament of Aliya madrasa has been a massive challenge throughout the research project. Moreover, it was impossible to find a single article that pays attention to the structural discrimination that Aliya madrasa students have faced in the Bangladeshi education system, violence in daily life, and how generation after generation lost their place in the public memory. Overall, this research intends to contribute to the anthropological study of Aliya madrasa in Bangladesh by analyzing the predicament of madrasa students and how they were subjected to state violence and discrimination – and the consequences of these social phenomena.

CHAPTER III

DISPARATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALIYA MADRASAS AND THE BANGLADESHI NATION-STATE

3.1. A Genealogical explanation of Politicization and Antagonization of Aliya Madrasa

In order to understand the genealogy of politicization and antagonization in the Aliya Madrassa, it is important to keep in mind that the disparate nature of the relationship between the Aliya madrasa and the nation state is actually part of the disparate relationship between the Bangladeshi nation state and its Islamic 'Other'. Thus to identify the genealogy of politicization and antagonization in the Aliya madrasa in Bangladeshi politics, one has to first follow the dynamics of religiously based identity construction in the region starting from the context of British colonial rule in United India, followed by the ramifications of this identity buildup within the framework of the nation state.

As a postcolonial state, Bangladesh is not exceptional in terms of using violence in the process of state building. Nevertheless, every state is a sequel of war and violence; every nation state is likely to hold control over violence and this monopoly over the use of violence helps it to exert control over its citizens. Charles Tilly (1985, 181) indicates four mechanisms of the state's full control and consolidation over power and violence;

1. War making: Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force.
2. State making: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories.
3. Protection: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients.
4. Extraction: Acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities.

The relationship between the state and madrasa students has often been one of antagonization. In this regard, it is extremely important to understand what kind of

state policies have politicized and antagonized the Aliya madrasa in Bangladeshi politics and in national history which is extremely secularized. From my understanding, in the post-colonial period, there are several distinctive historical moments that can be understood in terms of the politicizing and antagonizing of the Aliya madrasa in Bangladeshi politics. The first one is, the promulgation of explicitly authoritarian secular values in the first constitution of Bangladesh in 1972, the second one is the impact of the image of madrassa students in Bangladesh in light of Cold War politics, and the final includes the developments surrounding the Good/Bad Muslim image in the aftermath of increased focus on domestic terrorism after the events of 9/11. After a discussion of the identity formation process from the British colonial rule, I will describe all of these segments later with details.

It is inevitable that madrasas are inseparable from Islam and Muslim identity. For this reason, despite this genealogical exploration precisely addressing the politicization and antagonizing of the Aliya madrasa in Bangladeshi politics, this genealogy also can be a useful to understand how throughout time, after the independence war of Bangladesh in 1971, the Muslim identity has been rather negatively politicized.

3.2. Identity Formation in the British Colonial period

During the British colonial period, two fundamental issues that was accelerated and sponsored by the British, contributed vehemently to the construction of Hindu and Muslim identity markers. The first one is ‘a colonial way to study the Indian subcontinent history’, the second one is the ‘census’. To understand the politicization and antagonization of the Aliya madrasa, we ought to understand the Hindu and Muslim identity formation in the British colonial period and the socio-political consequences of those colonially crafted identities. Firstly, throughout their tenure, the British colonial rule and policies constructed identity based on people’s religion, the impacts of which continue today. The British colonial power wanted to divide people based on religion, so they couldn’t organize against colonial domination. Francis states “from the very beginning of the serious study of India in the eighteenth century, Warren Hastings and the orientalists around him-Jones, Halhed, Wilkins- thought of India in terms of Hindus and Muslims” (Robinson 1998, 273). Robinson (1998) also states that, with this kind of religious based study, the British also introduced a new

phenomenon of studying Indian history that divided Indian civilization into three parts, the Hindu, Muslim, and the British part and British colonial power categorized people in terms of their caste and religious affiliation. The most interesting phenomenon was that the British colonial power attempted to define who is Hindu and who is not. The British defined the Hindu community as;

> a native of India who is not of European, Armenian, Moghul, Persian or other foreign descent, who is a member of a recognized caste, who acknowledges the spiritual authority of Brahmans (priestly caste), who venerates or at least refuses to kill or harm kine, and does not profess any creed or religion which the Brahman forbids him to profess (Census of India 1911, 119).

So if we look at the British definition of Hindu, what we see there is a precise inclusive, and exclusive definition of Hindus and Muslims. This definition also describes Brahmans as the highest caste of Hindu society and religion, a clear cut authority. French philosopher, Michel Foucault showed us how categorizing people giving an absolute power to the state to manipulate people (Foucault 2020).

Secondly, one of the other ways in which the British colonial rule influenced identity formation was through the census. While British policies made a conspicuous split up between Muslims and Hindus, the census also played a fundamental role to construct both Muslim and Hindu religious identity. The first census of British India in 1872 categorized Indian people with their religious affiliation from big cities to small towns, bringing to the fore the notion of 'majority Hindus' and 'minority Muslims'. This majority and minority understanding gave the British a huge opportunity to control their Indian subjects. At the same time, this concept of majority and minority brought huge political unrest between Muslim communities and Hindu communities. Arvind Narayan Das (1994), an Indian sociologist, shows how the concept of tribe, caste, language, and religions based differentiation was accelerated by British colonial rule and the concept of majority and minority.

Similarly, the census of 1901 also contributed to stoking rising communal tensions and nationalist politics. According to the census of 1901, 70% of the population of that time was Hindu and 21 % percent was Muslim (Gait 1905). The consequence of these census policies would conclude with the eventual division of the Indian subcontinent, based on religious identity, the creation of Muslim Pakistan and Hindu-dominated

India, a process which we will discuss with much more detail below, with a focus on the Bengal region where present day Bangladesh is situated.

Historically speaking, the late colonial period, particularly after the Great Rebellion of 1857, in which India was directly brought under the rule of the British Crown, is important in terms of its contribution to the issue of identity formation in the Bengal region. The fruits of the so-called Bengal Renaissance, typified by Hindu reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, not only infused so called Western liberal values amongst a section of Hindu elites born and bred in the shadows of Fort William, it also created an exclusionary kind of identity for these Calcutta based Hindu elites.[7] This exclusionary identity was manifested in various ways – as a class divide, as a religious divide, and more importantly, as a civilizational divide. The class divide was economically sustained through the appointment of a large number of Hindu landlords beginning immediately after the colonial takeover of Bengal, and the largely Muslim peasantry whose activities they regulated and controlled. The religious divide was fostered through the British colonial policy of 'divide and rule', which favored Hindu or Muslim communities at the expense of one another to suit colonial interests and needs. The class divide exacerbated the religious divide and contributed to an overall Hindu elite-vs-Muslim peasantry discourse, which was partially religious and partially civilizational[8]. The civilizational divide culminated from the effects of liberal-values that infused with Hindu reformers, some of whom began to claim that Hinduism was a separate civilization that was much better than Muslim civilization, and at par with Western civilization. All this may have contributed to a "Hindu-Company nexus" which led to the oppression of the mostly-Muslim Bengali peasantry, a phenomenon which progressively worsened throughout the nineteenth century (Rahman 2018, 40).

The disaffected peasantry, however, were not necessarily silent receivers of this colonizing treatment. Peasant politicization contributed to the rise of formerly disaffected Muslim elites, the *ashraf*, as representatives of a wronged population mostly concentrated in and around Eastern Bengal, while the hub of the mostly Hindu

[7] For more details on the connection of Orientalists and the genesis of the Bengali renaissance movement from Fort William college and Hindu College in Calcutta. See Kopf, David, *British Orientalism and the Bengal renaissance*. University of California Press, 1969.

[8] For more on this discourse between Calcutta based Hindu elites and the Muslim peasant mainly based in East Bengal, contemporary Bangladesh and how this let to formation of Pakistan. See Hashmi, Taj Ul-Islam. *Pakistan as a peasant utopia: The communalization of class politics in East Bengal, 1920-1947*. (Routledge, 2019).

elites was in Calcutta in Western Bengal. These tensions came to a head during the Partition of Bengal from 1905 to 1911, where the West Bengal based elites strongly rose in protest against the issue of partition, and created a pressure which led to the reunification of Bengal within a few years.[9] It is interesting to note that while the logic behind these protests was that Bengali Hindus would become a minority within Bengal due to Partition, the same Calcutta-based Hindu landlord elite clamoured for separation from East Bengal and its nascent Muslim peasant-cum-nationalist movement in the 1930s, with the same logic, that Bengali Hindus would become a minority in a future Muslim controlled state, as observed by Joya Chatterji in her 2 volume *Bengal Divided* (Chatterji 2002). The intricacies of the identity debate was thus largely conditioned as part of serving narrow communal and class interests, and the reaction to that.

Within these circumstances, there was a distinct rise of Calcutta-based secular Bengali nationalism during 1930, which defined its 'Other' as Muslim, communal and low-class peasant. The creation of Pakistan in 1947 was a victory for the Muslim peasant of Eastern Bengal. However, Bengali Muslim intellectuals in East Pakistan failed to capitalize upon the opportunity that an independent Muslim nation was able to afford them. A lack of democratic culture, and politics based on linguistic nationalism, pushed back many Bengali Muslim intellectuals, many of whom began to find meaning in a secular Bengali identity which identified its 'Other' as the Urdu speaking Pakistani elite, and by extension, any discourse which clung to the idea of Pakistan on the notion of Muslim unity and brotherhood (Rahim 2007, 565-570). The discourse of secular Bengali identity which had served Calcutta based elite in the 1930's again served a new class of Bengali intellectuals in East Pakistan, whose denouncement of West Pakistani elite and their administrative-cum-cultural impositions on the Bengali speaking people of East Pakistan gradually took the form of a linguistic nationalism and turned into a call for independence and autonomy within less than three decades since the creation of Pakistan (Hasan 2017, 164-168).

[9] For details treatment of issue of formation of Muslim identity arising from the British imperial policies of divide and rule. See Ahmed, Rafiuddin. *The Bengal Muslims: 1871-1906; a quest for identity*. (1981). See also Bose, Neilesh. Recasting the Region: *Language, Culture, and Islam in Colonial Bengal*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press,2014).

This kind of tortuous identity construction dramatically shaped and reshaped by colonialism and some other factors throughout history was exacerbated in the aftermath of the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, Thus a secular nation state was at odds with forms of identity that had traditionally been informed by Islamic customs and ways of living. Despite having a violent liberation war, the newly born Bangladeshi state went through a rigid state led process of secularization that sought to antagonize Islam and Islamic elements as the 'Other'(Rabeya and Hossain 2017, 77).

3.3. Promulgation of the Secular Constitution of Bangladesh in 1972

Benedict Anderson (1983), while studying the nation, nation state and the formation of the contemporary nation state, defines nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991, 6). However, the issue important for the discussion at hand is related to the nature of emergence of the nation state, whether it is inclusive to minority groups, or tends to exclude them; this is very pertinent for our study of madrassa students, who seem to have become a minority in a Muslim majority country. In the case of Bangladesh, one notes that the first constitution of Bangladesh failed to integrate the spirit of the Muslim character of the majority of the population of the people of Bangladesh, taking an exclusionary approach in stating that secularism was one of the founding principles of the new state of Bangladesh. The liberation war of Bangladesh was fought with the assistance of India where India saw this as an opportunity to split Pakistan (Haider 2009, 537). The war was led by leaders of secular Bangladeshi groups who were dreaming to establish a land for Bengali people that would be run by Bengali people, not Pakistanis.

For this reason, in the first constitution, secularism was put down as one of the main pillars along with democracy, socialism and nationalism. After the liberation war, the post liberation government under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first President of Bangladesh, took steps for the speedy promulgation of a constitution for the newly formed nation. At the same time, Mujib's government also wanted to provide a political secular ethos to avoid any controversies. Thus, within the six months, the constitution was in visible shape and was passed on 4 November 1972.

The constitution started to function on 16 December 1972 (Rounaq 1973, 202-203). Apart from secularism and socialism, the constitution contained some controversial sections, such as the prohibition of religious politics, an issue that remains controversial today in Bangladeshi politics. The second preamble of 1972 constitution stated;

> Pledging that the high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, which inspired our heroic people to dedicate themselves to, and our brave martyrs to sacrifice their lives in, the national liberation struggle, shall be the fundamental principles of the Constitution.[10]

It also stated how secularism would be understood and applied in Bangladesh. Article 12 of the new constitution made strong claims against a state religion, which in the case of Bangladesh was Islam,

> The principle of secularism shall be realized by the elimination of
> (1) communalism in all its forms;
> (2) the granting by the State of political status in favour of any religion;
> (3) the abuse of religion for political purposes;
> (4) any discrimination against, or persecution of, persons practicing a particular religion.[11]

In a move similar to the Kemalist actions in Turkey (Özyürek 2006; Aras 2020), the new constitution banned all religious parties from participating in politics, and with this prohibition, the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) government wanted to impose a state sponsored secularism. At the same time, it took the responsibility to establish and construct Bengali nationalism (Riaz 2016, 24). Nevertheless, the state and Awami League wanted everyone to be secular and Bengali. However, ethnically not everyone was Bengali and there were several ethnic and religious groups such as Marma, Bawm and Tanchanga at that time. With this imposition, the state denied all drivers of ethnic identity (Mohsin 1997, 92). This imposing of state sponsored secularism and Bengali nationalism brought fundamental and dramatic change in the daily lives of general people. It seems at that time general people were not ready to embrace secularism given their thousand year long association with Islam. At the same time we have to take care to analyse the situation properly in that the Awami League government and its leading leaders were also in the front line of the creation of Pakistan, based on

[10] "Laws of Bangladesh", The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-367/section-24547.html

[11] "Laws of Bangladesh", The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-367/section-24560.html

religion. However, now it was the same leadership, led by Sheikh Mujibir Rahman, imposing secularism on general people in Bangladesh. This dramatic ideological shift in the span of two decades, however, did not touch general people, rather they resisted in every possible way to maintain their religious affiliation.

Moreover, like many other articles of the first constitution, the concept of 'communalism' was never really clarified. Broadly, 'communalism' is understood to be related to a particular religious or cultural group. In the first census in Bangladesh taken in 1974 following liberation, it was seen that 85.4% of the population was Muslim, 13.5% Hindu, and 1.1% that included Christians, Buddhists and others (Alam and Khuda 2011, 166). Most of this population was a part of establishing Pakistan. Actually, people were not ready to leave their religious activities and beliefs to embrace secularism. For this reason, after independence, like the Pakistani era, the conservative political parties always attained public support.

While the state was imposing secularism in all aspects of the society, the education sector was also strongly affected. Under the Awami League government (BAL), the first 'National Education Commission' was established under the leadership of Qudrat-i-Khuda, a prominent educationalist and chemist. The members of the education commission were Western educated and none of them had any connection with madrasa education. After two years the report was published and this report is known as the 'Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission Report'. This report was not an inclusive education that might bring all fragments together especially concerning education. The 'Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission Report' provided few suggestions for madrasa education. This included the suggestion that the primary level of education would be free as it states in the commotion report 'The same primary education system will be introduced in the madrasahs as in all other educational institutions and Bengali will be the medium of instruction at all levels" (Khuda et al. 1974, 56). Religious subjects would be compulsory at the secondary level of education.

According to the report, at that time in 1974, there were 1412 Aliya madrasas in Bangladesh. Actually it was the first step to produce secular-western minded people by reducing and restricting religious education. Against this Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission Report people especially conservative people started to came out in the street and demanded to revoke it. Conservative Muslims started to organize

symposiums, meetings, and even some demonstrations. Because madrasa was an inseparable part of their cultural and religious existence, as Ebrahim Moosa states "madrasa serve the religious and cultural needs of the largely working and lower middle classes of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh" (Moosa 2015, 35). This education report made deep wounds in Bangladeshi society. Until today people have been debating this issue. Literally, the 'Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission Report' and its application in the Bangladeshi education system was the first epic moment of politicization and antagonization of the Aliya Madrasa in Bangladesh. Aliya madrasa education had no government recognition until 1985. In 1985, the Dakhil and in 1987 the Alim was recognized by the government. To get full recognition Aliya madrasa had to wait until 2006.

3.4. A new Era for Madrasa Education

After a bloody military coup in 1975, the founder of modern secular Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed in an assassination plot and his regime was eliminated. This paved the way for a series of military strongmen to come to power, the most prominent of them being Ziaur Rahman and Hussain Muhammad Ershad. A common issue in their rule was to bring back Islam in the public sphere, recognizing the madrasa education, including Islam in the constitution.

After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the 'sepoy mutiny' of November 7, the chief of the Bangladesh Army, General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) emerged as the de facto military ruler (Islam 1984, 556). Ziaur Rahman took several steps to include an Islam in the constitution. At the beginning of 1977, Zia proposed a special order or amendment, to change the constitution of Bangladesh to include Bismillah-ar-Rah- man-ar-Rahim (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) in the constitution. In the same time he changed the second preamble and replaced secularism with the "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah" (Bhuiyan 2017, 210).

With the resurgence of Islam in the Bangladeshi constitution by including religious ethos, the restriction of religion in politics was also lifted. Several political parties

including the Bangladeshi Jamaat-e-Islami[12] entered into politics (Pattanaik 2009, 275). This was a turning point in the history of Bangladesh. The secular elite, those who were strongly associated with Awami League, protested against this fundamental change. The secular elite wanted to prevent religious political parties from entering politics in the name of preventing Jamaat-e-Islami in politics.

By introducing Islam in Bangladeshi politics, Ziaur Rahman, a strong army general, wanted to achieve two things by changing the nature of the Bangladeshi state. The first one was to stop the rigid authoritarian secularization and the second one was to make Islam relevant with the national identity and the future of Bangladesh. Like many other conservative leaders and people, Ziaur Rahman had a strong fear that without religious association, as a nation and independent country, Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi conservative Muslim community wouldn't remain (Islam 1984, 557-565). After indigence as a consequence of state imposed secularism there was dissatisfaction between the people and the state. The majority's reflection did not appear in the constitution. For this reason, Ziaur Rahman wanted a reconciliation between the state and the people (Islam 2015, 277-280).

The second intention of Ziaur Rahman was to attach 'Islam' with the future of Bangladesh. To do that Ziaur Rahman gave huge importance to Madrasa education. With his precise instruction, the Madrasa Education Board was established in 1978. General Zia gave an autonomous status to the Madrasa board to conduct their operations independently. With this kind of opportunity, the Ebtidai Madrasas (Primary level of Madrasa) started to operate. The Qudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission had already proposed a common primary level for everyone but with Ziaur Rahman's policy the primary level, the madrasa started. Ziaur Rahman took madrasa education to construct a national identity that is known as 'Bangladeshi nationalism' to encounter the secular 'Bengali nationalism' (Rahman, Mustafizur, Mohd, Meerah, Rahman 2010, 120). During my fieldwork in Rajshahi in June 2018, while I was interviewing Shabnam Munia, who is a student of Dhaka University, her father was sitting down next to us. While we were talking about her Madrasa education

[12] Jamaat-e-Islami, was founded in 1941, In India, it is an Islamic movement, founded by Syed Abul Ala Maududi, the famous Islamic theologian. After the independence of Bangladesh when state sponsored secularism was imposed, Jamaat-e-Islami was the first political party who opposed secularism.

suddenly her father[13] interrupted us and and jumped into the discussion. After a while he told me;

> You know my father was a general secretary of Natore division of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which was established by general Ziaur Rahman, and he was very close to Ziaur Rahman because of his association with Rajshahi Darus Salam Alia (Kamil) Madrasah, established in 1957 in Rajshahi. Once my father told me that Ziaur Rahman proposed to some famous Muslim ulama' that he wanted to establish a government Madrasa in every district of Bangladesh like district schools. But at that time, many ulama' opposed this policy because they were concerned that if the government established district based Aliya madrasas, the faculties of madrasa would have to move from place to place. Nevertheless, they wouldn't be able to live with their family. For this reason, they rejected General Zia's proposal.

With Ziaur Rahman's social and education policies, Muslim students from small towns and those who belonged to working class and agricultural families started to come to big cities in search of work. Meanwhile, as a consequence of Ziaur Rahman's foreign policy, many Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia started to recognize Bangladesh as an independent country and allowed hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi laborers to work in the Middle East (Siddiqui 2019, 238-240). During 1976, according to statistics, only 6087 workers were working abroad but under the Ziaur Rahman administration, the scenario changed dramatically and the number of workers rose to 24.485 (Ali et al, 1981 192-193). Because of this mass migration in abroad and internal migration to the big cities including the Dhaka, Khulna and Chittagong, the conservative 'Muslim' started to be visible in the public place, buying homes and settling down in cities and attending local and national elections. All of these developments were happening in the context of the time of the cold war (Huq-Hussain 1995; Afsar 2003; Banks 2013; Siddiqu 2010)[14]

The secular elite did not tolerate this development that gave life support to the conservative people in Bangladesh during the cold war. They started to protest for

[13] Personal interview with Shabnam Munia and her family in July in Rajshahi.
[14] All of this existing literature provides a framework to understand internal migration in Bangladesh. However, none of them focuses on poor, conservative families who migrated to the city to work.

allowing Jamaat-e-Islami to do politics in Bangladesh. But what happens in this duree of organizing public opinion against Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami is that the secular front antagonized the Muslim identity and the life style of Muslims. At this juncture, we have to remember that Jamaat-e-Islami is not the representative of Muslims in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a land of ulama. Every region has their own ulama and diverse Islam (Raqib 2020). And this ulama portrayed remarkable flexibility to adopt the changing situation that has been constructed modernity, the nation-state in the post-colonial Bangladesh. The Aliya madrasa education system is a significant example of this flexibility of the ulama (Ahmad 2004, 112-113). Interestingly, while Jamaat-e-Islami is a part of the global Islamic movement, most of the prominent ulama maintain a disparate relationship with Bangladesh Awami League to maintain their status quo.[15]

During this period, there was another event that highly politicized madrasas in Bangladeshi politics. The former Soviet Union's aggression in Afghanistan during the 1970s and 1980s was often portrayed as an issue of the Muslim Ummah, with many calling for fellow Muslims to join the fight against the Soviet aggressor. Such calls attracted a lot of madrasa students, who perceived that there was a crisis in the Muslim world that warranted their participation in the Afghan jihad. Moreover, these madrasa students also understood Communism and its principles as being thoroughly anti-Islamic. For them, the logical conclusion of communism was the transformation of society into one without religion, where Muslims would not have any place. As such, for them, the activities of the leftists in the society were against that of religion and the Muslims. Thus the construction of both sides, the Muslim and Leftist, was aimed towards eradicating each other from society.

To tackle communism and sympathy toward the Soviet Union in the Muslim world especially in South Asia, America lended their hands to Muslim political parties and that was followed with the rise of political Islam during the 1980s and 90s. What happened in Bangladesh was that with the intimate support of Saudi Arabia and America, around 3000 people and madrasa students went to Afghanistan to fight the 'Jihad' against the Soviet Union, to rescue their brothers and sisters in faith and to fight against communist infidels (Riaz 2016, 4). A profound number of them was

[15] Sohrab Hassan, "Will Awami League be able to leave Hefazat?" *Prothom Alo*, Decembor,19, 2020.

madrasa students. This event marked a complete rupture between the secular left and Muslim communities in Bangladesh.

On 30 may of 1981, Ziaur Rahman was assassinated by a faction of Bangladeshi army officers in Chittagong. After that, another army man Hussain Muhammad Ershad came to power. Ershad was also invested in bringing back madrasa education and Islam in the mainstream society. Consequently, on the 9th of June, the parliament of Bangladesh introduced the eighth amendment by which Islam became the national religion of Bangladesh. For the secular elites, the eighth amendment was irredeemable damage to their ideological stance, secularism (Alam 1991, 209-10).

In conclusion, the second phase of politicization of the Aliya madrasa in Bangladeshi, the politics was dominated by issues like bringing back Islam as a state religion into the Bangladeshi constitution, allowing Jamaat-e-Islami to do politics. The recognition of the madrasa education especially Aliya madrasa education was also dominated the second phase. All these issues helped pious Muslims to consolidate their place in Bangladeshi society and raise their voice against state-sponsored secularism and oppression.

3.5. Shapla and Shahbag: The Final Stage of Antagonizing the Madrasa and Muslim Identity in Bangladeshi Politics.

Bangladesh suffered from a resurgence of military rule from 2007 to 2009 (Chowdhury 2019), after violent street protests led to a military coup in 2007. After the election in 2009, the military handed over power to a civilian government, which in this case was the secular Bangladesh Awami League. It came to the power with a landslide victory, with an election promise to try the war criminals of the 1971 liberation war, mainly the leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami.[16] After forming a government, the Awami League started to arrest the top leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and after a questionable trial process the first verdict came out on 5 February 2013. After a long hearing, the court accused Abdul Quader Molla, the Jamaat-i-Islam leader, for being associated with crimes in the Liberation War of 1971, as a collaborator with the

[16] For details, see the election manifesto of Bangladesh Awami Ligue, 2009.

Pakistani army. But a section of the secular elite – mostly a coalition of bloggers, activists and leftist political parties started to protest in the Shahbag area of Dhaka. Elite secularists were organizing the Shahbag movement and for them The Shahbag movement was a 'spirit of Bangladesh's liberation war' (Fahmida 2018, 3). The primary demand of the Shahbag movement was that Abdul Quader Molla should be simply hanged, instead of getting a life imprisonment. Within a short time this movement calling for the 'hanging of (alleged) war criminals' managed to attract the attention and support of thousands of people.

After that, the Supreme Court changed their decision and gave the death penalty to Abdul Quader Molla and the verdict was applied on 12 December 2013, Molla was hanged. Soon the Shahbag movement started to raise questions on religion, especially Islam. Conservative people found it Islamophobic that the organizers of the movement started to portray Islam and the lifestyle of conservatives and attaching them to terrorists and Taliban. They raised questions about the prophet Muhammad and his family life[17] These Islamophobic attitudes angered general Muslims. With this anger and agony a counter protest took place in Dhaka led by Hefazat-e-Islam. The Hefazat-e-Islam movement was dominantly led by the Qawmi madrasa based ulama and students.

Hefazat-e-Islam follow the Salafi model of Islam and stay away from traditional politics. They have a long history of struggling against the state. Their history goes back to the British colonial period. Very broadly, the Qawmi madrasas in Bangladesh are connected to Darul Uloom Deoband (1866), and Darul Uloom Deoband was established as a resistance against British colonial Raj (Rahman 2018 4-6). Within a few years of establishing Darul Uloom Deoband, the ulama and students participated in the mutiny of 1857 (Goyal 2004, 12). Although for Muslim and Ulam "the vicious quelling of the Mutiny was nothing less than a radical and comprehensive spiritual defeat" (Mishra 2012, 131). Even before this date the Deoband ulama' incessantly rebelled against the British as they even fought numerous times. They developed several armed resistance movements against British colonialism. These included the

[17] A secular internet blogger group was the organizer of this movement. Many of their blogs contain very precise hate against the prophet Muhammad (SM) and his family. These bloggers took to social media to spread their hate against Islam. Later, as a consequence of immense protest of peoples, the Bangladeshi government deleted all of these blogging sites that were used by the secular bloggers, the organizer of Shahbag movement.

Farazi Movement (1838-1848) and the Bengal Wahabi Movement (1830-1860) but the most conspicuous one was organised by Mir Nisar Ali Titumir', a member of a peasant family, who rebelled against British colonial power. Titumir's rebellion in 1831 took place when the educated Bengalis were rush to get the designation from British Empire but 'the unlettered peasant militia of Titu Meer challenged the very colonial framework and fought with arrows and spears against rifles and cannons of the company's forces' (Dasgupta 1983, 46).

With this kind of rich history Hefazat-e-Islam which is Deoband rotted has long unresolved feud with Jamati Islami. Despite having these fundamental differences, Hefazat-e-Islam came to the street and protested against the defamation of prophet Muhammad (SM) and his family. As a counter movement to the Shahbag movement, to protect the prophet Muhammad's honor and to bring and end to the criminalization of Muslim lifestyles, the Hefazat-e-Islam gathered thousands of people in Shapla chatter, another central point of Dhaka. The Shapla Square movement was dismantled by state intervention and mass killing on 6th May 2013. Fahmida Zaman (2018) also viewed this counter movement as a coalition of Jamati Islami and Hefazat-e-Islam (Fahmida 2018, 3). It seems, for Zama, there is no differentiation amongst 'Islamist', Islamist are monolithic.

The influence of the Shahbag movement on contemporary conservative Bangladeshi politics is vehemently notorious. Many conservative political groups including Hefazat-e-Islam consider the Shahbag movement to be a permanent threat to Muslim identity in Bangladesh and view the Shahbag movement as trying to establish a permanent rupture between Muslim identity and Islam and the Bangladeshi state. After the Shahbag movement nothing was the same as it was before. The politicization of madrasa education and Islam and the criminalization of ulama' and madrasa students increased at the highest levels. In several senses, it was a cultural and media war against the pious Muslim community in Bangladesh.

The secular elite who control the mood of production as well cultural industries of Bangladesh started this cultural war in the second phase of politicization and antagonization of Aliya Madrasa in Bangladesh, from 1975 to 2000. By maneuvering the Jamati Islami and their role in the independence war of Bangladesh, the secular elite and state accelerated the cultural war against Islam and Islamic institutions like

the madrasa and Muslim identity in Bangladesh. Back in the 1990, this cultural war was restricted to only magazines, daily newspapers and the theater. But after 2000 with the rise of visual and electronic media, this cultural war went beyond imagination. Raju (2007) shows how cultural nationalists see Islam as a foreign alien culture that entered into Bengali culture with military aggression (Raju 2007, 125). Raju also showed how cinema contributed to establish a secular Bengali nationalism on the basis of othering Muslims and Muslim identity in Bangladesh.

The history of the feud between the ulama and the secular nationalist elite goes back to the colonial British period. The Muslim ulama's incessant rebellion against British colonial power didn't stop until the British were able to produce a secular elite. Although some Western educated Muslims fought against British rule, they did so within the framework of the British Raj. precisely, both countries, Pakistan and India, were born with the hands of secular elites. But Muslims traditional Ulam's never considered them as one of their own, rather they considered them as a 'moderate Muslim'. Interestingly the idea of 'moderate Muslim' is not new. It goes back to colonial rule. For this reason, many traditional ulama, those who are strongly connected with their traditions and history, see nation states as part of British colonialism. They still think that they are fighting against colonialism, against foreigners and against the British colonial power who destroyed their way of life.

To conclude, it is clear how the nation state and state apparatuses manufacture otherness in their own citizens by targeting religious belief, education and way of life. After the independence of Bangladesh, this 'othering' mechanism was established in the constitution which was established by the secular elites without any consultancy with general people or referendum. In the same times, the first constitutions which introduced secularism marginalized madrasa education. In the second phase this 'othering' and politicization and antagonization of the Aliya madrasa started to gain ground when Ziaur Rahman established madrasa education board and Hussain Muhammad Ershad recognized madrasa education. In the last phase of this 'othering' the politicization and antagonization of the Aliya madrasa and its students got institutionalized and legitimized by the state and all other state apparatuses with the war on terror idea.

These legitimizations provided state to discriminate madrasa students in higher education and government job, making them enemies, representing them as a member of the Taliban and other terrorist organizations squeezing Islam and Muslim appearance in the public place of Bangladesh. As a consequence of making this enemy, who are part of their own community and nation, the madrasa students growing up in Bangladesh under a 'Bare Life' (Agamben 1995) situation where they don't enjoy full citizenship rights despite being citizens of Bangladesh.

CHAPTER IV

DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

This chapter will be split up into four sections. Each of the sections deals with specific aspects of the lives of aliya madrasa students in contemporary Bangladesh. The first section of this chapter will briefly discuss how Aliya madrasa students have been subjected to discrimination in terms of getting admitted to public universities in Bangladesh until recently, despite having good scores in the admission exam. I will also talk about the role of public universities' administrative boards, especially the role of the vice-chancellor and the syndicate, the university's governing body, who place additional admission condition barriers in front of Aliya madrasa students. At the end of this section, I will shed light on the semi-apartheid like the university education system in Bangladesh and how it works against madrasa students.

In the second section of this chapter, I will delineate the various forms of violence that have been experienced by Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh, especially in public universities, by providing an inclusive discussion of violence and its emergence in contemporary anthropology and the place of violence in the history of South Asia and Bangladesh. The character of violence is not homogenous; instead, it has multiple forms, dimensions, and impacts. For this reason, several anthropologists, including Galtung, Pierre Bourdieu, Veena Das, and Talal Asad studied violence with their diverse lenses. To depict the violence that madrasa students have been subjected to, I will attempt to employ their various understandings to describe the violence.

The third section of this chapter is devoted to understanding how Muslim women have been marginalized and subjected to violence because of their religious dress in the Bangladeshi public sphere and universities. At the same time, how the state-sponsored secular media targeting Muslim women as prone to 'terrorism' will be discussed. The fourth section of this chapter will be devoted to discussing how the secular faculty members, student wings, and media stigmatize madrasa students in Bangladesh as anti-national, black soul of Pakistan, backward, and communalist. As a consequence of this

stigmatization, the madrasa students became ‘bare life’ and killable and torturable for the secular students' wing.

4.1. Structural Discrimination in Higher Education

It is always difficult to define a nation-state, its role, and how the nation-state shapes its citizens’ lives. As Philip Abrams states “the state is not the reality that stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is” (Abrams 1988, 58). The state is a reality, for this reason the state “becomes a social subject in everyday life” (Aretxaga 2003, 393) which we can feel and is also untenable. For this reason, “the state has always been difficult to define” (Mitchell 1991, 77). The ambiguous and hidden role of the state has been constructed in a way that it imbues fear, discrimination, and the terrorizie people through its monopolistic use of violence – in addition to subjugating them legally and physically. The Bangladeshi state snatched its liberation from Pakistan with the aim of establishing a state where people could speak in their own language, equality will be inevitable and justice will be ensured. But what we have witnessed, in the fifty years following independence, is that Bangladesh is becoming a police state where dissidents are abducted, beaten in broad daylight in front of hundreds of people, and where political killing is a grave reality.

Despite having these dictating and dominative characteristics, every nation-state claims that they are loyal to their citizens. The state claims to provide equal opportunities for its fellow citizens. However, the reality is that the state has been built through discrimination, and othering people based on language, religion, or racial differentiations – especially toward minorities residing within their boundaries. In the case and context of madrassa students in Bangladesh, discrimination is an inevitable reality, and to an extent it is state-sponsored. What does this discrimination mean and entail? We can say this is a social and state-sponsored process of marginalizing a group of people from public spaces and state provided opportunities for its citizens. This is a rigid process where one or several particular groups or individuals are systematically denied access to opportunities that have been provided by the state or any other organization and, in doing so, denying them social upward mobility. But these marginalized people or groups have the total right to get state-provided opportunities as citizens of their country. For this reason, here if we were to use discrimination as a

tool employed by the state apparatuses, this would allow us to precisely understand the nation state's discriminatory approach to their specific citizens.

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher, authored a remarkable work entitled "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1968), where Freire provided a multi-layered theory based on how education can be used as an instrument and institution to assimilate, eradicate, annihilate and oppress diverse segments of society. Freire attempted to choose education to revolutionize the human struggle against oppression for social equality. Very similarly, Karl Marx (1867), before Freire, used the term 'proletariat' to describe marginalized and oppressed people. After that the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1992), used 'Subaltern' and French Philosopher Michel Foucault (2007) used 'exploited' as words to describe discriminated and subjugated bodies and ways of life.

There are many postcolonial theorists and anthropologists, who have different ideas about the terms Subaltern, discriminated and Proletaries, including Indian prominent anthropologist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak doesn't see these terms as equivalent. According to Spivak, "the subaltern is just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie" (Spivak 1994, 45). Here Spivak is proposing a cautious use of the term subaltern and is more concerned about the condition and mechanism that keep people as subaltern subjects. Spivak (1994) also pointed out that particular socio-cultural situations and certain political ideologies might impede the subaltern from functioning properly. There are three particular phenomena, according to Spivak, that can lead to subalternity and these include gender, race and economic condition, as Spivak states "Clearly if you are poor, black and female, you get it in three ways" (Spivak 1994, 90). From my understanding, we can include several phenomena that can lead to subalternity, including the use of language, traditional religious dress, social and economic disparities, particular hierarchy, and finally access to public wealth, expanding Spivak's conceptualization.

However, the precise idea of subalternity, doesn't precisely define the present predicament of madrasa students and what kind of structural discrimination and marginalization they have faced in contemporary Bangladeshi society and from the Bangladeshi state in their educational lives. Here, to better describe the situation, we bring Johan Galtung, a prominent Norwegian sociologist, and his spectacular theory

on violence, structural violence. Here a collective description of predicament and structural violence will be depicted critically.

According to Johan Galtung, violence is “a situation when human beings are beings influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realization” (Galtung 1969, 168). For Galtung, violence, in every sense, is not only about the appearance or application of physical injury or trauma, rather it also includes the human potentialities of violence. Moreover, Pool and Geissler offer a definition of structural violence which they describe as referring to “the constraints on behavior and options imposed by institutionalized inequalities in wealth and power on those who are underprivileged: namely women, the poor, those of color” (Pool and Geissler 2005, 63).

Studying, documenting, analyzing, and deconstructing structural violence has been a huge labor in anthropology for a long time. Paul Edward Farmer, an American medical anthropologist, and physician showed how structural violence has a long colonial history on those who face violence and those who inflict violence. Farmer (2004) attempts to portray the roots of endemic suffering and how structural violence have a long history of association with European colonialism (Farmer 2004, 307). Queseda, Hart and Bourgois proposed another way to understand structural violence. Queseda, Hart and Bourgois (2011) argue that structural violence creates a vulnerable situation and this newly developed situation forces us to redefine the notion of agency about a particular group of people. They state that “because it requires an analysis of the forces that constrain decision-making, frame choices, and limit life options” (Queseda, Hart and Bourgois 2011, 3).

If we attempt to look at the case of madrasa students with this definition of violence, we can easily infer that madrasa students’ lives and existence are inferior in comparison with non-madrasa students and the violence and discrimination that they face are enormous. At the same time, when madrasa students do not have the same access to education and employment opportunities as non-madrasa students do, as well as madrasa students not enjoying the same levels of social, cultural, and political freedom, this violates their future career paths and opportunities. According to Galtung's framework, if madrasa students' lives and agency is limited or restricted, there is violence imposed on their life trajectory.

Furthermore, Johan Galtung also diagnoses the subjectivity and the objectivity of violence. He asks the question as to whether it would be possible for violence not to have a subject – a person or group committing or accelerating the violence. While he has been talking about the subjectivity of violence, he also argues that there must be an object of violence. Galtung offers two typologies of violence: 'personal direct violence' and 'structural indirect violence' (Galtung 1990, 292).

Galtung describes structural violence as "a situation where no actor is identified as committing harm towards another yet violence is still present. The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as uneven life chances" (Galtung 1969, 171). Structural violence is an invisible mechanism like that used by states and it is different from direct violence. As Galtung states "Direct violence is an event; structural violence is a process" (Galtung 1990, 294). Structural violence is also a mechanism that influences and affects our life as the state does. While structural violence is constructs and deconstructs our lives, it kills human potentialities. For this reason, Galtung attempted to make a connection between violence, power and mood of the production. Galtung states that in structural violence, both the resources and the power to decide over the distribution of resources are 'unevenly distributed' (Galtung 1969, 171). To make this idea clear Galtung pointed to the situation when [starvation] is objectively avoidable, violence is committed regardless of whether or not there is a clear subject-action-object relation (Galtung 1969, 171). What we can understand from this case study provided by Galtung, is that people are hungry but purchasing food is beyond their buying capacity. In this case study, there is no specific person or group of people who are executing violence yet people are unable to buy food. This is an example of structural violence.

If we look at the access of madrasa students' to the public university with Galtung's theory of structural violence in mind, we can rationalize that there is strong and visible discrimination and violence against Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh. Before talking about contemporary structural violence, which broadly started after the 1990s, it would be useful to present a historical chronology of discrimination enacted against Aliya madrasa education. From 1971 to 1985, following the independence of Bangladesh, the Aliya madrasa degree was not recognized by the Bangladeshi state. In the year 1985, the Hussain Muhammad Ershad government partially recognized the Aliya madrasa degree. Dakhil, the equivalent of the Secondary School Certificate, and

Alim, the equivalent of the Higher Secondary School Certificate were subsequently recognized in 1987.[18] Despite these developments, full recognition was still yet to be achieved with Fazil and Kamil being left behind. In the year of 2006, because of an immense protest led by madrasa students, the Bangladeshi coalition government made up of the BNP, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, recognized Fazil and Kamil as equivalent to Bachelor and Master's degrees.

During the period following independence up until the late nineties, there was a minute presence of madrasa students in public universities. Before the recognition of the Dakhil and Alim degrees, madrasa students used to register themselves in the government high school in the ninth grade to receive Secondary School Certificate (SSC). They typically did this after receiving their Alim degrees in the Madrasa, at an age between 20 to 22 years old. After receiving the SSC certificate, they used to go for the Higher Secondary School Certificate. After getting an HSC certificate, they were eligible for university admission.

Despite these positive developments, during the same period, university administrative bodies started to put several extra conditions with the intent of not admitting madrasa students. According to the Bangladeshi constitution under the 'University Sovereignty Act 1973' the public universities including University of Dhaka, University of Rajshahi, University of Chittagong and Jahangirnagar University, and the Bangladesh Agri- cultural University (BAU) is operate as a sovereign institutions (Kabir and Chowdhury 2021, 90-100). This ordinance, 'University Sovereignty Act 1973' "dictates the selection procedures for the four statutory bodies of a university, which comprise the senate, syndicate, academic, and finance councils" (Shiddike and Bockarie 2020, 215). The University Grant Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) provided a major share of the budget of the public university from public funds with the collaboration of the government. Among the key features of Bangladeshi public universities is that, in theory, they should enjoy total freedom in every section of the university especially in terms of their admission criteria, syllabus-making, hiring faculties, and bureaucratic decisions. Here the interesting phenomenon is that despite the public universities enjoying so-called 'sovereignty', the vice-chancellor is always

[18]History of BMEd T. Course," Bangladesh Madrasha Teacher's Training Institute, http://www.bmtti.gov.bd/site/page/14beae99-1d79-4de3-876c-1d9b0eac27e1/-

a political post and elected by the wish of the ruling political party. At the same time, the syndicate, as well as other administrative positions, are political. For this reason, under the guise of 'sovereignty' a group of secular intellectuals run public universities, and it does not matter which political parties are in power. For this reason, the faculties of the public universities got engaged in partisan politics, which resulted in personal gain and post (Shiddike and Bockarie 2020, 214-216). As a consequence of this notorious politics, the Bangladeshi universities became the political extension of political parties of Bangladesh (Masum 2008, 15-20)

Since the late 1990s, most public universities, chronologically, including Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, University of Rajshahi, and Chittagong University put barriers for madrasa students with regards to undergraduate admission.[19] Dhaka University, the most prominent university in Bangladesh, followed by other universities and government colleges, published an announcement that the university will not admit any students in the department of English, Bengali, Mass Communication and Journalism, International Relations, Women and Gender Studies, and Linguistics if they don't have 200-mark tests in Bangla and English subjects in their Higher secondary level, no matter what grades students obtain in their admission tests. The Aliya madrasa students study 100 marks test in Bangla and English in their Secondary and Higher secondary levels. For this reason, from 2004[20] to 2013, thousands of madrasa students were rejected from public universities in these specific departments because of the extra requirements that were only applicable to them. One of my interviewees, Arif Abdullah recalled his experience;

[19] The interesting thing is that I could not find the online admission brochure online throughout my fieldwork and post fieldwork. I went to Dhaka university's student affairs department, but they told me that without the permission of the Vice-Chancellors, they wouldn't be able to provide such kind of old document. I went to Vice Chancellor's office to acquire permission to get the previous admission brochure, but the answer I have received from the office is – We can only provide permission in terms of getting access to the old admission brochure if you have permission from the Court. Otherwise, we are not allowed to give such permission. After that I went to Jahangirnagar University's Vice-Chancellors office, where I have studied for almost three years; they also gave me the same answer. And all these documents are unavailable online. Here I am providing a daily newspaper link, the Daily Star, a leading English newspaper in Bangladesh, that describes how madrasa students were not allowed to get admission for specific departments.

[20] Actually, it is difficult to find the exact date forbidding madrasa students from getting admission in public universities, including Dhaka University. I was denied to access to the university archive that holds the admission criteria report. While I was doing my fieldwork, many of my interviewee's parents, especially the fathers, told me that even they were denied admission in 1994, 1997, and 1998. For this reason, here, I have to depend on oral history and daily newspapers.

> Public university education is free. Students don't have to pay save huge amount of fees. At the same time, public university students have more access to the government job sector. Because of this financial incentive and the high possibility of getting a job in the future, poor and middle-class Muslim families from small-towns want to send their kids to public universities, especially conservative families for better future prospects and government jobs. After finishing my higher secondary education in Amtola Islamia Azizia Fazil Madrasa, I prepared myself for the university admission test. In the admission test, I ranked 7th out of a hundred thousand students. My score was 27 out of 30 in English and 26 out of 30 in Bangla. My first choice was Development Studies but the interview board rejected me from the Development Studies department. They told me that "You studied in a madrasa and did not study 200 marks of English and Bengali literature. For this reason, we don't accept madrasa students who have studied 100 marks of Bengali and English literature in their secondary and higher secondary level." Despite not studying 200 marks in English and Bengali literature, I received an extraordinary score in Bangla and English literature. They did not hear me. It was not only me, there were hundreds of other students crying outside of the social science building in Dhaka University because they did not get the department they wanted despite achieving extraordinary grades on the university admission test. The interview board chose law for me although I did not have any intention to study law[21].

My meeting with Arif Abdullah was in his home, Banglamotor, a prominent neighborhood of Dhaka, near the University of Dhaka. I went to his house in the evening with the plan of staying two to three hours. But our meeting took almost nine hours. Before starting our meeting I was sitting down in a study room where Arif Abdulla spent 10 to 12 hours every day for his job preparation study. The walls of the room were painted white. A Bangladeshi map and flag hung on the wall. It promoted me to remember that the state is not merely police or, bureaucracy, at the same time the state is picture and symbols (Gupta 1995, 390-395)

[21] Personal interview with Arif in June in Dhaka. I am using a pseudonym in place of his real name as he did not provide permission for me to use his real name.

I began my conversation with Arif Abdullah by asking about cricket and other sports. After that, I asked him whether he used to play cricket in his early life, especially in madrasa or not. This is how our conversation started. With time he began to narrate his life story and the experience of studying in the madrasa. His narration did not stop until his wife came with tea and biscuits after almost an hour. After having those snacks, we continued talking from the point at which we ended. From his childhood, he proceeded to narrate how his family was subjected to political violence in 1977. A group of people burned their house because his father encouraged local people not to vote for the candidate who was supporting secularism in a local Mahfil. Due to this stance against the secularist political party, Arif Abdullah's father was beaten in front of hundreds of people in the weekly Bazar in Fultoha, Khulna, by the student wing of a secular party. When Arif Abdullah was narrating how his father was beaten despite being a respected teacher, his wife came and insisted that I join them for dinner. I looked at the clock and the time was 10 pm. After having our dinner, we started to talk again. He told me that, at that time, he was working as a part-time instructor in a university coaching center whilst also preparing himself for a government job. Arif Abdullah doesn't know whether he will get the government job or not because of his madrasa education background, but he is still hopeful. I saw his eyes full of tears when he talked about his future because it has no destination. Uncertainty envelopes his future. Meanwhile, his daughter Sumaiya Hasin woke up again. We exchanged our parting greetings to each other for that day. When I left his house, it was pitch black outside because of the power cut in the area. All around me, egregious darkness was enmeshing me like the darkness surrounding Arif Abdullah's future.

This discrimination and dark future brought about huge agony in the madrasa student community. They were always in the street protesting against this discrimination but their demands and grievances were denied. But the situation changed in 2010 after a group of people who studied in madrasa who were denied admission into public universities between1996 and 2008, came out and started to organize protests in Dhaka University and in other Universities.

As a consequence of the protests and petitions to the Ministry of Education and Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board from the general populace, in 2013 the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board changed the syllabus and included 200 marks of English literature and 200 marks of Bangla literature with the intention of

circumventing the barrier madrasa students faced to get admission in the public university.[22] But this did not happen since they did not fulfill their promise. Despite studying 200 marks of English and 200 marks of Bangla in secondary and higher secondary level and fulfilling all the admission requirements, several madrasa students were rejected admission to study their desirable subjects. Students were helpless, their guardians were dismayed. One of my interviewees, Zakir Hossain, told me his dire situation with visible frustration;

> I have studied 200 marks English and 200 marks Bangla in my higher secondary level and fulfilled all other requirements for admission to study Economics but I did not get the chance to study Economics. After publishing our admission exam results, we were asked to fill the subjects (Departments) form. While I was filling out the subjects, a lot of subjects including development studies, international relations, development student, and gender studies were absent in my choice form but all these subjects were visible in my other friend's choice list. I immediately went to university administration and they said they would look into these issues but they did not. I waited for almost a week; in this time, I went to the university administration, the dean of social science office, and even the vice-chancellors office, but no one was there to assist me[23].

Unfortunately, the case of Zakir Hossain and many others proves that the 200 marks English and 200 marks Bangla was not the issue, the issue was the educational background and the madrasa studentship. Actually, the idea was to block madrasa students from being admitted to public universities, from higher education and hence consequently rendering them pariahs in the political, social, and economic elite classes. This was precisely intentional; excluding a group of people from higher education. One of my interviewees, Numan Karim states;

> When I was not able to choose my desired subject (Department) I went to the administration building and informed them, and they told me to submit an application. I submitted my application right at that time. After that, I used to

[22] Nawaz Farhin, "All Dhaka University departments now open for madrasa students," *Dhaka Tribune,* September 21, 2017.
[23] Personal interview with Zakir Hossain in June in Dhaka.

> go to the administration building to get updates about my application but the university administration did not reply to me until the admission date was over[24].

Here, we are witnessing the 'a Kafkaesque state[25]' and their local representative, a Kafkaesque bureaucracy (Kafka 1925). Firstly, The secular state and their representative, the vice-chancellor, and the syndicate members thwarted madrasa students by putting extra conditions to admission to public universities. Secondly, when madrasa students broke the barriers, met all the conditions, and got the chance to study in the university, they now encountered the administrative officer of public universities. First, it was the state; now, it was the executive officer who was trying to prevent madrasa students from studying in public universities.

My interviewee Numan experienced something similar to what I experienced while I was in the dean's office of the social science department in Dhaka to collect information about previous years' undergraduate admission process. The administrative officers did not answer me for almost a month. Only after I wrote a petition to the dean of social science they tell me that their office didn't have the authority to provide such information. I also went through the same experience at Jahangirnagar University. This is the quicksand of the bureaucracy of Bangladesh. They do not provide any information or documents until they receive an order from the highest position of the office, and the highest authority of any particular office is always out of reach for general people like me.

While there is structural violence from state and university authorities, student organizations, such as the student wings of government have also been trying to prevent madrasa students from getting admission into public universities. Like the state, they consider madrasa students to be a threat to the secular state and secular education. So what they do is, while the interview session is going on in the dean's office, they come and if they see that someone is wearing traditional dress such as a long Jubba, cap and with a beard, they take him out from there and torture him mentally and physically. The issue is that these poor madrasa students, most of whom come

[24] Personal interview with Numan Abdullah in January in Dhaka.

[25] I am using the Kafkaesque state as a metaphor in that here the state has no intention to provide sustainable solutions for its respective citizens but rather it aims to keep the state and its apparatuses functional where citizens are not in a position to find the solution to anything.

from small cities and are unaccompanied, don't know the autocratic bureaucratic system and political culture of public universities in Bangladesh. One of my interviewees, a former graduate of Khulna Aliya madrasa, Mahmudul Islam, states this situation;

> I was standing in front of the social science dean's office in Dhaka University and was about to submit the petition for my admission. A few young men and women came and asked my name and wanted me to show my university exam result. After that, they asked me whether I have any association with any conservative political parties. After saying no, they started to interrogate me and started to slap me. After that, they took me to Sohidullah Hall and tortured me for several hours. My nose and ears were broken because of their incessant slapping. When the official time was finished they released me. I came to the social science dean's office to submit the petition for admission but the office staff informed me that the time is over. They will not take any petition now. This is the way I have lost my admission to Dhaka University. One of my friends who interviewed at Chittagong University, also lost his admission in the same way as I did[26].

Mahmudul Islam and his case study provides us with an explicit depiction of how in every stage of university admission, madrasa students are subjected to structural discrimination and violence. Several actors maintain this circle to keep madrasa students out of the public universities. First, it was from the secular Bangladeshi state who claimed that all citizens have equal rights to education. Second, it was the secular intellectuals who run the university and see madrasa students as indivduals whose education background is outdated, communalist, and fundamentalist. By considering madrasa students as communalists or fundamentalists, they legitimize their structural discrimination and violence, and madrasa students became *homo sacer or'* 'bare life'. And the state and their allied secular student wings beat, torture, abuse these *homo sacer or'* 'bare life' madrasa students, whilst enjoying full immunity from the university administration and the secular state. "These forms of legality allow post-colonial regimes to inscribe, frame, and repackage exceptional violence against

[26] While I was having interviewee with Mahmudul Islam, he showed me the permanent sore place of his body. His whole hand and His back was full of bruises.

minorities to reinforce and deepen a form of state power based on the explicit subordination of minorities" (Chatterjee 2017, 118).

Now the question that comes to mind is – is the Bangladeshi public university admission process based on an apartheid education system? Generally, people love to describe this 'madrasa issue' as a fight between secularist authorities and 'Islamist', or state vs conservative communities, but in reality, this is not the case. It is a system that excludes millions of people out of mainstream society through exclusion from the education system. For this reason, it can be claimed that the university admission system in Bangladesh can be described as a form of apartheid education system.

When discrimination against black people in South Africa was at its peak, the word 'Apartheid' started to get public attention. Broadly we can define the concept of apartheid as a legal system which segregated and ostracised black people in South Africa. Donald Ellis defined Apartheid as "a social and political policy of segregation and discrimination against a minority" (Ellis 2019, 63). In the year of 1948, the Nationalist Party (NP) came to power in South Africa. The Nationalist Party (NP) used the law to legitimize their racism against people. After gaining power, the Nationalist Party (NP) introduced several policies that restricted black people from getting equal rights in several issues including school, transportation, and healthcare. The Nationalist Party (NP) divided all South Africans into racial categories, black, white and mixed.

They also denied giving the right to vote to black people except for the local administration in Bantustans. Bantustans were established by the Nationalist Party (NP) for black people, a restricted area where the Nationalist Party (NP) forced black people to live. During the period of Apartheid, the education system of South Africa restricted black people from getting a proper education. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 brought an essential change in the history of the South African education system with the aim of subordinating black people. Actually, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 restricted black people from getting a proper education with of the intention of keeping them as working class individuals (Pam and Collins, 1982).

Under the Bantu Education Act, schooling was compulsory for white children between the ages of seven to sixteen. For black people, it was seven to thirteen. The Bantu

Education Act established a separate department of education based on race; white, black and mixed. Within this race, the position of black Africans was at the bottom in terms of getting funding, teaching, and teacher quality. For this reason, black Africans had very few chances to study and this limited black Africans to being laborers for generation after generation (Pam and Collins, 1992).

What's happening in Bangladesh is that despite Aliya madrasa students participating and going through the same institutional process, the university authority itself is making the decision as to who will study in which department. Nevertheless, a huge number of students, despite having a low scores on the admission test, have been selected to study in departments that require a high score in the admission test. At the same time, several students who have high scores are forced to study in departments that require low scores. This is precisely enforced onto a particular community to compel them to study particular subjects and imprison them within that arena. While this is happening it is difficult to consider the whole education system as an Apartheid like system. This is because there are a few students who have low scores in the university admission exams and had the chance to choose the subject they wanted. In the Bangladeshi context, these subjects have no job market values and include subjects such as Islamic history, Persian, and Urdu language and literature. For this reason, despite the fact that there are many similarities between the Apartheid education system of South Africa and that of Bangladesh, we can't classify the Bangladeshi education system under the specific category of Apartheid, but we can consider this as a semi-Apartheid like education system that has at its end discrimination.

4.2. Violence in Everyday Life

On the morning of the 16th of September of 2011, at Jahangirnagar University, I and some of my friends were sitting down in the place called 'Transport', a few minutes walk away from the Vice-chancellor's office. We were having our breakfast before going for our weekly routine class. When we were in the middle of our breakfast, a group of students came to the 'Transport' and ordered tea. These students were madrasa students, they were wearing long jubbas and had religious caps on their heads. At the same time, they had some supplementary admission books in their hands. They were talking about the beauty of the campus. While they were having their tea, another group of students came. They were members of the Bangladesh Chhatra League

(BCL), a self-claimed secular force in Bangladesh, and asked the madrasa students what they were doing there. The students said we are here to buy some 'university admission guides' and to visit the beautiful campus. After the BCL members started to question them about their family, their political affiliation, and in which madrasa they studied. The rigorous interrogation continued for around 20 minutes, after which my friends and I were done with our breakfast and moved on for our class.

After class, around 11 am, when I and my friends visited 'Transport' again, I asked the tea shop owner, Hamidur Rahman, what happened to those madrasa students who were having tea in his shop in the morning. The shopkeeper told me that the BCL members took them to Shaheed Rafiq-Jabbar Hall, a prominent dormitory in Jahangirnagar university. I called one of my friends, who was also a member of BCL at Shaheed Rafiq-Jabbar Hall and he told me that these madrasa students were member of Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir (ICS), a student wing of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, and that "we found them very suspicious". He feared that "they might attack our campus". They are Jongi[27] (religious terrorist). Our university authority was totally aware of this situation but they did not do anything. After torturing these madrasa students for almost twelve hours and establishing that they had no political affiliation with any political party, the proctorial body of the university rescued them from Shaheed Rafiq-Jabbar Hall and brought them to Enam Medical College and Hospital. Meanwhile the members of BCL stole their money and mobile phones. This event accurately described the "rough culture of student politics" (Ruud 2014, 309) in contemporary Bangladeshi public universities.

Just out of curiosity, I and some of my friends went to the Hospital to visit those brutally beaten students. Some of their legs were broken and their bodies were full of blood. Their parents were crying on the floor since they didn't have money to pay the hospital fees. This is not an unusual scene at the public universities in Bangladesh. This kinds of political violence happens not only to madrasa students, who are commonly accused of being members of Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir, but also happens to opposition political parties who oppose the Bangladesh Chhatra League. Even in their internal clashes of power, they would kill each other. This is how the

[27] Jongi is a Bangla word. The literal meaning is terrorist, but in Bangladesh, people use Jongi to imply the meaning of a religious terrorist, especially a terrorist who has a connection with Islam or who is Muslim.

secular Bangladeshi state and "the modern South Asian state has created political spaces and opportunities for the criminal and the presence of the criminal in politics" (Ruud 2014, 326).

But what explains this violence, violent clashes and killing of innocent people in universities? Why torture madrasa students who just finished their high school education and have dreams to get admission in public universities? It has no black and white answer. The hate against madrasa students, intolerance against the presence of madrasa students in public universities which the state wants to keep secular, has a long history in Bangladesh. This hate has also been taking place in the public space as well.

In this chapter, firstly, I will provide a discussion of the phenomen of of violence and its emergence in contemporary anthropologies theory and literature. Meanwhile, I will also give a glimpse of the history of violence in contemporary South Asia as well as in Bangladesh. After that I will delineate the various forms of violence that have been experienced by Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh especially in public universities. The character of violence is not homogenous rather it has multiple forms, dimensions and impacts. For this reason, several anthropologists including Johan Galtung, Pierre Bourdieu, Veena Das and Talal Asad studied violence with their own diverse lenses. To depict the violence that madrasa students have been subjected to, I would employ their diverse understanding to depict the violence. At the same time, I will also attempt to outline the stigmatization of madrasa students in Bangladeshi society as anti-national, prone to terrorism, Taliban members and the black soul of Pakistan.

Anthropology has a long historical association of studying human political life, association with political organization and violence. Interestingly, to a large extent, both sociologists and anthropologists avoided this discussion until the early twentieth century. The main reason for this neglect was the foundational heritage of the Enlightenment (Malešević 2010 17). While there is historical neglect of studying violence in social science, the study of 'violence' received closer attention in the postcolonial age. Sarah Accomazzo states that anthropology of violence "has come into popular discussion only since the 1980s and has been the subject of much debate between prominent scholars in the field" (Accomazzo 2012, 535). The anthropology of violence (1986), a collection of diverse essays published by David Riches, marked

the beginning of studying the nature of violence in anthropology. After that, many scholars started to contribute to the study of violence. Veena Das ed. Book (1990), led to a paradigm-shift in violence studies, entitled 'Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia', this work contributed and provided a solid-state for studying violence and trauma in anthropology. Interestingly, during the 1980s with the association of postmodernist anthropologists, as a subfield, the anthropology of violence was established and within this subfield anthropologists started to divide violence into several pillars including colonial violence, symbolic violence and structural violence (Accomazzo 2012, 534). These studies of violence were also accelerated by the political turmoil in the late 1990s that included the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the Bosnian genocide from 1992-1995.

The Indian subcontinent has a long history of colonial violence; the communal violence between Muslims and Hindus, nationalism, the partition of 1947, and pre and post-selection violence. These topics have been dominating the study of violence in South Asia until recently. However, now there is growing diversity in the study of the anthropology of violence in South Asia that includes militarization, state and upheaval. This diverse trend focuses on military violence in the tribal areas of Pakistan, Kashmir, and Sri Lanka (Shah and Pettigrew 2009; Duschinski, 2009; Thiranagama, 2009; Murphy 20019; Jafree 2018).

While there is a diverse trend in the study of violence in the world and in the Indian Subcontinent, "literature on political violence is limited in the context of Bangladesh. Most of the available literature is qualitative in nature, and only a few use time-series data on violence to show the trend" (Aziz and Razzaque 2018, 2). Zunaid Almamun divided the available literature on political violence into two; the first one being political parties and the second one being the state. At the same time, Almamun stated that the available literature did not explain the violence that was committed by the Bangladeshi state (Almamun 2020, 16). With this kind of fundamental limitation, Suykens and Islam (2015) provides, from 2002 to 2013, records of 14,187 single events of political violence in Bangladesh. Their study provides precise details regarding the timeline, casualty list, actors of violence, and geography. Aziz and Razzaque (2018) provide an explicit description of how political parties are involved in violence in Bangladesh. Moniruzzaman (2009) analysed the causes, manifestation

and the consequence of political violence in Bangladesh. By keeping three factors responsible for political violence in Bangladesh, the author shows how this violence is the consequence of the political culture of revenge and vengeance, intolerance to different political parties, revenge, and antagonism. Islam (2011) presents another interesting work on political violence in Bangladesh that describes how criminals has been enjoying political immunity from political parties as well as from the state. At the same time, Islam also argued that political violence has been initialized and institutionalized in Bangladesh with the precise contribution of the state. Interestingly, not a single academic work paid any attention to how madrasa students have been subjected to political violence in both the public university campus and the public sphere.

In 1990, Galtung introduced another phenomenal concept on violence named 'cultural violence'. As we know culture is the main internal and external control mechanism of a society. For this reason, several anthropologists have invested their labor in defining and theorizing this complex phenomenon of human life. The main reason for defining and theorizing cultural violence is that generally most of people oversimplify culture and in a general sense, people hold stereotypes about the 'other culture'. Culture is not obscure, nor rational or even static. From Franz Boas to Clifford Greets and Alfred Kroeber to Leslie White, everyone attempted to define culture but the most 'accepted' and elaborate definition was provided by British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, "Culture, or civilization … is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1871, 1).

With the complex understanding of culture, we attempt to understand Galtung's definition of cultural violence which would be more comprehensive, inclusive and relevant in the context of my subject matter. According to Galtung, cultural violence is any aspect of a culture that "can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form" (Galtung 1990, 291). Here culture is the main weapon of othering people and legitimizing any form of violence or discrimination against them. And this othering and legitimizing against them happens by using various aspects of cultural markers. According to Galtung, Six aspects of culture can be used to legitimize direct or structural violence. These six aspects are religion, ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) (Galtung, 1990 291).

Cultural violence is a consequence of orientalism that drives from assumptions, stereotypes and antagonism to the native culture. This is also a consequence of trying to make a state-sponsored homogeneous society and by making those who do not conform as the enemy or the 'other'. This process starts with brainwashing and ends with the killing of other people by rationalizing the violence. Cultural violence, Galtung argues further, is so powerful that it makes "direct and structural violence look, even feel, right – or at least not wrong" (Galtung 1991, 291) in the eyes of those who perpetrate violence, discrimination and othering.

In the Bangladeshi context, the most important aspect of constructing and legalizing cultural violence is ideology. According to Galtung, ideological-based cultural violence takes place following binaries such as self vs other. In this case, the "self is inflating even exalting' while the 'other' is deflating, even debasing" (Galtung 1991, 298). It occasions superiority and inferiority complexes in the social sphere. This binary process has a historical background that has been connected with western colonialism. This historical binary construction can work in several levels of the particular society such as Gender - men have more capability to work outside and women love to gossip; Race - white people are more intellectual and realistic and Asians are skillful to computer operators and Arab men marry two, three or even more women; crime culture- Afghan people are extremely prone to terrorism, and white people are more rationalist and impregnable to terrorism.

In Bangladeshi society, these binary construction works in this way: madrasa students don't know English and non- madrasa students have more proficiency with English; madrasa has a strong connection with terrorism and non- madrasa students are impregnable to crime like white people; madrasa students and conservative society has missed the train of civilization. Conspicuously, these narratives in Bangladeshi society have created and have been establishing and legalizing extreme cultural violence[28].

[28] This binary process has a historical background. Since the rise of secular Bengali nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century, Muslims have been depicted as a communalist, backward, and uncivilized. After independence, the secular Bangladeshi state marginalized madrasa education and imposed secularism to, from their point of view, free society from the communalist ideas of Islam. Since then, this kind of binary has been constructed in Bangladeshi society. Following the establishment of the war on terror, this binary construction accelerated, and secular intellectuals began to read madrasa with the eyes of the military and Taliban.

This state-sponsored cultural violence is happening through the state's apparatuses and within the education system. More crucially, Althusser (1971) argues that ideology has a precise material base that works within the framework of an institution, such as media, schools, the military and state institutions etc. The media, electronic and printed media, are the most unequivocal institutions that have been dictating, shaping and informing our modern life. The media also is dictating how people will think and what people will think tomorrow. And who would be our friend and who would be our enemy in the sense of nation-state. For this reason, the media and its discourses have the role of a vendor of ideologies and this is extremely important. Since the media is constructing and reconstructing the image and the depiction of the enemy, the portrayals of madrasa students as the other and people who are prone to terrorism became a cultural hegemonic ideology in Bangladesh. This idea of the supposed hegemonic ideology has been used to discriminate and stigmatize many sections of society including madrasa students. This cultural war also includes the idea that conservative community and madrasa students are against the idea of 'Bengali nationalism', they are against schooling the women and participation of women in the public sphere and consequently are hindering the national progress of the country (Asadullah, M. Niaz, Islam, and Wahhaj 2018;)

The Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, is known for his great invention of the idea of cultural hegemony. Gramsci showed in his analysis of hegemony that cultural hegemony dominates the society while the rest of the society is extremely diverse (Lears 1985, 567-570). This dominance does not come through only economic discrimination or oppression, rather it comes through the from culturally constructed ideologies. The idea that conservative community and madrasa students don't know English and their previous education is not compatible with the present secular education system is spreading out as cultural violence towards madrasa students in Bangladesh. The media creates this cultural violence with political intention with the precise help and encouragement of the dominant political class. For this reason, the pious Muslim community and madrasa students have been and continue to be intentionally represented as prone to or having a strong association with terrorism, not being a part of 'us', being the 'other' - that is a threat to the national ideals and principles. Interestingly, this narration became normal as Galtung states "it dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or into not seeing

them" (Galtung 1990, 295). While Galtung is describing how this cultural violence became normal and part of our life, one of my interviewees, Shahida Rashid, who was a student of Dhaka University, department of International Relations, during 2012-17, describes one of her experiences:

> It was my first year studying at Dhaka University. I was traveling to Chittagong for a job interview in an international NGO from Dhaka. Since my childhood, I have loved to wear hijab and try my best to cope with my education. While traveling to Chittagong, the person who was next to my seat was also a woman, refused to sit with me and requested the bus authority to change her seat to somewhere else. In the Bangladeshi context, women like to sit together even if they don't know each other. Broadly it's a gender issue. When the bus authority refused to change her seat, she came and told me to change my seat and sit somewhere else. When I refused she started to shout and told me that I might blast a bomb or I might have a weapon. Even her oral violence started to transform into physical violence but some other people came out and rescued me. I was speechless and I had nothing to do[29].

Several of my interviewees, from University of Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna, shared almost the same kind of experiences. These kinds of events are the consequence of incessant intentional communal rhetoric about the pious Muslim community and madrasa students in Bangladesh. This is also a media trial as Edward Said states, the coverage of Islam in Western media has been extremely successful " this coverage can be attributed to the political influence of those people and institutions producing it rather than necessarily to truth or accuracy" (Said 1981, 169).

While Edward said has been talking about how the media coverage has been politically motivated, one of my interviewees from Dhaka University, Rasheda Khanom[30], studied in the Department of Marketing, explained how she was victimized by the mainstream media while she had nothing to do with that incident.

> At the beginning of 2014, there was a clash between two groups of students from the same political organization, BCL, in our university. I was not

[29] Personal interview with Shahida Rashid in July in Dhaka.
[30] Personal interview with Rasheda Khanom in January in Dhaka.

> politically active but as you know if you want to have a place in a university hall you have to have a blessing from a powerful leader otherwise you won't get a place despite this being your right to stay and having a place in the dormitory. The clash took national attention. For this reason, the government supported media were looking for a scapegoat to prove the government was innocent. The government-run media started to target hijabi women and they especially targeted me and some of my women friends. They started to circulate the news that me and my friends who are wearing hijab are associated with some Islamic political parties and that we intentionally made this clash. They, the student wings and pro-government media, did this to cover up their own internal conflicts. We were arrested. Later we were released without any charge after almost a month.

I received Rasheda's contact from another of my interviewees, who was also a student of the University of Dhaka but left the university after a mob attacked her in her second year of study. I met with Rasheda in her house; her parents and husband were present during our meeting. We had a long discussion. Rasheda informed me that the case is still going on, and she has to go to the Dhaka district court every three months. Rasheda also said that after that incident, she left the university and her photo was published in some online portal. As a consequence of all these issues, her marriage was broken because her fiancé's family didn't want to mess up. During our meeting, she showed me her university identity card and told me that she never wanted to leave her studies, but the situation did not allow her to continue.

Attacking women for their hijab in Bangladesh especially in the public universities where the secular ethos is extremely dominant has several factors and all of these factors also have multilayered manifestations. We can divide these factors into two parts. The first one is the political factors and the second one is the gender and cultural factors. The visibility of Muslim women and their cultural ethos like wearing hijab resists the secular narration of Bengali nationalism and making their own way of life. These Muslim women's resistance, not assimilating with the secular life style, became a political issue in Bangladesh especially after the starting of the 'War on Terror'. When an 'issue' is politicized in Bangladesh, the actors and actresses enjoy complete immunity. For this reason, the attack on Muslim women who is wearing hijab remains extremely ignored in Bangladeshi society, academia and especially in media.

4.3. Gender Violence and Muslim Women

While Aliya madrasa students are met with vigorous and impregnable structural and cultural violence, the most brutal victims of this violence are Muslim women. Men somehow manage to get admission to other government colleges or work elsewhere to earn money and support their family. However, women don't have any other way to go and are left at the mercy of their parents. Most of these women who face structural and cultural violence return home when they don't get admission to public universities.

As I stated before, public universities atmosphere is not in favor of madrasa students, for this reason, pious Muslim families started to rethink sending their kids to school and university. They started to send their kids to private universities rather than sending them to the university with the help of bank loans. They knew that because of their madrasa background they won't be able to get admission to esteemed departments and will not get a good job. There an acute fear of the public space for Muslim women. This fear has been accelerated by secular violence. And this has been maneuvered by state and secular parties, in the same time the main aim of this secular violence is to keep away the Muslim conservative students from higher education in public universities. This secular violence also wants to liberate Muslim women from 'patriarchy', the traditional Muslim society.

Lila Abu Lughod (2013) critically examines this journey of saving Muslim women from 'patriarchy'. Abu Lughod also states how this ideology of 'saving Muslim women' has been used to justify foreign military intervention in Muslim countries. While Abu Lughod describes the justification of intervention by the West, Gargi Bhattacharyya provides a very intuitive descriptive analysis of how the 'war on terror' was a cultural project, and it is not a war against Islam or any particular ethnic group but is a war against values and the way of life practiced by Muslims (Bhattacharyya 2008, 2).

In the Bangladeshi context, the state violence, marginalization, stigmatization and cultural violence is not directly against Islam with the banner of secularism but the target group is the pious Muslim community and their values, norms and culture. With the statist policies and discourse, it seems that they are just trying to save women from so-called 'Islamic traditional patriarchy'as Spivak states "white men saving brown

women from brown men" (Spivak 1994, 93). President George W. Bush suggested that the invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq have been in the interest of Muslim women (Bhattacharyya 2008, 19). Physically, Bangladeshi seculars are not white but they adopted the same discourse white man and Western states take such as; Muslim women are oppressed, are not allowed to enjoy modern life, the veiling tradition etc. By doing this, the state and secularists just sank into their self orientalism. So, the saving of women did not change throughout time because saving Muslim women was always a Western policy. As Edward Said (1978) states, the colonialist and orientalist cultural production always portray Muslim women as victims.[31]

Day by day with the change of the international, regional and national political atmosphere, religious polarization becomes more visible and there is a war against Muslim women especially those who are wearing hijab in Bangladeshi educational systems and in the public sphere. They have been the subject of discrimination, mocking or even sometimes viewed suspiciously as people who are prone to terrorism or as people who are members of terrorist organizations like the Taliban. During my fieldwork I had the chance to talk with several women who narrated their experience of mocking, stigmatizing and lynching in public and private places. One of my interviewees, Mosfeka Rahman who did not study in madrasa but used to wear hijab revealed her experience in one of the public university campuses;

> I finished my higher secondary study from Rajuk Uttara Model College, one of the most prestigious and leading colleges in Bangladesh. I had an extreme desire to study cinema. I got a chance at Jahangirnagar University in the department of Drama and Dramatics in the year of 2008- 2009. When I passed the written exam they called me for an interview. During the interview, two professors told me that by wearing this hijab, I would not be able to study in that department. However, I had shown my confidence and they gave me admission. After that, during the orientation, I refused to participate in several events such as dancing with men and wearing shorts for dancing sessions. So the mocking started from there. I can vividly remember, in the second week of my study, my professor asked me to remove my hijab in a practical class. When

[31] For details Lane, Edward William. *An account of the manners and customs of the modern Egyptians.* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

> I refused, she got angry. Such events happened to me. As a result, I quit the department. The following year, I got admission in the Business administration department and I moved there[32].

Here, it is clear that women's bodies, especially Muslim women bodies have been sexualized and considered as a barrier to the secular agencies and existence in education sector in Bangladesh. For the secular agencies the Muslim woman's body is something they want to reconstruct and sometimes smash and as Eisenstein states, the woman's body is 'a horribly powerful resource for those who wish to conquer, violate, humiliate, and shame.' (Eisenstein 2006, 186).

Another of my interlocutors, Israt Huq, was extremely upset because she still thinks that if she had the chance to study in the drama and dramatics department she would have been a great screenwriter or director. It is not only Israt Huq, some of my other interviewees shared similar experiences. So it is difficult to unveil the characteristics of this violence: it is complex, varied and multi-layered. This oppression and attempt to the control of Muslim women bodies comes up regularly in the name of modernity.

In contemporary Bangladesh many women, both from madrasa and secular education, are demonstrating against sexualizing their gender and bodies, against the secular qualm by using several resistance approaches including public visibility, joining university's clubs and sometimes even in politics. As a consequence of the modern state and its immense discrimination in education, violence in public sphere especially in public universities and the attempts to control the Muslim woman's body, a wide range of resistance movements are visible around the world.

Nevertheless, the main reason behind the criminalization of Muslim women with their traditional Islamic dress by secular students and faculty members is that they, the secular state and their local representative, the student's wing and faculties, want to keep the public space of the public universities secular, no presence of religious sign and identity.

[32] Personal interview with Mosfeka Rahman in January in Dhaka.

4.4. Symbolic Violence in Everyday Life

While Galton has been talking about three kinds of violence, Piero Bourdieu has introduced another kind of violence, called symbolic violence. The discussion of symbolic violence is an important part of his famous 'theory of practice' (Bourdieu 2007). Bourdieu starts to introduce several social organizations, those that are not static but tentative, such as sports, politics, education and media. These fields are not equal and they don't maintain equal power but these fields have immense influence on each other. All of these social organizations are considered as social structures and a person can access to these structures by using different forms of acquired capital[33] which has been valued by all active agencies in that particular structure. In a broad sense, symbolic violence, as like other forms of violence like cultural and physical violence, has been known as a space where powerful actors contain impregnable privileges to access to the social resources by using their capital. Social agents, by accepting social order, occupy both dominant and dominated positions. Bourdieu states, "[For] symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it" (Bourdieu 1991, 164). While actors dominate the social structure by using capitals, for Bourdieu, symbolic violence exercises hidden power. To understand these symbolic power practices Bourdieu states the relationship between colonizer and colonialist (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). The colonizer held a position of power and domination and exercised it by imposing culture, languages and social norms on the dominated/colonized.

Furthermore, Bourdieu also describes symbolic violence as "a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible, even to its victims" (Bourdieu 2001, 1). This does not mean that symbolic violence is impossible to detect. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) state that most of the symbolic violence does not happen by the organizational structure of domination and asymmetrical social relation. He coined this notion while he was conducting research on the French education system.

The interesting thing is that the symbolic violence is insidious and invisible. It has no appearance like other violence such as physical or structural violence. For this reason,

[33] Bourdieu introduced four different forms of capital: cultural, social, economic and symbolic.

invisibility brings huge silences and domination for subaltern agents or someone who is subjected to this violence. The dominant discourse has been used to silence the other and subaltern people. This domination would not be demolished only by allowing dominated people to talk. This is not a sustainable solution. But there is a need for structural changes that can assure that subaltern agents will be heard (Bhambra and Shilliam 2009). Domination and othering happening with urge when dominated people stop questioning the present power structure and take the situation as granted or normal. By taking situations for granted, individual agencies stop raising questions and this situation has the effect of producing and reproducing domination and subordination (Bourdieu 1977). Individual agency has been targeted by symbolic violence through everyday social habits, and is generated through the 'subtle inculcation of power relations upon the bodies and dispositions of individuals' (McNay 1999, 99). For this reason, symbolic violence can take place through the normal process of everyday life.

In the Bangladeshi context, in the public university and public space, madrasa students have been experiencing symbolic violence in everyday life through perception and discourage. It is claimed that the madrasa students are less intelligent, not allowing them to talk in class, excluding them from departmental student associations etc. It became a normal and social habit for others. If we say, this symbolic violence became normal in present Bangladeshi society. Several of my interviewees narrated how they experienced symbolic violence during their study especially in public universities especially from faculty members of the department, the administration and sometimes from seniors from the same or different departments. The traditional dress up, beard and the way of speaking is the main cause of this symbolic violence.

For this reason, every year, despite structural discrimination and violence, those who manage to get admitted in the public universities, a huge of madrasa students change their life style. They leave the traditional Islamic dress like long jubba and religious cap and adopt secular dress up like jeans and shirt and shaved beard. Almost every one of my interviewees - men and women - acknowledged that they were harassed because of their traditional dressing style. Some of them were beaten. One of my interviewees, Shamim Ahsan narrated:

> It was my fifth day in Dhaka University. I was sitting down with my friends behind TSC building in Dhaka University. Around ten members of Bangladesh Chhatra League came to me and asked me whether or not I was a member of Bangladesh Chhatra Shibir. I told them that no I was not and I have never been. Then they asked me why I was wearing jubba and pajama. I told them that I studied in madrasa. That's why I am wearing jubba and pajama. After that they started to beat and kick me. I lost my senses. When I woke up I was in Dhaka medical college, both of my hands were broken. Police arrested me because of 'making chaos' being in the university and I was in jail for 6 months[34].

Shamim Ahsan's experience was not unfamiliar to most of my interviewees. This is the precise racialization of Aliya madrasa students. What was conspicuously unique in the case of Shamim Ahsan is that during the time of his imprisonment without any charge he did not receive any judicial and other assistance from the university administration. Some of his friends even wrote an application to the vice-chancellor office to give him assistance but the office of the vice-chancellor of the university of Dhaka told them they have nothing to do with this issue. This is an issue between the court and Shamim Ahsan. After being released from jail, Shamim Ahsan spent 6 months in the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) – Savar, Dhaka. After almost one and a half year Shamim got back to school with his new appearance. At the same time, after getting back to the university campus, Shamim Ahsan wrote an official petition to the proctorial body of the university. One night he received a phone call from an unknown number that if he didn't withdraw his petition he would be beaten again and again. During our interview he showed me his pictures with his dress before and after the brutal attack. Shamim stated;

> After having long treatment when I got back to the campus I was a new Shamim. I did not have a beard and traditional dress. At the same time I got introduced to a leader who was from my friend's hometown. I used to go to political meetings when he, the student leader, used to call us. And after that no one attacked me or even asked me about my educational background. After even completing graduation, I have maintained contact with that political

[34] This event was published in several daily newspaper in Bangladesh. I am using a pseudonym in place of his real name to describe the event. Personal interview with Shamim Ahsan in June in Dhaka.

leader. He even recommended me for a government job with several financial incentives[35].

This story provides a strong template of brutality of student politics in Bangladesh. Students get into politics because of money, power and for future political aspirations (Kuttig and Suykens 2020; Koch Andersen 2019; Andersen 2018). For this reason, student politics in Bangladesh is not about the making future leadership, organizing students or to advocate for equal opportunities and free education, rather student politics in Bangladesh is "extortion, racketeering, kidnapping, the harassment of female students, and violence are part of everyday campus life" (Kuttig 2019, 406).

All these student beating, oppression and violence happened in front of the law enforcement group such as Bangladesh police. But they are silent because the state and government are not in favor of controlling violent student politics to keep the public universities out of fear of them. Islam shows that this student political violence took place with the green signal of state and ruling political party and they provide complete immunity to the students who are accused of being criminal (Islam 2011). The 'Bishwajit' killing might be a good example. Bishwajit was a Hindu and garment worker. Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), a student wing of Bangladesh Awami League, a self-claimed secular force in Bangladesh killed Bishwajit in front of thousands of people at Laxmibazar, Old Dhaka on December 9, 2012. Almost 10 years after the killing, justice still did not prevail. The killer of Bishwajit is moving freely now.[36] The 'Bishwajit' killing is proof of what Islam (2011) stated in how student violence has been enjoying immunity in Bangladesh.

Interestingly, with all these egregious activists made a state-sponsored "culture of terrorism" in public universities. And within the culture of terrorism everything is legitimized as like colonial era. When someone has been beaten for their traditional dress up, hijab and their way of life, the secular political parties and their controlled media try to present it as though the beating was legitimate because that person was associated with Bangladesh Chhatra Shibir (ICS).

[35] Personal interview with Shamim Ahsan in June in Dhaka.
[36] Syed Samiul Basher Anik "Bishwajit's killers moving freely, but police remain unaware," *Dhaka Tribune*, October 12, 2019.

With all these substantiated case studies, what we can see is, the state and the public university authority began deciding who gets educated and who will not. Under every nation state, every minor community has been facing and this racist practice marked 'who may live and who may die' (Quinan and Thiele 2020). While in the every stage of life, the madrasa students faces discrimination, racist attitudes, physical, cultural violence, Islamophobia and bulling, this form of structural discrimination in education is a form of 'violence against those who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death' (Butler 2004, 36). The matter of life and death in contemporary Bangladesh especially in the section of education, social and political life raises questions about how this symbolic violence and death is a clear picture of growing war against a particular group of people and their lifestyle.

Here we can trace the Mbembe's (2003, 2019) concept of necropolitics. As a concept the 'necropolitics' has been developed with the idea of Foucault's idea of biopower (Genel 2006). In a broad understanding, Foucault developed this concept to discuss how power technologies are controlling and governing the regulation and management of life of people. New tactics such as demographics, health and hygiene, policing techniques have been controlling people's lives. Interestingly, the concept of biopower has a huge association with the human body.

At the same time necropolitics explains how human life under the bipolar frame is subjugated and determined by the power; broadly the power has decided who may live and who has to die. The concept of 'necropolitics' can be used as a tool to understand how power or state make decisions about a particular group of people's fate and whether they will die or not. Similarly, Elizabeth A. Povinelli (2011), shows how state policy is leaving black people in America and the refugees who are trying to get access to Europe in a 'Zones of abandonment' by using neoliberal political order. These 'Zones of abandonment' is not a precise exclusion of banning people from facilities but rather this is a state of 'death making' (Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco 2014). So here the state authority is the decision maker on living- dying, getting facilities and or being out of facilities.

What we are witnessing here in terms of understanding the predicament of madrasa students and their place in public universities, is that the state and university authority who make decisions as to whether the madrasa students will be able to study and live

their life with their will or not. The university authority and the state do not take any action to control the violence in public universities; rather they are controlling the violence in terms of their political and electoral benefit. In the same time they are also giving complete immunity to the criminals who perpetrate this violence (Islam 2011). With this dimension it is clear that the violence is state sponsored and motivated to keep a certain group of people, the madrasa students, out of higher education and mainstream society.

4.5. Stigmatization in the Society: The Madrasa Student as the Other

Theoretically, the modern concept of stigma is coined by Erving Goffman (2009) who studied stigma as a process of social construction of human identity. Bangladesh as a post-colonial state, is not free from the debate of 'national identity' construction (Hossain 2015). Actually, this 'national identity' construction process in Bangladesh has inclusion and exclusion like many other postcolonial states. This inclusion and exclusion is an ideological war between secularist and pious Muslims. In the Bangladeshi context to understand the state oriented secular identity construction, we must pay attention to Islam, Muslims and Islamic institutions like madrasas and how these institutions has been opposed and represented by the secularists and their media to construct the secular national identity in Bangladesh.

Ironically, in contemporary Bangladesh, a Muslim majority country, Islamophobia is a reality and an increasing phenomenon. The principal causes of increasing Islamophobia in Bangladeshi society goes back to 1990 although it has an exceptional origin with the Bangladeshi independence war with Pakistan, in 1971. Very generally Islamophobia has a strong root with colonialism. With a precise limitation, Islamophobia can be understood as a continuation of an already existing global structure of racialization where 'culture' and 'religion' have replaced 'biology'(Bayraklı and Hafez 2018, 5). Bayraklı and Hafez (2018) provided a philosophical and ontological description of how Islamophobia has spread out in 'Muslim Majorities' countries. Bayraklı and Hafez described this flood of Islamophobia by raising questions on epistemic racism, secularism and the self-orientalization in 'Muslim Majorities' countries. Interestingly, the rise of Islamophobia in Muslim majority countries goes back to the nineteenth century and

early twentinth century with the rise of the nation-state after colonialism (Hatem 2019, 39-40).

In Bangladeshi context, very broadly this Islamophobia starts from root levels, by stigmatizing pious Muslims as the 'Other'. In urban areas, conservative people's dress, way of life and social interaction and presence in society has been stigmatized by state apparatuses and media. In Muslim majority countries especially in Bangladesh, the media has been controlled, dictated and manipulated by Westernized secular local elites (Shah 2018, 61).

Recently, Ali Riaz, who is known for his orientalist approach in the study of the madrasa and Islamic movements in Bangladesh and South Asia, has shown how media has been owned by large elite business groups of people and how they use this to secure their financial and political interests[37]. Riaz also states that the same family members own different media outlets to support different political parties at the same time to ensure their interests are secure whoever is in the government. While Riaz was describing all this issues, he failed to show how the biased and partisan media is serving the American narrative of 'war on terror' to antagonize and stigmatize madrasa education in Bangladesh. In the Bangladeshi context, like many other countries, this is an example of statist mainstream media who are teaching people who is their friend and who is their enemy. For this reason, in education life like any other of social life, this stigmatization such as accusations that madrasa students are members of the Taliban, *Jongi* (terrorist), anti-Bangladeshi, anti-modernist, dark soul of Pakistan, starts from the root level and then spreads out into every part of life. This incessant stigmatization is never ending.

Erving Goffman defines stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" and Goffman offers another aspect to understand stigma as the stigmatized person who is reduced "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman 1963, 3). Throughout the time several anthropologists and sociologists contributed to define stigma by their own research. For this reason, the idea and the definition of stigma has

[37] Riaz and Rahman. "Media ownership in Bangladesh: Why more Media Outlets does not mean more Media Freedom". April 15, 2021. https://www.cima.ned.org/blog/media-ownership-in-bangladesh-why-more-media-outlets-does-not-mean-more-media-freedom/

changed. According to Pescosolido and Martin stigma is “difference is translated into a marked, devalued distinction” (Pescosolido and Martin 2015, 93). After that Link and Phelan state that “stigma exists when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination occur together in a power situation that allows them” (Link and Phelan 2001, 377). It seems the definition of stigma has moved away from Goffman’s understanding. At the same time, Goffman proposed three techniques that have been used by attributor to do stigma. First, abominations of the body”, secondly “blemishes of individual character” and thirdly “tribal” (Goffman 1963, 4.). Comparing Goffman’s techniques, Link and Phelan describe stigma as a process with four distinctive phenomena:

> In the first component, people distinguish and label human differences. In the second, dominant cultural beliefs link labeled persons to undesirable characteristics— to negative stereotypes. In the third, labeled persons are placed in distinct categories so as to accomplish some degree of separation of “us” from “them.” In the fourth, labeled persons experience status loss and discrimination that lead to unequal outcomes (Link and Phelan 2001, 367).

Very broadly these four components can be found in the experience of madrassa students' daily lives in Bangladesh. For this reason, if we attempt to examine the situation and to stigmatize techniques of madrassa students in contemporary Bangladeshi society with the component of Link and Phelan describing stigma as a process idea, we reach in a holistic picture where the mainstream media and secular state apparatus stigmatizes madrasa students as other, communalist and backward.

Inevitably, stigma shapes human behavior and identity in every possible way. The most well known stigmatization process is the depiction of madrasa students as suicide bombers, prone to terrorism, members of the Taliban and wanting Islamic sharia in Bangladesh and the black soul of Pakistan (Fair, Christine, Hamza, and Heller 2017; Islam 2016). Throughout the time this stigmatization process has changed. In the 1980s it was much limited to secular newspapers and big urban cities but after 2000 this stigmatization process flourished with the development of visual and social media. Broadly, for the Bangladeshi madrassa students there are several political events that closely accelerated this stigmatization process, the most notorious one is the ‘War on Terror’. The ‘War on Terror’ fueled the fire to the Bangladeshi state’s secular policies toward the madrasa such as modernization of the madrasa syllabus, including secular literature in madrasa syllabus and representing the madrasa as the other. The ‘War on Terror’ event fundamentally transformed the conservative political movement and the

conservative educational system into another phase. This phase was full of stigmatizing and terrorizing the madrasa students socially, politically and economically.

This transformation started in both the governmental and intellectual levels. Very broadly, during a terrorist attack on on 17th August 2005, around 400 bombs exploded within an hour in 63 out of 64 districts in Bangladesh and this incident was the most significant turning point that changed the national discourse of politics. A dark age came to the life of madrasa students. Government and other international organizations accused Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) for these attacks and that organization also claimed responsibility. While Momen states that the "The exact origin of JMB is still in mystery, its strong militant existence first came into attention on 20 May 2002" (Momen 2020, 247), Supriya Singh states that "JMB was formed in 1998 in Palampur in Dhaka division of Bangladesh" (Singh 2006, 1). The JMB has been considered as the Bengali Taliban (John 2008).

During my fieldwork, when I had chance to talk to Aliya madrasa students about this radical organization that is hurting the serene image of Islam and madrasa education in Bangladesh, the only answer they had was that the JMB was not in a position to act merely and destroying Muslim's image. From their understanding the JMB was recruited by the American deep state. This notion of recruitment is not only vivid in Bangladesh, rather the notion that 'Jihadists' are recruited by the Americans is common in other countries too (Mamdani 2005, 131-134).

After the terrorist event, the national and international media suddenly pounced on Bangladesh and found everywhere the 'Radicalist' and 'Terrorist'. They published thousands of reports that contain the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)' camps details and how they were training madrasa students for future and potential terrorist attacks. These reports and documentaries accelerated the fear among Bangladeshi society about radicalization. People started to accuse madrasa for this terrorism. A prominent Bangladeshi- American author, who claims to be an expert on Bangladesh and is a senior Fellow at Hudson Institute, Maneeza Hossain, considers this trend of attack as "cultural radicalization" (Hossain 2007, 21). Actually here Hossain is accusing the 'Islamic cultural ethos' for these terrorist attacks. It would be not fair to accuse a particular community if some inhumane terrorist belongs to that community.

In every part of the world as a consequence of 'war and terror' we can see this tendency of collective and generalized corporal punishment and accusations.

After that Hossain tried another attempt to study this terrorist attack with the division of religion in Bangladesh. She states "as part of their program of cultural radicalization in Bangladesh, Islamists have created a dichotomy between a fictionalized monolithic Islam and a local culture redefined and re-branded as Hindu" (Hossain 2007, 19). Islam was never monolithic or static. In the Bangladeshi context Islam is much diversified and the ulama are extremely diverse. Raqib (2020) showed how Ulema in Bangladesh are divided and belong to their own religious sects. Hossain's study is very problematic and biased like many others. But this bias constricted several phobias in Bengali society including the assertion that ulama and madrasa education is against the Hindu community despite the fact that they are living in and sharing the same homeland for thousands of years.

When I was doing my fieldwork in Dhaka, during the summer of 2018, I met with Aminul Islam, a student of Govt. Madrasah-e-Alia Dhaka, who was arrested and imprisoned for almost 2 years with the accusation of 'burning the house of Hindus'. After spending almost 2 years in prison he got bail and was freed from all accusations. He told me that this accusation was totally biased and this accusation stigmatized him for his whole life. Aminul Islam states:

> It was a Friday morning. I woke up to perform prayer with my friends and I went to the central mosque of our madrasa. While we were coming back to our dormitory, after prayer, a group of people came in a white minibus and arrested me and my friend Abdul Hamid without any arrest warrant. They tied our hands with a black cord and threw us into their car. My friend and I were both injured. They informed me that they are members of the law enforcement agency of the Bangladesh government. After several hours they freed Abdul Hamid but put me in custody.
>
> After two days the RAB, a special law enforcement team, submitted a case against me for burning Hindus house in my home district in Faridpur. Interestingly, at that time I was staying in my dormitory in Dhaka. That is almost 200 kilometers from Faridpur. After spending almost 2 years in Gazipur

> prison I was finally released, but I lost my admission as well as my seat in the dormitory. I had no place to go. I couldn't go to my home district of Faridpur because people might attack me. And this accusation (stigma of being communaist) will be remain with me, family and my relatives forever.[38]

Whenever there is a terrorist attack or any incident, the Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies need a scapegoat to hide its institutional deficiencies. And the scapegoat is always madrasa students especially those who themselves and their family are members of any opposition political party. According to the Bangladeshi context, the 'madrasa students' identity is enough to be suspicious of any terrorist attack. Here, we see that identity and belonging in a particular education institution have been suspected as terrorists. Interestingly, even law enforcement agencies have arrested many madrasa students from their houses without any warrant. As they are studying in madrasa their house is full of Islamic books including the Muslim holy books like Quran and Hadis books. After arresting them the police present them in front of media as terrorists and claim that they found huge number of 'radical books'. This is a vicious circle of stigmatizing madrasa students as terrorists, members of the Taliban, anti-Bangladeshi and the black soul of Pakistan. This vicious circle has no end.

[38] Personal interview with Aminul Islam in June in Dhaka.

CHAPTER V

THE LOST GENERATION: FEAR, MEMORY AND FORMATION OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

During my two-phase fieldwork, in Dhaka and Istanbul, I had the chance to meet with a number of people who were and still are some of Aliya madrasa students, family members, relatives and friends. Generation by generation, they are out of jobs, living with agriculture and experience immense poverty. For this reason, the flow of collective memory and brutal trauma has been haunting generation upon generation in Bangladesh. This notorious discrimination caused the disapperance of a whole generation from mainstream Bangladeshi society and this phenomenon continues.

In this chapter, firstly, I will demonstrate the pious Muslim community and madrasa students fear of the secular state with the historical context and how this incessant fear constructs and deconstructs their present life. Secondly, the way in which generation after generation has been lost from the public memory of Bangladesh as a consequence of this incessant and conspicuous violence and discrimination will be discussed. After that, the trauma of being subjected to state-sponsored violence and discrimination will be discussed.

During my fieldwork, it was agonising to listen to my interviewees extremely variant stories despite them having gone through horrendous violence, discrimination, and ostracization in their everyday lives. But there was one similarity where most of the interviewees used to stop and state almost the same experiences. That was ‘fear’, more specifically, ‘fear of the secular state’. Bangladesh, as a postcolonial state, is day by day becoming a police state where; law enforcement has impunity to torture the dissident, the justice department is politically motivated and public liberty is under fundamental threat. The a state of exception (Agamben 2005) became ordinary and state-sponsored ‘culture of fear’ became normal (Green 1994, 236-238) for the Bangladeshi people.

Fear is not static. Fear is a multi-disciplinary phenomenon. For this reason, if we attempt to study fear from one aspect it would be incomplete. That is why we need to study fear collectively that includes every aspect of human life as well as academic disciplines. At the same time, fear is not homogenous. Rather fear is diverse and might be collective. And it has not only political effects. It has historical, biological, social, economic or even future effects (Plamper and Lazier 2012). Laffan and Weiss (2012) have studied emotions with the world-historical context. At the same time Lutz and White showed how the "Interest in 'the emotional' has burgeoned in the last decade, not only in anthropology, but in psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, and feminist studies" (Lutz and White 1986, 405). For this complexity, it is extremely difficult to place the notion of fear under a single umbrella.

In the context of the pious Muslim and madrasa community in Bangladesh, the fear of state started back in 1972 when as a newly independent state, Bangladesh embraced socialism and secularism despite being a Muslim majority population. "The original constitution of 1972, drawn up under the new government of the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) invoked nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism as key principles of statecraft" (Siddiqi 2010, 8). After that, the pious Muslim community never invested their trust in the state and mechanism despite several political leaders attempts after 1975 to reintroduce Islam in the Bangladeshi constitution and public life. This occasioned the genesis of the struggle between secularist elites and Islamic movements in the country.

After 1975, a new chapter started in Bangladeshi politics. The newly formed government took several attempts to introduce Islam in Bangladesh. Moreover, the scenario dramatically changed after the US intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. This time the victim was the pious Muslim community especially madrasa students. The marginalization and terrorizing of madrasa students started with the title of 'Us vs Them'. Here, 'Us' concluding with West and secularism and 'Them' concluding with Taliban and 'Muslim community'. Government law enforcement groups started to raid madrasas, arresting 'suspicious' conservative community leaders and they were doing all of this in the name of saving country from terrorism.

Throughout time, the nature of fear has changed. In the beginning, in 1971, it was state-sponsored secularism, and now it is the discrimination in the job sector, education, and daily life. I asked them what they fear, how the political narration has been changing so rapidly in Bangladesh with the influence of regional and international politics and how this changes constructing and demonstrating their world view and how they see their future in Bangladesh. One of my interviewees, Fatima Munira, who studied in the Department of Anthropology at Dhaka University, stated:

> It is not about the fact that I studied in madrasa and I did not get the government job despite being nominated twice for the government job, it is about how the government has been trying to shape the people's life by imposing secularism. And the main victim of this imposition is madrasa students and politically conscious pious communities in Bangladesh. The state is playing with our memory, history and lifestyle. They are investing every state's apparatuses and their regional and international support to dominate and transform the conservative community into a submissive secular nationalist community. So this is not the struggle between madrasa education and secular education, rather this is a struggle between colonial attitudes of the nation-state and those who want to live freely and practice their beliefs, customs and ethos.[39]

After being rejected several times, Fatima Munira gave up and now lives in a field office in an NGO. Meanwhile, she did not even give up her veil. She told me that her uncle from the maternal side, Shirajul Islam, was also rejected from a government job in 2011 because of their family's association with madrasa and orphanages in their region, Madaripur, a division of Dhaka district.

As a postcolonial state, Bangladesh has a corrupted system of recruiting government bureaucrats. In every stage of this process, from exam to viva, corruption is everywhere. The most notorious is, even after viva, when the candidate is recommended for a government job, candidates need police clearance. In this process of providing police clearance, Bangladeshi police and other law enforcement agencies have a vital role. Actually, in this police clearance, the law enforcement agencies

[39] Personal interview with Fatima Munira in January in Dhaka.

examine the political and religious affiliation of the candidate's family members, relatives, and even sometimes their lineage members. With the help of law enforcement agencies, local political leaders, unofficially, play a significant role. They examine the political loyalty of the candidates. If the candidate is a dissident there is no chance to get a government job. The same things happened to my interviewee Fatima Munira's uncle, Shirajul Islam. He was a political dissident. For this reason, studying for almost 20 years did not bring a government job to his door. After independence, throughout time, hundreds of thousands of pious Muslims were excluded from government jobs because the police did not give them 'police clearance'. This is a vicious circle of examining so-called loyalty to the nation and state. No one has touched it, but it is conspicuous everywhere.

While pious Muslims of Bangladesh are fighting with the post-colonial nation-state and its colonial behavior, experiencing social and political ostracization and structural discrimination in education and government jobs, there are two ideas revealed and narrated by them more than anything. These two major issues define constructing and reconstructing the madrasa student and pious communities' past, present, and future.

The first issue is the emotional agony of trauma. In this time of globalization which is "often seen as global westernization (Sen 2002, 16) and rigid capitalism, day by day extreme poverty and social and economic injustice have become part of the state. Every human being is born and grows up with the dream of having a good job and a good lifestyle andh this is why they invest their whole energy to study. After studying for 20 years, passing every exam, especially in government job exams, when they get refused without any reason they collapse with agony, stress, and apathy. This is structural violence. You can't ask the reason why you were refused a government job. In today's Bangladesh, there are millions of families who have gone through this experience. This trauma has been affecting generation after generation. If someone was denied a government job in a family, the next generation does not apply for a government job. It's because they know that they would not have the job even if they pass the exam. Several of my interviewees addressed these issues. This is the structural violence that demolishes the trust between madrasa-educated students and the state.

Secondly, precise anxiety about the future. Precise anxiety was found in every interviewee. This anxiety is not just about a job, education, and injustice, it is all about the future generation and their life. People are removing their kids from Aliya madrasas and sending their kids to government schools. Government schools are secular oriented. For this reason, the whole picture of conservative societies might be changed in the upcoming decades. I did not find any official statistics on this issue but several of my interviewees told me that even they love to send their kids to private school or government school by selling their property. It's because of the future of the kids. During my fieldwork, I found several stories that normalize my claims. Liyaqat Hussain, who was a student of the University of Rajshahi, department of history, was rejected from government jobs twice and is now working as a product salesperson in a private company, told me an interesting story.

> Like any other Bangladeshi family, I invested all of my labor to get a government job. Because in the Bangladeshi context, as you know, the government job only can provide you sustainable insurance for the future. I started to prepare myself from the first day of my undergraduate studies. I was rejected twice. My whole confidence collapsed after that. I stopped going home for several years because my family was expecting me to get a job and support them. During these days I met with my fiance. We got married. At that time in 2012, she was also trying to get a job but she did not find one. She made a bold decision and that changed our children's life. My wife received few precious assets from her father. She sold all this property and we moved to Dhaka for a better future. Now we have two children. We are sending them to an English medium school in Uttara, Dhaka. By paying all school and other fees we spend all of our monthly income. We only did that because of the future of our kids. We don't want them to go through the pain and ambiguity that me and my wife went through.[40]

This is not an extraordinary life story rather this is an ordinary story that belongs to thousands of contemporary families in contemporary Bangladesh[41]. After

[40] Now Liyaqat Hussain working in a construction company as an area manager. Personal interview with Liyaqat Hussain in January in Dhaka.

[41] Mosabber Hossain. "Negative police verification report a curse for BCS candidates". *Prothom Alo,* October 4, 2020.

independence, every generation of pious Muslims has grown up with their own particular memory of fear and trauma.

Generally, memory is understood as the ability to remember information, experiences, events and personalities (Nora 1989). Olick considers memory as ‘‘the aggregated individual memories of members of a group’’ (Olick 1999, 338). Here we have to understand that every member of that community might have different memory and this memory resides in their own periphery. Mario I. Aguilar argues that memory is a cognitive device that is constricted by human instincts and emotion. According to Mario I. Aguilar “Memory is therefore a cognitive device that, while used by particular individuals, can be understood only as a social device that catalyzes emotions, senses, participation, pain, joy, togetherness, and ultimately community” (Aguilar, 2005, 60). Memory is not natural. It is socially constructed by social occurrences and history. With everyday interaction, an important event like a flood, genocide, marriage, or any other social and political, or human event helps humans to gain memories about their life.

We can define collective memory as something which “prominently includes wars, revolutions, economic depressions, large-scale strikes and riots, and genocide – as well as the legal proceedings often arising from such upheavals” (Osiel 2000, 19). Memory is not only biological or past. Halbwachs argues that memory is not merely a knowledge of the past; rather it is a social performance and humans gather their memory from where they belong. For this reason, Halbwachs idea of collective memory is not only cognitive and “not a given but rather a socially constructed notion” (Coser 1992, 22). Yadin Dudai, a neuroscientist and Professor of Neurobiology showed in his work that the term ‘collective memory’ actually refers to three entities: a body of knowledge, an attribute, and a process’’ (Dudai 2002, 51). Here the first one is the body of knowledge is publicly and group-wise constructed. By living with a group of people, humans construct their collective memory in interaction, common events, and relations. The ‘attribute’ is a totally distinctive memory from other members of society and the ‘process’ is how a particular memory goes through evaluation throughout time.

The construction of the memory of a pious Muslim is not serene in Bangladesh. The pious Muslims fought to establish the state of Pakistan in 1947, a land for Muslims. The brutal rule of Pakistan broke their idea of 'Ummah' and with a new generation of secular Muslims, some of them fought against Pakistan, and Bangladesh was liberated from Pakistan in 1971. After liberation, Bangladesh adopted a secular constitution, madrasa education was not fully recognized until 2006, the religion of Islam was marginalized and pious Muslim kids were not allowed to study in public universities- in some contexts they were rejected from getting government jobs at all. All of these developments destroyed the structure of the pious Muslim community and made them out to be marginal, anti-Bangladeshi, and the black soul of Pakistan. So the memory construction of Bangladeshi pious Muslims is full of agony, stigma, and exclusion. This agony transformed into endless trauma.

Trauma is another essential belonging of Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh. Both are an egregious part of their everyday lives. Marginalization in higher education, social, cultural and political violence in every aspect of life, rejection from government jobs, the shadow trauma spread out in the life of Aliya madrasa students and their community. This trauma has been shaping their relation with the state and secular political parties and organizations. At the same time this trauma requires them to construct their own lifestyle and organization to encounter the secular state. Jeffrey C. Alexander, a leading American sociologist, defines this cultural trauma as something that "Occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander 2004, 1). Jeffrey C. Alexander's definition of cultural trauma provides some specific points. First, there must be a group of people. Secondly, it has to recognize that they are subjected to horrendous events. Thirdly, this event must construct, reconstruct and impact on the group's memory. And the last is, this particular cultural trauma must changes the groups future identity.

When we examine Aliya madrasa students' experience with the Jeffrey C. Alexander's theory of cultural trauma, we see all the symptoms have been conspicuously present in the life of Aliya madrasa students and broadly in the religious community in Bangladesh. After almost two hundred years of British colonialism, almost 25 years

of Pakistani notorious rule, and after the independence, incessant oppression, marginalization, attempt to consider as an 'other' has been causing brutal trauma in the conservative communities. As Alexander states "For trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society" (Alexander 2004, 2). Every day in every step, it might be education, might be a public sphere, Aliya madrasa students recall their memory of discrimination, not having a government job and a prestigious place in the society as Halbwachs states "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Halbwachs 2020, 38). All this oppression, discrimination, violence and stigmatization was not enough for state and secular elite. They started to target some madrasa students, especially those who were vocal against state oppression and othering of madrasa students. During my fieldwork in Khulna, I had the chance to spend time with one of my interviewees, Mohammed Ismail, a former student of 'Khulna Alia Kamil madrasah' and an Imam of a mosque in Rupsha, Khulna. He told me how his memory of being beaten still traumatized him. And how that memory was still haunting him. Mohammed Ismail narrated:

> It was the beginning of 2012, I was working as an imam in a small mosque in Rupsha, Khulna. One day, after evening prayer, a group of people, those who were members of the law enforcement group of Bangladesh, came and abducted me in front of at least 20 people from my mosque. They took me to a home where there was no electricity and water for a week. They beat me and did not provide any food for at least two days. They interrogated me and told me to acknowledge that I am a member of a terrorist group that I wasn't. I refused to give any kind of statement. Almost one year I was in their custody and they did not inform my family anything. My family was full of anxiety and my father died in a heart attack because of my disappearance. I was the only person from my family who used to earn money. So in my absence, my parents, my children and my wife started to work outside. It wasn't easy. One day a law enforcement group released me and when I got home, I got sick. I was in bed for two months. After two months I started to talk and work. This event just took everything from me. I lost my father and my job.[42]

[42] Personal interview with Mohammed Ismail in July in Khulna.

Md. Kamal Uddin (2020) depicts how Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies have been associated with disappearance culture and physical violence on terror suspects. Uddin also provided a chart of reportedly abducted people from 2007 to August 2014. The total number of people who disappeared was 327. Sourav (2016) attempts to describe how political parties are associated with the disappearance and at the same time Saurav also attempts to briefly describe the suffering of disappeared people. Saurav's work is extremely limited. Actually, in academia, there is a precise limitation of the work of disappearance since data is not provided by the government.

While Mohammed Ismail told me his own forced disappearance story, one of my female interviewees, Fahmida Rasheda, who was a former student of Dhaka Aliya madrasa and Jagannath University, Dhaka, described her agony, pain, and fear of the disappearance of her husband, who was the non-political person and used to do business. Fahmida narrated;

> My father was a principal of a local Aliya madrasa principle. While I used to study at Jagannath University, in the department of English, I was so active in politics. During the national election of 2014, me and some of my friends were extremely active against vote-rigging in the port city of Chittagong. The government-supported groups attacked me but I did not stop raising my voice in social media and local and national news agencies. Before a week ago, a group of people from the law enforcement agency of Bangladesh abducted my husband, who was a non-political person doing his cement business in Mirsharai Upazila, Chittagong. My husband disappeared for two years. Me and my in-law's families were full of pain and agony. We don't know whether my husband was alive or not. My family started to force me to get married again while I was married to my husband who was missing. At the same time, my husband's family started to blame me for my husband's disappearance. As a woman, it was an extremely difficult time for me. Police used to come to my home at midnight and ask questions about my missing husband. It was an intentional precise harassment. One day I received an unknown letter that if I pay around ten thousand US dollars, they will return my husband. My husband's family's economic situation was good and we paid the money and

got back my husband after almost two years. After that, I quit all of my political activities and moved to Dhaka at the beginning of 2017.[43]

According to Human Rights Watch, an American-based Non-governmental organization, "From January 1, 2009 to July 31, 2020, at least 572 people have been reported forcibly disappeared by security forces and law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh. While some were eventually released, shown arrested, or discovered killed by security forces and law enforcement agencies in so-called "crossfire" encounters, the whereabouts of many of them remain unknown[44]." The Human Rights Watch report was only based on police reports but there are huge cases that have not been reported to the police to avoid further melee and harassment by the state security agencies. Fahmida Rasheda's case study is also an example of political disappearance in contemporary Bangladesh. These women are voiceless. They don't have a place to go. They mourn alone, they tolerate their agony for the future. In this kind of situation women are always vulnerable as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a Distinguished Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Sociology, argues, "Women have never been secure within (or without) the nation state-they are always disproportionately affected by war, forced migration, famine, and other forms of social, political, and economic turmoil" (Talpade 2003, 514). What is interesting is that women from Kashmir established an Association to raise their voice called the Association of the Parents of the Disappeared (APDP) (Ather 2013, 1). But in the Bangladeshi context, there is very little scope to raise the voice of women whose husband has disappeared.

With this kind of egregious historical memory and continuous trauma, there is a generation lost in Bangladesh especially from the Aliya madrasa generation. This generation loss started after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 when there was no recognition of Aliya madrasa and their study. Aliya madrasa students received their secondary and higher secondary recognition in 1987, whilst undergraduates and graduates were recognized in 2006. Within this time framework, there were two distinctive events that strongly indicate the lost generation. The first one was, the barriers to getting admission to the public university, and the second one is the "War

[43] Personal interview with Fahmida Rasheda in January in Chittagong.
[44] https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/28/bangladesh-end-enforced-disappearances#:~:text=From%20January%201%2C%202009%20to,law%20enforcement%20agencies%20in%20Bangladesh.

on Terror" and its consequence in Aliya madrasa and conservative communities. Several people moved from place to place to hide their past, to hide their experiences, and for a better future for their kids. Some people sold their properties to move abroad - especially those who were financially secure, some people sold their property to move to big cities where their political agencies would not be unveiled.

Many of my interviewees told me how they were attacked by political leaders, law enforcement agencies, and sometimes by unknown people during my fieldwork—this incessant threat from the secular state silenced generation after generation. Many were abducted. They did not come back until today. Their family members have no idea whether they are or dead. People are living in a "age of mini-massacre.[45]

[45] Arundhati Roy: "We Live in an Age of Mini-Massacres", Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, February 26, 2021.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

After my first meeting with Mizanur Rahman on the 13th of July 2014, I gave my word to meet with him each time I visited Istanbul. In the summer of 2016, during my fieldwork among Bangladeshi illegal workers in Istanbul, I stayed in his house for a week. He treated me as if I were part of his family. He was a connoisseur of his own life story. He always had a passion to go back to Bangladesh and take care of his family. I witnessed how his honesty and instinctive love for his fellow countrymen meant that he had a respectable position among Bangladeshi workers in Istanbul. For this reason, people, especially newcomers, used to come to him in search of jobs and employment opportunities through his wide network. . Nevertheless, he acquired respect from the Turkish law enforcement agencies, especially those who are dealing with illegal workers, because of his religious dress, way of speaking, Turkish language proficiency, and good gestures.

After moving to Istanbul during the summer of 2017, the regular contact I had with Mizanur started to fade. The pressure of graduate school was the reason behind this fading. However, at the end of 2018, when I first began to think about my thesis on madrasa students and the phenomenal discrimination they faced in higher education,I went to his house in Yenikapi and shared my idea with him. In the beginning, he was excited but at the end he advised me to write something that could secure my future. This was because he was aware of how 'insecurity' might come if someone takes a pen on behalf of madrasa students and the brutal face of the secular Bangladeshi state. On that day, I can vividly remember, he was not feeling good. He had a fever.

In the second week of February of 2019, I again went to his house in Yenikapi. His house was closed so I waited for around an hour and talked to his other Bangladeshi friends; no one knew where he was. His cell phone was turned off. Many of his friends, including me, thought perhaps the Turkish police caught him. He did not come back that day. After a week I went again, and he was not there. It came as much surprise to

me that nobody knew where he was. After many constant requests, one of his close friends who worked with Mizanur for several years, Sohidul Islam, told me something which was beyond my imagination.

Mizanur was the only financial supporter of his parents. His whole family was dependent on him; his only sister was waiting for him to come back home and organize a marriage for her. Meanwhile, Mizanur's father got sick, his liver was seriously damaged. Liver transplantation was inevitable. For this transplantation, ten to fifteen thousand US dollars was needed. Mizanur was a simple daily laborer, his weekly income was seventy to one hundred dollars. For this reason, that amount of money was beyond his capacity. Mizanur knew that he was the only human being in the world who could help his father. He found a way. What Mizanur did is he sold one of his kidneys in Istanbul for 26 thousand US dollars before sending the proceeds to cover the costs for the liver transplantation his father needed. After selling his kidney, he started to get sick because the kidney removal operation was not properly done. His friend Sohidul Islam told me that before even receiving that money, Mizanur's father passed away.

Kidney selling is a rapidly growing tendency among 'Bangladeshi illegal workers' in Istanbul. Two reasons work behind the nascent idea.[46] The first one is to pay debts owed to middlemen based in Istanbul who promise safe passage to workers wanting to go to Italy. Since most Bangladeshi workers come to Istanbul not to stay permanently, like many other nationalities, including Afghani, Irani, and African workers, they use Istanbul as a transit point (Düvell 2014; Wissink and Mazzucato 2018; Zijlstra 2014). Even when they become penniless, they don't go back to their home country. To accumulate the money for the middlemen, they sell one of their kidneys as a last resort for themselves and their families. The second one is when workers want to return to Bangladesh but don't have money to arrange for this.

Despite having a job in Istanbul, Mizanur wanted to go to Italy to support his family more effectively. Sohidul Islam told me that he took the 'game'[47] in the first week of January 2019 with a few Syrian and Afghani refugees from Istanbul. Unfortunately, six people were missing from the group; Mizanur being one. No one knows how they

[46] Personal meeting with Sohidul Islam who was a friend of Mizanur Rahman for a long time.
[47] Bangladeshi use the word 'game' to narrate their attempt to get into Greece.

got lost. The news of missing Mizanur was not shared with his family until the Covid-19 pandemic emerged. His family knew that Mizanur was arrested by the Turkish police. Recently, Sohidul Islam informed Mizanur's mother that he was no longer alive. With the help of Sohidul Islam I found the middle man. I asked the Bangladeshi middle man, who took two thousand dollars from Mizanur to take him to Italy, how did he got cut off from the group? The middle man told me that his responsibility was to help them cross the Turkish-Greek border. After that, his responsibility was finished and another person was responsible for bringing Mizanur and their groups to Italy from the Greek border.

When Sohidul Islam was narrating this story, he opened the empty room of Mizanur on my request. The room was clean, and the window curtain was moving slowly by the air of the Marmara Sea. The Marmara sea was visible from the small window and the ceiling fan was still there. Before leaving, he donated all of his belongings including his books, plates, glasses, and carpets, except one book named 'the responsibility to the parents'. It is a Bengali book where religious obligations have been described with examples of the Prophet Muhammad (Sm) and his comrades.

After leaving the house of Mizanur, I went back to my dormitory. I was shocked. The pain and agony was everywhere. A promising young man just disappeared from this world because of his educational background. He had a great passion for study and to grow up as an ideal citizen. After that, thousands times I endeavored to understand what kind of mental torture Mizanur had gone through. Perhaps I failed like the secular Bangladeshi state who has been antagonizing madrasa education and madrasa students to understand how the madrasa students "strategize, feel pain, contest interpretations of what is happening in short, live their lives" (Lugod 1993,11).

Mizanur's life story can help us understand the impoverished situation of the Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh. If they live in their homeland, they will be discriminated against, out of jobs, and subjected to violence. At the same time, moving abroad legally or illegally will not bring permanent solutions. Despite being recognized now, Aliya madrasa students face backlash and violence in their everyday life in public universities. The most brutal discrimination came when they apply for the governmental job. The law enforcement agencies don't provide 'police

clearance'[48] for them because the madrasa students are always under suspicion of the secular state as their enemy. They have no place to go and no recourse to get a good job. They are becoming 'limbo'. The verbal meaning of 'limbo' is in between, the uncertain situation.

Arnold Van Gennep, a German-French ethnographer, was a pioneer in Anthropology in the study of human life transition from one phase to another. In his groundbreaking book named 'The rites of passage' he discussed the transition points of human life that brings humans from one state to another such as marriage, crisis, or puberty. According to the Gennep, all human transitions from one stage to another stage are marked by separation, liminality, and reincorporation. This is known as rites of passage. He defined rites of passage as "betwixt and between," in which the individual, while no longer in the old role, has not yet entered the new one. It is through the third set of rites, those of incorporation, that the individual reintegrates into society in the new role" (Van Gennep 1960, xviii).

There are two specific reasons behind this becoming and living the 'limbo' life of Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh. The first one is the secular state and its discrimination. The Bangladeshi state puts fundamental barriers to getting a government job for Aliya madrasa students. Even if someone passes the exam, they might not receive police clearance. During my fieldwork, I experienced several cases where madrasa students paid a huge ransom to get police clearance by selling their homes or sometimes borrowing money from their relatives. What if someone does not have that amount of money that the police demand? In this situation, they just collapse. The second reason is that the ulama from non-aliya madrasas, including the Deobandi tradition[49] which is flourishing now in Bangladesh and squeezing the world of Aliya madrasa ulama and students (Kabir 2009), have fundamental doubts regarding how much Aliya madrasa students know in terms of religious knowledge and the Arabic

[48] Many of my interviewees told me that they did not even receive the 'police clearance' for a passport to travel abroad for education and business.

[49] The School of Deoband is a revivalist movement that advocates for orthodox Islam. The Deobandi madrasa was established in 1866 following the 1857 war against the British colonial power. Deobandis run hundreds of thousands of madrasas in the Indian subcontinent. For details, check Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, "Tradition and authority in Deobandi madrasas of South Asia." In Schooling Islam, edited by Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 61-86. (Princeton University Press, 2010), 61-86.

language. Generally, in Aliya madrasa, the medium of instruction is Bangla. For this reason, the Aliya madrasa students have limited knowledge of standard Arabic text compared with other Islamic traditions such as the Deobandi tradition. Hence, the Aliya madrasa students have limited options to return to traditional Islamic knowledge practice and become ulama in scripturalists Islamic (Geertz 1971) arena of Bangladesh while being rejected from the state's job. They live a 'limbo life' where there is no opportunity to live either with prosperity nor with complete destruction. "this was a time of neither life nor death. A stasis, a stall, a paralysis" (Navaro 2003, 117)

Interestingly, these 'limbo life' holders, the Aliya madrasa students, have shut their mouths and stopped giving opinions regarding religious, political, or any other issue in contemporary Bangladesh. This is because if they talk, there is a solid possibility of being stigmatized as being rebellious against the state, anti-national and the supporter of Pakistan and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. At the same time, 'limbo life' holders came under criticism when they talked about religious issues. According to other Islamic traditions such as 'The Deobandi', the Aliya madrasa students do not have much skill to read traditional Arabic texts. During my fieldwork, when I had the chance to talk with the madrasa faculty, they told me that they are aware that there had been a flood of activity in writing academic journals, books, and organizing symposiums. Still, no one came to them to talk while writing on Aliya madrasa education and Aliya madrasa students. Nevertheless, I was the first who went to them and spoke to them about their present predicament.

While the Aliya madrasa students are living a limbo life straddling between the machinations of the secular state and the judgment cast down upon them by Deobandi and other religious communities, the Bangladeshi state has been snatching the life of Aliya madrasas by introducing curricula reform as the British colonial power did before. Mostly these reforms target only madrasas, and not other faith-based education in Bangladesh (Roy, Sudipta, Huq, and Rob 2020, 5). Almost every year, the state introduces new secular readings and eradicates traditional Islamic knowledge from the textbook of the madrasa. The latest one was to remove the idea of 'Jihad' from Aliya madrasa textbooks. An insider from the Madrasa Education Board told a journalist that "The government has directed us to remove the chapters on Jihad to curb controversy

regarding the madrasa education system".[50] As a consequence of this continuous imposing reformation from the Bangladeshi state, the Aliya madrasa day by day chronologically losing its religious identity and becoming regular state high school (Banu 2010, 563-564). This transformation from a religious school to a secular madrasa took place in the name of reforming madrasa education. The secular elites and the states introduced this so-called reform to establish their imagined secular lands by marginalizing Islamic education. Nevertheless, these secular elites and state never approached the madrasa education and did not introduce and start dialogues as to "how they might transform their nation-state to make it a more equitable or just place" (Lughod 2005, 245).

While the secular state snatches the essence of Aliya madrasa education, the students of Aliya madrasa have also been going away from religious education and bending down to general education or secular education. Now, what is happening, as I stated in chapter four, is that the Madrasa education board is updating their curricula and syllabuses as they significantly did in 2013. They included 200 marks of English and Bangla literature which enabled the madrasa students to get admission in all public universities despite some anomalies. This new era for the Aliya madrasa students brought colossal dissatisfaction among Aliya madrasa faculties and those sending their kids to the Aliya madrasa for religious purposes.

The main reason for this dissatisfaction is a developing tendency among Aliya madrasa students to concentrate on studying Bengali and English literature, compared with other religious subjects, which is extremely important for public university admission. Now the Aliya madrasa students are becoming more disinterested in acquiring religious knowledge and reading Arabic text because they want to invest more labor to prepare for university admission. During my fieldwork in Govt. Mustafabia Alia Madrasah, Bogura, I had a conversation with a faculty member who had been associated with the madrasa for almost three decades. He told me that, before 2000, students were more keen to study traditional Arabic text and become ulama because they knew that they would not be able to get a job in the state. But after 2000, the situation started to change; the Aliya madrasa students began to move to the secular

[50] Manik Miazee "Bangladesh to remove Jihad from madrasa textbooks". *Dhaka Tribune*, October 25, 2017.

universities to get a job in the state after graduation. This shifting has eradicated the passion for learning the religion and the tradition Arabic text in the Aliya madrasa.

All of these substantial case studies show how the Aliya madrasa is losing its religious individuality and slowly transforming into a secular government educational institution. For this reason, many religious people, I have witnessed during the time of my fieldwork, started to move their kids from Aliya madrasas to other religious madrasas like Deobandi madrasas where students acquire the skill to study Arabic text and be more connected with 'traditional Islamic ethos'. For many years, Deobandis and other local Islamic groups have leveled accusations against the Aliya madrasa saying that their dress and way of life has very little similarity with traditional Islamic life, and Aliya madrasa students are politically motivated and who want to mix the religion with politics. Sometimes this issue causes huge social as well political tensions.

While I was writing this thesis, news came out that caused public debate among Bangladeshi internet users; the news was that a madrasa student, Md Zakaria from a prestigious Aliya madrasa named 'Darunnazat Siddikia Kamil Madrasah' achieved first position[51] in the university entrance exam of the University of Dhaka, B unit where most of the social science departments are included. He scored 100.5 out of 120. After the announcement of the admission exam result, many secular professors and activists came out and started to protest and spread-out hate against madrasa students. Many secular professors shared posts on their social media pages and spread hate against madrasa students claiming Dhaka University became a higher madrasa now.

However, this thesis work is anchored in sharing life stories of violence in public universities, examples of law enforcement harassment, discrimination in higher education and the denial of government jobs for Aliya madrasa students in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, this dissertation also works to document how the Bangladeshi secular state targets a particular education system, the Aliya madrasa education, and marginalizes them by using states apparatuses, political violence and the threat of being subjected to violence and discrimination. The present literature has been ignoring the

[51] Mohammad Sifat. "Madrasah students are acing the DU admission tests for humanities. Here is how and why". *The Business Standard*, Novembor, 21, 2021.

predicament of the madrasa students. For this reason, this thesis work also includes a critique of secular academic body that has been targeting madrasa students and trying to prove that madrasa education is a communalist education that is teaching terrorism. For this reason, this research will provides space for readers to understand collectively the Aliya madrasa education in Bangladesh.

Thus, this thesis work aims to create a new space for further exploration on the anthropology of the state, violence, emotion and the anthropology of political violence. At the same time, this thesis work provides a genealogical explanation of the construction of the Bengali secularism through the othering of Islam and Muslims in the last hundred years. This study also provides a platform to understand the disparate relationship between the secular Bangladeshi state and the religious, especially when it comes to Aliya madrasa education.

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