

# ATHEISM IN BANGLADESH: ITS RISE AND IMPACT

# في ضوء القرآن الكريم

□ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا أَفَمَنْ يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ يَأْتِي آمِنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (40)  
فصلت.

□ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (60) وَيُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (61) الزمر.

# INTRODUCTION:

- ▣ Bangladesh, a hugely populated country, approximately 165 Million population in a small territory, out of which 91% is estimated to be Muslims, and 8% Hindus, and the rest 1% comprise Buddhists, Christians and others.
- ▣ Atheism is rising in Bangladesh through blogging, social media, facebook etc.
- ▣ Islamists termed it as 'anti-Islamists', 'attack on religious sentiments', and 'western conspiracy' etc. while secular people termed it simply as 'intellectual freedom', and 'religious freedom' and so on.

- ▣ Due to atheism and its impact on society, many problems occurred and continued to occur, such as illegal killings of individuals, country-wide unrest and demonstrations continued.
- ▣ Let us look at how atheism started to emerge in the country.

# 1. EMERGENCE OF ATHEISM IN BANGLADESH

- ▣ The Islamophobists or atheists declare their dislike towards Islam. They start condemning all fundamental creeds of Islam, such as the Day of Judgement, Isra' and Mi`raj, Jannah and Jahannam, Angels, Hur al-'Ieen, male dominance in family etc.
- ▣ Their main target is to disconnect Muslim youths and teenagers from Islamic beliefs.

- ▣ It is difficult to identify when exactly atheism emerged in the country.
- ▣ **LALON SHAH (1772-1890)** an idealist utopian, mocked at Islamic shari`ah.
- ▣ He presented '**pantheism**' which regards that every being is the manifestations of God, and hence everything can be worshipped.
- ▣ Also presented '**religious pluralism**'.
- ▣ According to some scholars, the idealistic utopians, who mocked at shari`ah were regarded to be the beginning of atheism in the country.

## ▣ CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND HINDU REMORMISTS:

- ▣ Their missionary activities and debates with Muslims.
- ▣ Though Muslim scholars subjugated them and stopped their aggression, the roots of doubts were created in the minds of people.

## ▣ **SECULAR NATIONALISTS RISE:**

- ▣ In the post World War II, terrible famine emerged in the country.
- ▣ Loss of religion and morality due to hunger and extreme poverty.
- ▣ Secular nationalists grabbed the opportunity, and stressed on economic solvency and political freedom more than the religious attachment.
- ▣ Religion is personal affairs. Religion was presented as opposed to science and development
- ▣ Anti religious sentiments were growing to rise in **1960s and 70s**. But the common masses did not welcome this anti-religious stance.



# SOME FAMOUS ATHEISTS IN BANGLADESH

- ▣ **AROJ ALI MATOBBAR** (1900-1985) was regarded to be the first evident atheist for anti-Islamic beliefs.
- ▣ Though uneducated, he managed to learn by his own self, later turning to be anti-Islamic, due to people's extreme stand towards religion.
- ▣ It was noted that his mother's janazah was denied by the people when her family took her photo after death. This led him to extreme anti-Islamic stand.

- ▣ The real anti-Islamic stand started in **1973** by **POET DAWUD HAIDAR (1952 - )**, who published a poetry against the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Prophet 'Isa and Gautama Buddha, and it was published in **Daily Sangbad in February 1973**.
- ▣ Huge protests led to his expulsion from the country.
- ▣ Lived in India from 1973-1987.
- ▣ And then moved to Germany and living there until now.
- ▣ He has been welcome by the West due to his anti-Islamic stance.

- ▣ **ASIF MAHIUDDIN (1984 - )**
- ▣ He is living in Germany under a political asylum **from 2013**.
- ▣ In the age 13, he declared to be an atheist.
- ▣ In 2010, he organized a convention for all atheists in the country. He claims that a total of **34 youths joined his convention declaring their atheistic beliefs**.
- ▣ **TASLIMA NASRIN (1960 - ):**
- ▣ She was expelled from the country and lived in Sweden, USA and now in India. In fact, Taslima got many youngsters to support her mission. Her writings were read by many youths, who get influenced, especially the teenage girls.
- ▣ Also famous are **AHMAD SHARIF and HUMAYUN AZAD**.

## 2. SPREAD OF ATHEISM IN BANGLADESH

- ▣ Before 2006-2007, it was unimaginable that the atheism may spread in the country.
- ▣ They were unwelcome by majority of Muslims.
- ▣ Due to Internet wider accessibility, they could easily spread their destructive messages to their fellow friends, get along with them, get support from foreign friends and media, and secular nationalists.
- ▣ They could also use a fake ID to spread their messages.

- ▣ The atheists were able to spread the rumors about Islam, mock the Muslims and their fundamental beliefs.
- ▣ They assert that the '**Religion is a virus**' which has to be removed from society.
- ▣ With the existence of 'religion' **no country can develop or flourish!?**
- ▣ It simply brings us to the **14th centuries backward.**
- ▣ These atheists could be termed as '**Militant atheists**' who want to remove Islam and Islamists from society, want to ban Islamic politics, Islamic economics and Islamic social reform and so on.

# HOW MANY PERCENT ARE ATHEISTS/IRRELIGIOUS

- ▣ The people of Bangladesh love their religion knowingly or unknowingly. The religious sentiments are in their blood and soul. They might be irreligious, but never they accommodate to be the atheists.
- ▣ This shows that their belief in the Creator is firmly rooted. But religiosity decreases day by day. A person may not be practicing; but he does not want to declare that he/she is irreligious, let alone be an atheist.

- ▣ In a **Gallup Poll of 2009**, the participants in the survey from Bangladesh, **the 99% of the population claim that the religion is an important part of their life.** The country secured the first place in the poll.
- ▣ It was observed that the highest income GDP countries declare that the religion plays less important roles. So, there is strong link between becoming richer and getting detached from the religion.

- ▣ In another **Gallup poll of 2014**, it was seen that **7%** of the population declare that they are irreligious.
- ▣ In another **Gallup poll of 2017**, a whopping **19%** of population declare that they are irreligious.
- ▣ Though the real number must be much more than this. Perhaps this number shows the one who never goes to mosque, even for weekly Jumuah prayers.
- ▣ It is also to be noted that the population of Bangladesh are not atheists, or they do not welcome atheistic beliefs; but **irreligiosity** is rising alarmingly.



- ▣ **So, what is the reason of irreligiosity among the people of Bangladesh?**
- ▣ It could be due to:
- ▣ *Unending propagation of atheistic beliefs,*
- ▣ *failure of political Islam in Muslim countries,*
- ▣ *huge internal conflicts among the religious clerics,*
- ▣ *Government tortures and murders of religious figures,*
- ▣ *and the anti-Islamic propagation of secular elements in the country.*

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF ATHEISM

- ▣ **PRO-INDIAN ATHEISTS:**
- ▣ Supported and financed by India and Hinduism.
- ▣ They, though claimed to be atheists, they do not hate Hinduism. They only hate Islam.
- ▣ They could be termed as 'ISLAMOPHOBISTS', not 'ATHEISTS'.
- ▣
- ▣ Among them, **TASLIMA NASRIN, ASAD NUR AND ABDULLAH AL-MASUD** are famous.
- ▣ Asad Nur himself claimed that Indian people especially the secular elements support them strongly, which motivate them to reside in India.

- ▣ **EUROPEAN ATHEISM:**
- ▣ Some atheists ran away from Bangladesh, and got asylum in European countries, and financially supported.
- ▣ **ASIF MOHIUDDIN** is the famous one among them. Atheism is not simply their creed. It is their life, motivation, financial support, an avenue to earn name and fame in the West.
- ▣ **Asif Mahiuddin, Ononnya Azad, Shammi Haque** and others reside in **Germany**, while some others reside in **Sweden**, and others reside in **France** and other countries.
- ▣ Asif's **shongshoy.com** website is the most dangerous one to spread anti-Islamic and atheistic beliefs among people.

- ▣ **PHILOSOPHICAL ATHEISM**
- ▣ **PARVEZ ALAM** is among those who propagate atheism from philosophical perspective. He does not attack on Islam openly; nor he claims atheism. But he inserts atheistic beliefs in Islamic terms and certain foundations of shari`ah.
- ▣ He published a book namely, **MADINAH**, where he inserted atheistic beliefs in its different chapters such as **Hijrah, Madinah and Qiyamat**.
- ▣ These atheists are more dangerous as they instill anti-Islamic values in the minds of people without their knowledge and awareness.

- ▣ **AWAMI ATHEISTS** (supported by the current ruling government)
- ▣ **AMI RAHMAN PIAL, AZAM KHAN** and others are Awami league supporters, and they spread atheism in the country. The government was forced to take action against the atheists who spread their beliefs and anti Islamic ideology. Some of them were arrested or warned not to repeat such an act.
- ▣ They find Awami League is the best option for them to support, than others.
- ▣ But they assert that the student wing of the party should focus on strengthening their intellectual and cultural knowledge and be well-equipped to deal with religious fundamentalists.

## ▣ **FEMINIST ATHEISTS**

- ▣ They are vocal on women's rights; but at the same time, they are not behind in attacking Islam and its beliefs.
- ▣ Women should be equal with men in everything.
- ▣ Religion should not be allowed to control their freedom.
- ▣ They also vocal on LGBT rights. Among them, **Nadia Islam** is attacking Islam terribly. **Tashnuva Shishir is working for LGBTs**. They are causing damages to the society and its moral values.

# IMPACT OF ATHEISM

- ▣ It could be assumed that atheism and irreligiosity are rising in the country, and its impact maybe overwhelming in near future.
- ▣ Today, it might not be seen evidently; but the way it is rising, in 10-20 years, their impact would be terrible on the youngsters.
- ▣ **Feminist atheists** will rise extensively. The presence of enormous dating sites globally and locally, spread of pornography and the active involvement of feminists on social media and huge followers would impact the social and family life of the youngsters and teenagers.

- ▣ **Philosophical atheists** may also influence the generation extensively. Since they do not expose their real face of atheism, they prefer to instill their anti-religious thoughts onto the minds of youths and teenagers.
- ▣ The **change of current education system into secular education** or anti-Islamic education system was a clear sign of its impact. Many famous secular nationalists mold the minds of students and teenagers into atheistic tendencies and beliefs.



- ▣ **Awami atheists** are also rising day by day. Previously, in Chatra League (student wing of Awami League) the main focus was on the power and strength, who can dominate over others by force. But now, they also focus on cultural and intellectual activities to equip their followers against Islamic fundamentalists.
- ▣ **Secular nationalists** are also spreading their atheistic beliefs. Though currently majority of the children are following their fathers and mothers. But now, the tendencies are changing. They prefer to **follow their friends over their parents.**

- ▣ Currently, the **religious preachers** are trying their best to maintain Islamicism in the country. But the oppression and attack of the secular vandals made such programs less impactful. People are fearful of attacks by anti-Islamic forces nationwide. But in 10-20 years situation may rise to alarming situation.