

# The Impact of *Hajj* on The Society of Bangladesh

Md. Thowhidul Islam  
International Islamic University Chittagong, Bangladesh  
tauhidcox@gmail.com

## Abstract

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

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

## A. INTRODUCTION

The *Hajj* or Pilgrimage to Makkah is one of the five *Arkan* (fundamental pillars) of Islam. It is *fard* (mandatory) for every able-bodied adult Muslim man or woman who can financially afford the trip at least once in a lifetime (Al-Qura'n 3: 96-97). It takes place during the Islamic month of *Dhu al-Hajj*. This *Ibadah*

(Worship) is promised to have the best and unique rewards. Thus *Hajj-i-Baitullah* (Pilgrimage to the House of Allah) has become a spiritual longing of every Muslim. Following the divine instruction, *Hadrat Ibrahim (AS)* introduced *Hajj* making the *Ka'abah* its center (Al-Qura'n 22: 26-27) and later Prophet *Hadrat Muhammad (SAAS)* made it mandatory following the *Qura'nic* instruction. Since then the Muslims (believers) from far and near began coming to Makkah every year to perform *Hajj*. With the global population increase and the expansion of Islamic religious faith in different regions of the world over the centuries, the number of *Hajjis* (pilgrims) also increased accordingly. Millions of Muslims from around the world pour into Makkah every year to perform *Hajj*. The number of pilgrims for *Hajj* in Saudi Arabia during the last 92 years has increased by approximately 2,824%, up from just 58,584 in 1920 to 1,712,962 (1.713 million) in 2012 (Shah, 2015).

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

The *Hajj* congregation- as the largest gathering of the Muslims to take place on a regular basis in the world (Person, 1994, p. 1) has got immense socio-economic and cultural impacts on every Muslim society irrespective of their country affiliation. As the Holy *Qura'an* states: لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ . "They may witness advantages for them and mention the Name of Allah." (Al-Haj: 28, 2017) The word 'مَنَافِع' - advantages' widely includes all the socio-economic and cultural

virtues in every society of the world. It is the great assembly of Muslim nation in a single forum. As a result of unity of opinion and unanimity arising from believing in one Allah (SWT) and being the followers of one Guide Book- the Holy *Qura'an* and one Prophet *Muhammad* (SAAS), all Muslims stand in a single rank facing the *Qiblah* and go around a center with a single aim. It thus develops a unique symbol of unity, universality and social cooperation by creating mutual understanding among the nations.

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

## B. SOCIAL IMPACT

Bangladesh is a country of Muslim majority with 89.7% of the total population, while the Hindus constitute 9.2%, Buddhist 0.7%, Christian 0.3%, Animist and believers in tribal faiths is 0.1% (Population Census 2011, 2017). Every year thousands of Muslims from Bangladesh make pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah for *Hajj* and return home with new religious spirit, fresh Islamic teaching and most importantly pure Islamic *Aqidah*. The spirit of *Hajj* everyday leaves diverse impacts passive or active on the individuals, family and society of Bengal as well. The positive teachings of *Hajj* produced several revolutionary movements in the history of Bengal such as the *Faraidi* movement led by *Hajji Shariatullah* and the *Tariqa-i-Muhammadiya* movement led by *Meer Nisar Ali alias Titumir*. Both of them started the reform movements after their return from *Hajj*. *Hajji Shariatullah* (1781-1840) of present *Shariatpur* district (*Shariatpur* named as such after the name of *Hajji Shariatullah*; formerly it was under the *Madaripur* sub-division of Bangladesh),

made a pilgrimage to Makkah in 1799 to perform *Hajj*, which privileged him with the opportunity of staying there and receiving education in that international centre of Islamic culture. It prepared him for the great role to be played by him in his later life. *Hajji Shariatullah* stayed there for 20 years and studied religious doctrines under *Shaikh Tahir Sombal*. In 1818, he returned to Bengal having well equipped himself with Islamic learning. *Hajji Shariatullah* found the Muslims of Bengal practising many local superstitions which appeared to him grossly un-Islamic. For historical reasons the Muslims of Bengal had been following many indigenous customs, rituals and ceremonies which were far removed from Islamic principles. These mainly infiltrated into the Muslim society from the contemporary Hindu society because of their close contact. People here used to ascribe superhuman powers to the *Sufis* and *Pirs* such as giving life to the dead, being present at several places at a time and foretelling the future. Because of these, people considered the shrine of a *Pir* as a place of pilgrimage. They offered fruits, flowers etc. at their tombs, illuminated them at night and thus the culture of worshipping shrines of the *Pirs* widely spread in the Muslim society. *Tazia*- Observing the *Ashura* procession in the holy month of Muharram in a noisy and clumsy way, participation in the Hindu festivals of *Durga Puja*, *Ratha yatra* (Purana-inspired religious processions) and so forth are also mentionable in this context (Khan M.-u.-D. A., History of the Fara'idi Movement in Bengal, 1965, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii). The Muslims of Bengal thus steeped themselves in the superstitions and vices of the Hindus. Inflamed with a burning desire to reform the Muslim society of Bengal, *Hajji Shariatullah* tirelessly addressed the social gatherings for preaching the pure doctrine of Islam indoors and outdoors, in village after village, district after district, which ultimately assumed the form of an Islamic reform movement. The objective of the movement was to purify the Muslim society of Bengal from the superstitious *Aqidah* and practices and induce the Muslims of Bengal to follow the true teachings of Islam. The movement popularly came to be known as the *Faraidi* Movement (i.e. the movement for establishing the fundamentals of Islamic *Sharia'h*).

The term *Faraidi* was taken from the Arabic root-word *Fard* meaning obligatory duties enjoined by the Islamic *Sharia'h*. The *Faraidis* were, therefore, those who aimed at enforcing the obligatory duties of Islam. The movement

emphasized on the five fundamentals of Islam, strict observation of *Tawhid* (pure monotheism) and condemned all deviations from the original doctrines as *Shirk* (idolatry) and *Bid'at* (sinful innovation). Numerous rites and ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death were declared *haraam* (forbidden) such as *Chuttee*, *Puttee*, *Chilla*, *Shabgasht* procession, *Fatihah*, *Milad*, *Urs*, worshipping the *Pirs*, *Taziah* during *Muharram* etc. These practices were either described as *Shirk* or *Bid'at*. *Hajji Shariatullah* stressed on justice, social equality, and the universal brotherhood of Muslims.

The *Faraidi* movement spread with extraordinary rapidity in the different districts of Bengal, particularly where the Muslim peasantries were oppressed by both the Hindu *Zamindars* and the European indigo-planters. The *Zamindars* used to impose different kinds of illegal taxes above normal land-tax, such as tax for such Hindu festivals as the *Kali Puja*, *Durga Puja* etc. They had even banned the slaughter of cow, especially on the occasion of *Eid-ul Adha*. *Hajji Shariatullah* directed his disciples not to pay the illegal taxes and thus there was a contentious relation created between the *Faraidis* and the Hindu *Zamindars*. Through continuous involvement with the Hindu *Zamindars* and the European indigo-planters, this religious reform movement gradually developed into a socio-economic revolt. Faced with such an effective Islamic revivalist movement, the *Zamindars* and the indigo-planters persecuted the *Faraidis* ruthlessly through officially condoned acts of violence and terror. *Hajji Shariatullah* had also to face severe opposition from the conservative local *Ulama* who had scant knowledge of the original Islamic practices and thus they wanted to preserve the existing traditional order. But the *Faraidi* movement won rapid popularity. On the death of *Hajji Shariatullah*, his only son *Muhsinuddin Ahmad* alias *Dudu Miyan* who returned from Makkah in 1837 after completing education and *Hajj*, took charge of the movement in 1840 (Khan M.-u.-D. A., Dudu Miyan, 2017). Under his leadership, the *Faraidi* movement turned into a strong and powerful agitation, assuming an agrarian character. He followed a policy of aggressive resistance instead of passive mobilization. Bengal Police estimated that *Dudu Miyan* had about 80,000 followers (Iqbal, 2011, p. 66), while Alexander Forbes, editor of the *Bengal Hurkaru*, calculated it at 300,000 (Iqbal, 2011, p. 66). During the 1857 Sepoy mutiny, *Dudu Miyan* had been arrested and after his release

he passed away in 1862. The number of followers of the *Faraidi* movement seemed to continue to grow steadily during *Dudu Mian's* son *Noa Miyan's* time. But after the death of *Noa Miyan* in 1884, the movement seems to have gradually lost its original spirit and influence (Iqbal, 2011, p. 69). The successors to the *Faraidi* did not prove equal to the caliber and ability of *Hajji Shariatullah* and *Dudu Miyan*. So, this lack of strong leadership and the vigorous attacks of the *Zamindars* and the opposition from the rigidly conservative *Ulama* brought about the decline of the movement and thus it has lost much its social and religious effectiveness. *Hajji Shariatullah* and *Dudu Miyan* may be characterized as Islamic revivalists, social reformers and peasant leaders (Khan M.-u.-D. A., *Islamic Revivalism*, 2010, pp. 176-205). For more than fifty years, the movement dominated the history of that territory, striving to create among the rural peasantry a genuine Islamic order. The movement turned into one of the most prominent anti-colonial socio-religious and economic movement in Bengal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Faraidi* movement witnessed the power of *Hajj* in creating the original spirit of Islam in the mind of the *Hajjis* and also shows how revolutionarily it could impact the society of a country like Bangladesh.

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

*Titu Mir's* family claimed to be the descendent of *Hadrat Ali* (R). *Titu Mir* went to Makkah for *Hajj* in 1822 and there came in close contact with the great Islamic reformer *Sayyid Ahmad*, the exponent of *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya* movement. He was motivated by the idea of *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya* and after returning home from Makkah in 1827, *Titu Mir* started preaching the idea of *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya* among the Muslims in the districts of 24 Pargana and Nadia. He advised them to purify their activities from practising *Shirk* and *Bidaat*, and inspired

them to follow the Islamic way of life. His movement initially aimed at socio-religious reforms, elimination of the superstitious practices such as Saint-worship, erecting shrines and many others which resulted due to the close contact of the local Hindus with the Muslim society. The perspectives and objectives of the *Faraidi* movement and the *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya* movement are almost similar. However, one difference was that *Titu Mir* from the beginning emphasized on the idea of *Jihad* in Islam and got involved in conflict with the oppressive *Zamindars* while *Hajji Shariatullah* initially followed the policy of avoiding conflict with the *Zamindars*. *Titu Mir* got a very devoted and organized group of Muslim peasants who had been oppressed by the local Hindu *Zamindars*. Soon he and his followers were involved in conflict with several local Hindu *Zamindars* because of the *Zamindars*' sectarian attitude towards the Muslims and the imposition of illegal taxes on them. *Titu Mir* formed a *Mujahid* force and trained them in *lathi* and other indigenous arms under the command of his disciple *Ghulam Masum*. The increasing strength of *Titu Mir* alarmed the *Zamindars* and Englishmen who attempted to take united stand against him. Being instigated by the *Zamindars*, Mr. Davis, the English *kuthial* (factor-owner) of Mollahati and Alexander, the collector of Barasat, advanced against *Titu Mir* with their forces, but they were beaten back and had suffered a severe defeat. *Titu Mir* built a strong bamboo fort at Narkelbaria in October 1831 and recruited *Mujahids* and provided them with military training. The number of *Mujahids* rose to nearly five thousand. Having completed his military preparation *Titu Mir* declared himself *Badshah* (king) and urged upon the people to participate in *jihad* against the British. He soon established his control over the districts of 24 Pargana, Nadia and Faridpur. Several local *Zamindars* had to pay tax to *Titu Mir* instead of the English. An English contingent was sent from Calcutta, which again suffered severe defeat in the hands of the *Mujahids*. Subsequently Lord William Bentinck sent a regular army against *Titu Mir* under Lieutenant Colonel *Stewart* consisting of 100 cavalry, 300 native infantry and artillery with two cannons. The *Mujahids* with traditional arms failed to resist the English army equipped with modern arms and took shelter inside the bamboo fort. The English opened fire and destroyed the fort. There was heavy casualty on the side of the *Mujahids*. *Titu Mir* along with many of his followers fell in the battle (19 November 1831). *Titu Mir*'s movement began as a socio-religious

reform movement but the then socio-economic circumstances compelled it to be characterized as an agrarian one. No doubt, the teachings of *Hajj* and consequent realizations highly influenced *Titu Mir* for such a purification movement which later on turned into a revolutionary movement (Khan M.-u.-D. A., *Islamic Revivalism*, 2010, pp. 141-162).

*Hajj* undoubtedly leaves huge virtual impact on the personal, familial as well as the social life of the Bangladeshi Muslims. In Bangladesh, the people generally think to perform *Hajj* at the late age or late middle age. It is believed an optimum time to undertake *Hajj*. Several types of thinking characterize this realization of Bangladeshi Muslims regarding *Hajj*. It is believed that pilgrimage to Makkah is a Muslim's last significant act preparatory to death. So, after completing all the worldly responsibilities, he or she would go to *Hajj* as a beginning of his journey to the next world. It is believed that a pilgrim should leave for *Hajj* only when all other debts have been discharged and all family matters including other social obligations have been settled. Similarly, old scores should be resolved, money should be set aside for the care of the family, and all children should be married prior to his departure for Makkah. It is also sincerely believed that the money spent for *Hajj* should not be borrowed from others but should be from the savings accumulated from *Halal* (legal) employment, so that in the event of a pilgrim's death there will be no outstanding financial or material debts. In this sense, after fulfilling all worldly responsibilities, the pilgrim departs for Makkah with a clear conscience, and there he will be completely purified from all his/her worldly indulgences. With such a realization of end journey and preparation to die or return home, many pilgrims bring with them the *Ihram* (two plain white sheets of cloth) which they wore in Makkah during *Hajj*, so that they can use these as their shroud. In order to make their life worthwhile, the pilgrims desire to die either in Makkah while performing *Hajj*, or after returning home as a *Hajji*. Thus, *Hajj* is understood among the Muslims of Bangladesh as signaling the end to the material existence. And after their return, the *Hajjis* earnestly try to remain isolated from the worldly activities so that he or she would not be involved in sins or indulgences again, for it might cause harm to his purified life through *Hajj*. The spirit of performing *Hajj* in the early age is almost absent among the average Muslims in the society of Bangladesh and even among the *Ulama* too.

In the society of Bangladesh, the *Hajjis* enjoy a very special dignity. Historical accounts on *Hajj* also suggest that *Hajj* confers social prestige and legitimacy (Donnan, 1989, pp. 205-216) (Yamba, 1995) (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990). One who performed *Hajj* is later on addressed as *Hajji*, which is a very respectable title for anyone in the community. The *Hajjis* are generally addressed as ‘*Hajji Saheb*’ (the honorable pilgrim), and their names are written with the dignified title ‘*Al-Hajj*’. This title indicates that he/she performed the great job-*Hajj* and thus he/she would be given dignified address and thus be honored. Sometimes the real name of a person overlapped under the title ‘*Hajji Saheb*’. The *Hajjis* are believed as purified personalities and an accepted slave (*Maqbul Bandha*) to the Almighty Allah. Because Allah (SWT) specially accepted him or her to be His guest and thus he or she is accepted by the Almighty Allah. Not only the Muslims but even the non-Muslims also show respect to them as purified ones. In every meeting or public gathering, the *Hajji* is given special place of honor. Thus, *Hajj* mostly improves the social status of a Muslim after *Hajj*. This change becomes remarkable both in the manner in which the pilgrim should now behave with others as well as by the honor which others should show them. Everyone should behave quietly and respectfully with the *Hajjis* in their company, avoiding topics of conversation or styles of expression which could be considered discourteous. The *Hajjis* are given priority for the socially honored positions, for example the chairmanship/membership of a school, college, *Madrasah* or Mosque, or its governing committee, as well as the chairmanship or membership of different local governmental/non-governmental bodies etc. Another person could also be selected, but only after expressing unwillingness by the concerned *Hajji*. The opinion or advice of a *Hajji* is honored by all. The businesses or social services run by a *Hajji*, are also considered to be more reliable than those of others with the belief that they could not cheat or harm the clients; rather they be more honest in their dealings. Such changes of status open up new areas of influence for the *Hajji*, such as in adjudicating disputes, the settling of marriage negotiations, leading prayers in the mosque etc.

An aspirant *Hajji* is spontaneously invited by his/her relatives and neighbors immediately after his/her decision to make pilgrimage to Makkah for *Hajj*. Hosting the would-be *Hajji* at least for one meal is considered as a very meritorious job as

he/she is hosting the guest of Allah (SWT). Many people usually accompany him/her to the airport or departure place and also receive him/her after arrival at the station. Everyone feels proud who could handshake or hug the *Hajjis*.

*Hajj* brings significant changes in the daily life of the Bangladeshi *Hajjis*. *Hajjis* are expected to be more religious and honest in their daily activities. It has also been observed that after performing *Hajj*, a *Hajji* usually tries to observe all the religious duties and obligations strictly not only in his/her personal life but also in the family-related and social activities. For example, the women who didn't observe *Purdah* (Islamic dress code for a woman) before *Hajj*, she rarely ignores *Purdah* after *Hajj*. Similarly a Muslim who was in the habit of taking bribe, making interest-based transactions, or such kind of unfair and illegal means before *Hajj*, he/she usually tries to avoid these kinds of activities after *Hajj* for the fear that it may damage his/her purification attained through *Hajj*. One who did not wear beard previously would hardly remove beard after *Hajj*. The *Hajji* regularly prays five times a day, and avoids cheating or stealing or disturbing anyone. Even the *Hajji* abandons morally dubious pursuits and bad habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, different types of games such as *ludu* (the board game), *daba* (chess) etc. It is believed that a *Hajji* can never tell a lie; rather he/she always tries to speak the truth. A *Hajji* makes a demonstrable effort to change his behavior in line with the desire which society associates with *Hajj*. This positive change at individual level of a *Hajji*, undoubtedly impacts the society; because the individuals are the basic units of a society. The *Hajji* encourages the members of his family and others to follow religious principles of Islam. In some cases in rural Bangladesh, it has been found that some *Hajjis* would not go out of home for 40 days as a beginning of his purified life. A *Hajji* not only protects himself by leaving usury-bribe or such kinds of unfair means, but also saves many others from involving in these social corrupt practices. However, it is important to stress here that people's expectations of a *Hajji's* behavior are also positively very high. It is expected that the life of a *Hajji* clearly be a model of spirituality and religiosity through prayer coupled with his/her concern for others, his/her judicial participation in social affairs and his/her behavior with those whom he comes into contact. They generally abstain from life's frivolous as well as morally suspect pursuits. Rarely a *Hajji* gets involved in social corrupt practices in Bangladesh. If a *Hajji* is observed

getting involved in corrupt practices, it is generally believed by the mass people that his/her *Hajj* has not been acceptable to the Almighty Allah (SWT) and such people stand diminished both spiritually and in the eyes of their fellows. Sometimes the image of *Hajj* has exceptionally been manipulated by some secular or even communist political leaders who practically do not believe in the spirituality of *Hajj*. They perform *Hajj* with the intention of using the image of *Hajj* to earn social respect, confidence of the mass people and focusing him/her as a religious personality and thus gain his/her own ambitious leadership. So, it may be said that everyone does not perform *Hajj* with pure *Niyyah* (motive). In short, if a *Hajji* maintains the spirit of *Hajj*, then he/she is a true *Hajji*; if he/she does not maintain the spirit of *Hajj*, then he/she is a worse person. It means in the society of Bangladesh, the social and spiritual value of *Hajj* depends not only on divine judgment but also on public opinion. *Hajj* thus, changes the philosophy of life of a *Hajji* and the *Hajji* is spiritually transformed, which leaves a long-lasting impact on the family as well as the whole society. *Hajj* has certain transformative properties, which enable the *Hajjis* to pursue a more spiritual life and leading them to a better understanding of Islam. This change and purified life style of *Hajjis* creates the sense of honor in the mind of others towards them as well as influences others to make pilgrimage. Thus, *Hajj* brings a positive and remarkable change in the life and society of the Bangladeshi Muslims as a force of Islamization.

From the socio-global point of view, thousands of people go to perform *Hajj* from all over the country (Bangladesh) as well as from other parts of the world having differences of races, colors, and speaking different languages. They mix across the lines of ethnicity, nationality, sect, and gender that divide them in everyday life. Even Bangladesh has more than 41 regional languages (Bangladesh, 2017) whereas the world as a whole has thousands of different languages. Although the *Hajj* rituals last five days, many pilgrims stay longer. Most of the *Hajjis* from Bangladesh spend 40 days worshipping in the cities of Makkah and Madinah. Each ritual component of the *Hajj* is performed simultaneously with well over two million participants. All the people, despite their diverse demographic attributes, wear the same unstitched clothes known as the *Ihram*, come together at one place, and follow the same rituals, affirm a common identity by performing common rituals, exhibit unity, equality and

discipline as well as neglecting the sense of differences among human being on the basis of wealth, race, creed, language and region. *Hajj* engenders substantial mixing across national, sectarian, and gender lines in an atmosphere that emphasizes equality and unity. *Hajj* expands people's vision and makes them accommodate and leave their biases first at the holy places and then this mutual harmony is perpetuated after one experiences life away from worldly affairs, embracing one's true identity symbolizing submission of one's will to the will of Allah. As a participant in a global platform with thousands of people of different race, locality, origin and color, *Hajj* increases the desire for universal brotherhood, peace and tolerance in the mind of the *Hajjis* towards others, both Muslims and non-Muslims. *Hajj* helps to integrate the Muslim world, leading to a strengthening of global Islamic beliefs and a sense of unity and equality with others who are ordinarily separated in everyday life by sect, ethnicity, nationality, or gender, but are brought together by means of *Hajj*. This reflection has been observed among the *Hajjis* of Bangladesh in several social affairs. For example, as a respected person, the *Hajji* is usually being asked to mediate in disputes among different groups or individuals, resolve family quarrels, offer advice, attend marriage negotiations, lead the social activities etc. In many social conflict resolutions, it is found that the decisions of *Hajjis* are mostly more positive than the opinions of non-*Hajjis*. The *Hajjis*, thus play an important role in creating peaceful co-existence among different socio-religious groups in the society. Because as their own affairs have already been put in order, the *Hajji* can deal with other people's affairs more neutrally and altruistically being free from self-interest. This evidence suggests that *Hajj* increases tolerance and positive views towards both Muslims and non-Muslims; Thus, the *Hajjis* positive attitudes contribute to the communities' co-existence and harmonious relationships among different ethnic and religious groups in the country. The feelings of unity and equality brought about by *Hajj* extend across all artificial lines. *Hajj* offers Bangladeshi *Hajjis* a novel opportunity to interact also with the members of the opposite gender in a religious setting, and to observe cross-gender interactions among Muslims from different nations too. In Bangladesh, interaction between men and women who are strangers is uncommon. Women rarely go to mosque and when they do, they typically pray in a separate area from men. But gender interactions are a natural part of the *Hajj*. Men pray alongside women during

the *Hajj*. Thus, *Hajjis*' views towards women and their rights in the society are more positive. They also express greater concern about women's quality of life in Bangladesh relative to other countries and about crimes against women in the country. Here *Hajjis* are also more likely to support girls' education and female participation in the professional workforce than the non-*Hajjis*.

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

There is a tendency of performing *Hajj* more than once among the economically solvent Muslims and particularly the *Ulama*, *Pirs* and *Awliyas*. For example, *Shah Meer Muhammad Akhtar* of Chittagong visited Saudi Arabia 29 times to perform *Hajj* and *Umrah*, (Khan M. A., 2011, hal. 100) *Shah Maulana Mohammad Abdul Jabbar* visited Makkah and Madinah 33 times for *Hajj* and *Umrah*, (Nadwi, 2012, p. 67) *Maulana Hafez Ahmad* performed *Hajj* six times (Chowdhury, 2007, p. 42). They usually encourage others to perform *Hajj* and advise them from their own experience (Jabbar, 2012, pp. 30-33). *Prof. Dr. Abdul Quader*, who performed *Hajj* 11 times, said in an interview with the author that there are two reasons behind performing *Hajj* more than once, one is love for *Ka'abah* and another is the sense of purification. No Muslim can deny the attraction of the holy *Ka'abah*, especially one who visited it once. Moreover, some *Hajjis* undertake the *Hajj* several times mainly for others such as their parents or relatives or others who are unable to do so because of ill-health, or as they died without performing *Hajj*. It is believed that while this pilgrimage by proxy certainly earns the prime rewards (*sawab*) for the person in whose account it is performed and he is purified by this *Hajj*, it also confers blessing (*sawab*) upon him who undertakes it. In this kind of cases, experienced *Hajjis* are chosen with priority.

There are about five million Bangladeshi migrants working in Saudi Arabia. The *Hajjis*, whose relatives are living in Saudi Arabia, take the time of *Hajj* as an opportunity of their meeting with them. Even many Bangladeshi people, who live in different countries of the Middle-East and North Africa, use the occasion of *Hajj* as an opportunity to meet the *Ulama*, *Shaikhs* or relatives and family-members who come from Bangladesh. Thus, *Hajj* works as a social platform of getting together for Bangladeshi people at Makkah and Madinah. The *Ulama* and *Shaikhs* also use this opportunity to meet their disciples and visit different historical and spiritual places of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East (Khan A. U., pp. 100-116). Not only at Makkah, but also several *Hajj* agencies of Bangladesh back at home regularly arrange *Hajji* Reunion programs. For example, *Hajj-i-Baitullah Hajj Kafelah*, a leading *Hajj* agency in Chittagong headed by *Giasuddin Talukdar*, a professor of Chittagong University, regularly arranges *Hajji* Reunion program every year. This program brings the opportunity for *Hajjis* of different localities to meet together and share their views. Such programs create spiritual reawakening among the *Hajjis* and remind them about their glorious times spent in Makkah and encourage them to keep the promises that they had made during *Hajj* with Allah (SWT). Thus, the spirit of *Hajj* is renewed and it leads to purified life whole the year through.

### C. Economic Impact:

The earliest Arab-Bengal relation was mainly based on commercial activities. It is assumed that the relation was established probably soon after 2800 B.C. After the advent of Islam, early Arab Muslim traders had established trading contact with the costal lands of Bengal. There were major settlements of Arab traders scattered along the west and south coast of the Indian Sub-Continent including Bengal, with similar facilities extending into the chain of Islands at the South China Sea and the Philippines (Nizami, 2009) (Hourani, 1951). The Arab Muslims settled in these coastal regions and the Arab settlers in Chittagong region had gradually grown to be a compact and influential community and had in course of time organized an independent principality of their own comprising the coastal belt of the Chittagong and the Noakhali Districts (Haq, 1948, p. 17). Some indirect references in the writings of Arab Geographers (such as *Silsilt-ut-Tawarikh* by *Sulaiman*, *Kitab*

*al-Masalik wal-Mamalik* by Ibn Khurdadbih, *Mu'jam al-Buldan* by Yaqut, *Nuzhat al-Mushtaq* by Al-Idrisi) strongly record a flourishing trade contact between Arab and Bengal (Karim, 1985, pp. 31-33) (Ali M. M., 1985, pp. 33-34). The great admixture of Arabic words and phrases in the local dialect of Chittagong also supports the theory of early Arab settlements. Many social customs also preserve the Arabic tradition. This early contact is evidently supported by archeological discoveries such as coin discovered at the ancient Buddhist site of *Paharpur* in *Rajshahi* district dated on 788 A.C (Dikshit, 1938, p. 87), and two others at the site of the ruins of *Mainamoti* in *Comilla* district (Khan F. , p. 11). It indicated to a strong trade relationship. They traded in various delicious and valuable items as rice, sugar, aloe-wood, medicinal-wood whose leaves produced bitter juice, cotton cloths such as Muslin (very fine cotton garments), ivory, rhino horns and otter skins, horses, perfumes, spices, Persian luxurious items and many other commodities. This trade contact led to the emergence and expansion of Islam in Bengal. The social condition of the then Bengal with strict caste and sub-caste system was also in favour of the expansion of Islam. The teaching of social equality, justice and simplicity in Islam impressed the lower classes of Hindus and Buddhists and they gradually became converted and flocked into the fold of Islam (Khan M. A., 1965, p. 83). Being one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam, *Hajj* attracted the converted Muslims and their descendants to perform it. To visit the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah has been a keen desire among the Muslims of Bengal. So it is believed that the Bengalee Muslim merchants who went to Arabia for trade, naturally performed *Hajj*. At the same time, who went to Makkah for *Hajj*, also had some trading concerns. They carried several local items to Arabia when they travelled to Arabia for *Hajj* and brought Arabian items with them when they returned home. Thus, from the beginning *Hajj* has economic implications or trading concern.

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *Hajjis* from Bengal as well as India had the option of travelling to Makkah either by overland caravans or by sailing ships. Most of them preferred to go by the sea routes, primarily through the Red Sea, and occasionally through the Persian Gulf and rarely through the land routes. During *Mughal* rule, several ships undertook the voyage, providing free passage and provisions for the pilgrims. There were three ships called the *Rahimi*, the *Karimi* and the *Salari* for the

cost-free transportation of the pilgrims. The contemporary traveller *John Fryer Keane* (*Hajji* Mohammed Amin) mentions that these pilgrim ships weighed between 1400 to 1600 tons and often carried 1700 pilgrims each. They used various Deccan ports on the east and the west coasts for *Hajj* sailings such as port of *Surat* in Gujarat, which was described as *Bab-ul-Makkah* or the *Bandar-e-Mubarak* (blessed port). They used to send regular charity to Makkah and appoint *Amir-i-Hajj* for the pilgrimage. During 984-989 A.H. (1576-1582 A.C) the Akbar's *Amir-i-Hajj* carried more than Rs 600,000 in money and goods to be distributed to the people of Makkah and Madinah as charity, along with thousands of *khilats* (robes of honour) and expensive gifts for the *Sharifs* of Makkah. In 1659 A.C *Badshah Aurangazeb* sent presents worth Rs 660,000 to the *Sharif* of Makkah. During the British rule, *Hajj* continued to get regular attention. The famous tourist agency Thomas Cook and Son was appointed in 1885 as the official travel agent of *Hajj* with the responsibility of streamlining the pilgrimage trade. In 1927, a 10-member *Hajj* Committee was constituted headed by D. Healy, Esq., which provided services to the pilgrims. During the World War II, when the number of *Hajjis* reduced, the Saudi government used to appoint *Mutawwifin* and *Muallims* since 1941 so that they could canvass for pilgrims. During Pakistan period (1947-1971), the trend was still continued.

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

travel only by two airlines i.e. *Biman* Bangladesh Airlines and Saudi Arabia Airlines. Around *Hajj* activities transaction of billions of dollars take place commercially and thus *Hajj* has become an important concern in the economy of Bangladesh.

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

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

#### D. Cultural Impact:

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

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

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

*Haajj*’, or even the people also usually do not address a young *Hajji* as ‘*Hajji Saheb*’ or do not show equal respect towards them as to the old aged *Hajjis*.

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

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

Sometimes, the families and friends who missed the chance of inviting the would-be *Hajjis* before their *Hajj*, arrange such programs after their return from *Hajj*. *Hajjis* briefly share their *Hajj* experiences with the friends and relatives and influence them to visit the holy cities in the post-*Hajj* programs. The *Hajjis* entertain the visitors generally with the drinking water of *Zam-Zam* and Arabian dates. The water of *Zam-Zam* and Arabian dates are believed to be symbols of *Barakah* (blessing).

Many of them eat or drink it with the hope of being cured of their illnesses. The *Hajjis* entertain close relatives, friends or dignified guests with some special gifts brought from Makkah. The special gifts include Prayer-rug, Arabian perfume (Atar), prayer-cap, Arabian *Jubbah*, beads (tasbih), *Miswak* (teeth-cleaning twig made from the *Salvadora persica* tree). Distribution of gifts of *Makkah* by a *Hajji* has been the most attractive feature of post-*Hajj* programs.

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

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

## **E. Educational Impact**

*Hajj* increases knowledge of the *Hajjis* both experimental and theoretical through various means. Primarily, whenever a person desires to perform *Hajj*, he/she simultaneously tries to learn the ways of performing *Hajj* correctly. The intending *Hajji* learns it either by way of studying the books written on *Hajj* or from a learned

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

After the training programs, the intending *Hajjis* devote themselves into studying and learning *Hajj* rituals in details until they perform *Hajj*. During their stay at the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, the Bangladeshi *Hajjis* gather knowledge from different types of lectures and practices of global Muslims particularly of Arabia. Several Arabian scholars arrange religious discussion programs in the *Masjid- al-Haram* compound, where Bangladeshi *Hajjis* participate and acquire knowledge there about several important Islamic issues and practices. These lectures mainly focus on the importance of having pure *Aqidah* (faith). Bangladeshi *Hajjis*, who because of historical perspectives observed several *bida'at* (sinful practices) in Bangladeshi society, receive exclusive knowledge of pure *Aqidah*, and thus they can

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

Many Arabian *Shaikhs* voluntarily arrange a good number of intellectual discourses in different venues and mosques during *Hajj*, where Bangladeshi *Hajjis* also participate. *Professor Dr. AKM Shahed* (Rahman), who performed *Hajj* in 2013,

remarks that he participated in these types of several programs and *Shaikhs* also gave him some books. He got benefits from these discussions and remarks that these were very thoughtful, effective as there mainly focused on pure Islamic *Aqidah*. Sometimes, Bangladeshi students studying there promptly translate the lectures of *Shaikhs* into Bangla for the better understanding and easy communication. He suggests multi-lingual translations for greater benefit of the *Hajjis* coming from different language backgrounds.

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

Many educated people of Bangladesh who got Arabia to perform *Hajj* every year, naturally take the opportunity to bring many books from Saudi Arabia particularly the religious and historical books. The *Ulama* and the people who understand Arabic language usually bring the books for personal use as well as for libraries of their institutions. H.M. Ataur Rahman Nadwi (Rahman), who performed *Hajj* second time in 2015 brought sixty kgs of books during his departure from Makkah, Dr. Masudur Rahman (Rahman), also couriered about 100 kgs of book from Makkah when he visited that sacred city. He brought the books particularly on *Tafsir*,

*Hadith, Fiqh* and Arabic language particularly for kids. Professor Dr. AKM Abdul Quader also observed that during several lectures arranged by Arabian Shaikhs, he and many other participants were presented many books. Thus, many Arabic books on Islam are brought to Bangladesh by the *Hajjis* every year. So, *Hajj* not only enhances the knowledge and perception of the *Hajjis*, but also increases the opportunity of learning Islam from original sources for non-*Hajjis* of Bangladesh.

#### **F. Religio-Spiritual Impact:**

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

about how they felt themselves transformed by means of *Hajj* as recounted by *Dr. Helaluddin Noman* who performed *Hajj* in 2015. To quote him here:

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

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

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

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

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

Because of historical perspectives as well as lack of alertness on the part of the Bengali Muslims, many socio-cultural practices infiltrated from Hinduism and Buddhism into the Muslim society of Bangladesh. Many superstitious practices are

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

*Hajj* inspires a *Hajji* to be a better Muslim in both faith and practice than before. It encourages regular participation in practices which they unambiguously identify as Islamic and in this sense is seen as part of a process of Islamization among them. *Hajjis* are more likely to undertake obligatory and supererogatory (nawafil/optional) prayers such as *Salat-ut-Tahajjud*, *Qu'ran* recitation regularly etc. They become regular attendants in the mosques to perform five times prayers,

observe obligatory and non-obligatory fasting and follow Islamic principles strictly in the daily affairs of their individual, family and social life. The female *Hajjis* are never seen to ignore *Purdah*. The male *Hajjis* rarely shave their beard as it goes against the *Sunnah* of Prophet (SAAM). They try to avoid all kinds of unfair, unethical and un-Islamic means in their everyday activities. Even the *Hajji* forsakes morally unsound habits such as smoking etc. They rarely do cheat, tell a lie or break a promise with others in their social affairs. The *Hajjis* inspire their fellow brethren and family-members to follow Islamic religious principles in their lives. Thus, in the society of Bangladesh, life of a *Hajji* has ever been a model of spirituality and Islamic religiosity.

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

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

Thus, it may be concluded saying that *Hajj*, being an Islamic religious obligation inculcates Islamic religiosity and inner spirituality of the *Hajjis* of Bangladesh as often reflected through their practical dealing in all through the rest of their life after *Hajj*. They become more meticulous in their religious observances, more honest in their social affairs, more trustworthy in their interactive attitudes,

more reliable in their family commitments, more confident in themselves, and most importantly every moment they remain ever ready to meet their beloved Lord Allah (SWT) with a purified life and a heart bedecked with the jewels of absolute surrender to His will.

## G. CONCLUSION

*Hajj* is the most complete worship and the most comprehensive act of submission before the Almighty Allah (SWT). *Hajj* is hope for humanity wounded by the deadly blows of materialism and robbed by both atheism and polytheism. *Hajj* disciplines the human being, teaches *Tawhid*, purifies his soul, creates unity with other fellow-believers without arrogance, prepares the mind for death, ushers in a feeling of humbleness, and – most importantly – strengthens the faith of a true believer in Him. *Hajj* has an enormous impact on the life of Bangladeshi Muslims in all respects as the social and religious sentiments run side by side. *Hajj* not only transforms individual life of the *Hajjis* but also collective beliefs and practices of the society that spread universal Islamic values. Every year thousands of Bangladeshi Muslims; male and female, perform *Hajj*. This huge number of *Hajjis* with the teachings from *Hajj* and diverse experiences is exerting positive influence on the different aspects of society. *Hajj* is the most vivid manifestation of believing in and practising *Tawhid* (belief in a single Deity of Allah). The *Hajjis* practise true Islam with pure *Aqidah* (beliefs) during *Hajj*, which contribute to the spread of ‘True Islam’ among the Muslims of Bangladesh who have been practising many social rites having relation to or shade of *Shirk* (polytheism) and *Bida’at* (sinful innovation) because of historical, and socio-cultural interaction with the non-Muslim religious groups. The *Hajjis* work for social peace and wider tolerance towards every social group irrespective of gender and religion as based on the Islamic teaching of justice and equality. *Hajj* offers the most evident and effective lesson of equality and brotherhood for mankind. It induces a shift from localized beliefs and practices towards global Islamic practice, increases tolerance and peaceful inclinations, and leads to a more favorable attitudes toward others particularly women. *Hajj* eradicates such vices as racism, murder, casteism, regionalism, nationalism etc. and permanently annihilates polytheism from the minds of the Muslims who gather

around the Holy *Ka'abah* to submit themselves before the will of Almighty Allah (SWT). *Hajj* also helps spread some Arabian culture into the Muslim society of Bangladesh. The *Hajjis* in the society of Bangladesh enjoy a position of special respect (Ali S. A., 2017). It also contributes to the spread of Islamic knowledge primarily at the individual level of the *Hajjis* as well as at the collective level to an appreciable extent. Several commodities are exchanged unofficially between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia during *Hajj*, which facilitates the trading concerns with the prospect of a rise to a very remarkable level. Spiritually, *Hajj* undoubtedly represents the essence and spirit of Islam, complete devotion towards the Almighty Allah (SWT), self-sacrifice, equality, and indiscrimination on the basis of color, race, caste, wealth or power. It not only moulds the *Hajjis* into more sincere and practising Muslims, but also the society at large by their honesty and piety. *Hajj* is a coveted preparation for the next life as it leads to a spiritual reawakening and improves social status. It betrays their perceptions of denial of the everyday class, gender, and ethnic inequalities. *Hajj* creates the unity of thoughts and acts by performing divine injunctions and consolidating the pillars of social justice. The Bangladeshi Muslim's keen attraction to the Holy *Ka'abah* and the great assembly of the Muslim *Ummah* during *Hajj* in a single place for performing a series of common religious acts, rites and rituals evidently create mutual understanding, unity in thinking and tolerant attitude towards others. The most important factor of understanding is the equitable teachings of Islam that bridge the gaps, bring hearts together, create a link between the east and the west, and make the black and the white, the Arabs and the non-Arabs feel sympathy for one another. Above all in the context of the society of Bangladesh, it may confidently be said that *Hajj* turns a Muslim a better Muslim to the least and this is so way mean contribution of *Hajj* one of the most fundamental pillars of Islam.

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