

A New World View and the Promises of Tabligh: An Ethnographic Study

Thesis Presented By

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Abstract:

The Tablighi Jamaat is a self-proclaimed non-political, transnational Islamic reform movement which was initiated in India in the 1920's. The founder of the Tablighi Jamaat, Moulana Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944), founded the Tablighi movement in India with a desire to make the Muslims of that time into “true Muslims”. The word 'Tabligh' means the transmission of a message, and the word 'Jamaat' means a group of people. The focus of this movement is to invite and communicate with people to improve their faith. This movement is solely focused to preach the true idea of Islam among the Muslim community, it does not preach outside of the Muslim population. In Bangladesh, the movement has a following of millions.

Preaching is one of the core concepts of this movement. The main goal of this movement is to establish a spiritual closeness with Allah. Which can be obtained by preaching. Thus, it is an integral part of the movement. The preaching journey includes both activities with other people in one's own locality and missionary journeys to other places. One must take part in preaching campaign. The campaigns has different time span. One must go for a 3 day campaign every month, on a 40 day campaign every year, and a 4 months campaign once in their lifetime.

The focus of my thesis would be to provide an ethnographical account of the preaching method of Tablighi Jamaat. The paper is designed to give an overview of the life of an active Tablighi Jamaat member, at the same time provide an insight into what propelled them to join this movement.

A New World View and the Promises of Tabligh: An Ethnographic Study

Introduction:

In Bangladesh, religion is an ambiguous affair. The state claims to be founded on a secular framework. However, Islam is listed as the state religion. This poses a question about what the true role of religion in the state is. Again, having claimed to be founded on a secular perspective, religion has played an important role in the political arena. Currently, we see that hardliner Islamist now occupy the political sphere of Bangladesh. How did this shift take place.

From being a secular or "ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ" (the term used in Bengali) state, Bangladesh became a state which promotes Islam as the state religion. The shift is really remarkable. The constant identity flux between the cultural identity and the religious identity acted as the fuel for the epic shift. In turn, the crisis of identity in Bangladesh was used as a tool in politics to gain control and power by the parties trying to capture power.

When religious groups come into the political sphere, they become rigid and tough. They follow an agenda as any political party, and the religious affiliation is just another tool. In contrast, Tablighi Jamaat is an apolitical movement. This doesn't claim any political affiliation. I want to understand why people are getting involved with Tabligh and what is motivating them, and what pursues them to change their lifestyle. In this study, I want to narrowly focus on the preaching technique of Tablighi Jamaat because it offers an insight into the dynamic between the preacher and the recruit.

In Bangladesh, we need more understanding of religious identity. In recent years, scholars argue that a vibrant Islamic public sphere has emerged in Bangladesh (Ali Riaz, Madijal Islam) and globally (Charles hirchkind). There is a secular narrative, yet a strong presence of religious ideologies. The internal dynamic is highly critical for an understanding of the force of that public sphere. This study is a narrow approach to a broader narrative of religious change. Form an anthropological point of view, this topic intrigued me because it offers an insight into the inner dynamics of the religious sphere. Anthropology as a discipline tries to understand society's various issues and complexities. This study will give me a chance to understand the underlying mechanisms of a religious reform movement, which asserts its position as an apolitical player.

Usually, there are two sets of narratives in any religious movement. One, from the point of view of the preacher. The preacher has a journey, a spiritual call. This journey often starts from a point when they were not at all religious or spiritual. This narrative helps the recruits to connect with the preacher. The other narrative is from the recruit's point of view. They often feel alienated or out of their element before being recruited. I am interested to see how these two narratives unfold and interact in the case of Tablighi Jamaat. I want to investigate at are the spiritual support behind this preaching. The recruits themselves undergo a drastic change. I want to see what changes they are going through and how they are coping with the changes. In summary, I want to analyze how they are being preached and what they make out of that preaching.

From a personal perspective, the huge popularity of this non-political and reformist movement has always interested me, especially the preaching technique that enables people to go on a journey. My personal connection with the Tablighi Jamaat made me curious to look into this topic further. My father joined the Tablighi Jamaat when he was a teenager. He has been active

since then. Ever since my childhood, his lifestyle made me curious, and I wanted to learn about Tablighi lifestyles in great detail.

The focus of my thesis would be to provide an ethnographic account of the preaching method of Tablighi Jamaat. The paper is designed to give an overview of the life of active Tablighi Jamaat members, at the same time provide an insight into what propelled them to join this movement. In addition to introduction and conclusion, the thesis contains four substantive sections. The first part of this paper looks into the background of Tablighi Jamaat and the position it holds in Bangladesh. The second part deals with how people integrated the teaching of Tablighi Jamaat in their day to day life. The third and the final part is dedicated to understanding how the concept of Tablighi Jamaat appeals to the new recruits.

Methodological Consideration:

Religion is and always has been a matter of fascination for me. From my childhood I was intrigued to understand the underlying mechanisms of religion. The anthropology program presented the opportunity to go above and beyond the common understanding of religion and analyze it from an objective position. This paper is a narrow attempt to explore a broad topic.

I have learned that when a researcher is doing ethnographic research, they must have very open approach and be passionate about the topic and the informants. Otherwise, understanding or capturing every small detail becomes very difficult being a third eye. Being unbiased is another major role for the researcher. Sometimes belonging to a privileged position might cause little harm while contacting with research population for getting information. Thus, I decided not to reveal background during my fieldwork. Moreover, I got myself ready for several days before going to the field so that I can be one of them. Before going to the field work, I did my secondary research, I read several articles and books on Tabligh and the lifestyle of Tabligh. I familiarized with many terms that are frequently used by the members in their conversation, most of them were Urdu and Hindi. I also went over the book Fazaele Amal, which is the main book of Tablighi movement. I did not want myself to be accepted as a third person. I kept all my pre assumptions and judgments away while going to the field. Thus it helped me to mingle and blend with them which was very necessary for any research finding.

This study is an ethnographic account of the preaching method of the Tablighi Jamaat in Dhaka. The study was done over a span of three months. I used common ethnographic tools like participants observation. I conducted several in-depth interviews with new recruits as well as

members who have been active for years. To gather insight and understand the experience of the participants, I used a semi structured questionnaire. I was careful not to use leading questions.

During this time I attended several weekly gusts and daily Taalim. I also attended the 2019 Bishwa Ijtema in Tungi, and went on a three day Dawah journey. During my field work, I interviewed a total of 12 members. Most of them were new recruits. While on Ijtema and the three day Dawah Journey, I analyzed the sermons and taleems. I took part in several Tashkil session, and analyzed the preaching style. My main focus was on the preaching style. For my secondary data, I collected and analyzed writing of both anthropology and religious scholars.

As an anthropology student, I have learned that negotiation is one of the most important things for conducting a qualitative research. Reflexivity is another important point that an ethnographer should encourage. Reflexivity while interviewing and gathering data is important because it helps to minimize the ethnographer's own biases. While developing my questionnaire I used reflexivity to minimize the effect my presumptions and biases might have on my findings. While I was interviewing some participants, they were skeptical about talking to me about Tabligh. Most of the participants opened up after I explained what I was doing, however, some were totally unwilling to talk.

In my opinion, an ethnographer's duty is to have the ability of identifying his or her own position to the group he/she is studying. Having the thought of "studying a particular group" might create power relationship between ethnographer and subject. Hence, involvement and trying to be a part was more convenient for me in terms of getting information.

Existing knowledge on the Tablighi Jamaat

This part is dedicated to discussing the previous studies on this topic. Previous studies on this topic are few and far between, especially in the context of Bangladesh. The number of studies done on Tablighi Jamaat includes the book by Yoginder Sikand (The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at, 2002), a book (Becoming 'Good Muslim': The Tablighi Jamaat in the UK and Bangladesh) and a PhD research paper by Bulbul Siddiqi, articles by Barbara Metcalf (2003), Mohammad Masud Rana (বাংলাদেশে তাবলীগ জামাতঃ অংশ গ্রহণ ও ধর্মচর্চায় বৈপরীত্য, ২০১৮), Hasan Ashraf and Suboran Camelia (Dhormo and Social and Cultural Construction of Wellbeing in Bangladesh: case of tablig jamat), Bulbul Siddiqi (Purification of Self: Ijtema as a New Islamic Pilgrimage, 2010).

Yoginder in his book focuses on how Tabligh Jamaat originated and its journey. He studied Tabligh Jamaat on 3 different context, in the context of India, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom. His focus was on how Tabligh spread through these borders. Apart from the development of Tablighi Jamaat, he also argued about the different aspects of life inside Tabligh. He talked about the gender aspect around Tablighi Jamaat. He argues that Tablighi Jamaat prioritizes women's participation to establish the practice of Islamic tradition in family. He also disapproves Tablighi Jamaat's claim to be apolitical. He argues that Tabligh Jamaat's works are more political in nature than it claims. Their work at the grassroots level of transforming lives leads to a certain activities and an aspirations that are political and similar to what many political organizations do. The fact that they shy away from questions around the state, governments and governmentalities, does not mean that Tabligh missions are devoid of political content.

Metcalf in her articles discussed how Tabligh has become an influential transnational Islamic revivalist movement. Her studies also deal with how the teaching of Tablighi Jamaat influenced and in terms, changed the life of its followers. She also discussed the dawah technique of Tabligh. She discusses how Tablighi texts have internalized Hadith and how this affects the followers. She refers to the followers as 'living the Hadith'. Metcalf's arguments are mostly centered on how Tablighi life influence/changes the lives of the followers. She argues that, the follower of Tablighi Jamaat internalize Hadith because it is one of the core concepts of the movement. She also argues that, while implementing Hadith in their daily life, the followers memorize numerous Hadiths, and thus can refer to these Hadiths without going back to the main text. Metcalf also analyzes the gender aspect of Tablighi movement. She argues that, Tablighi families are less hierarchical than traditional Muslim families in south Asia, as Tabligh asserts a set of duties to be shared by both men and women. She also argues that, Tabligh provides female members of the movement with greater access to Islam, as the movement requires women to meet with other women.

Bulbul Siddiqi is actually the first one who analyzed Tablighi Jamaat in Bangladesh from an ethnographic perspective. He also analyzed the nature of the movement in Bangladesh in contrast with the nature of the movement in the United Kingdom. His research paper deals with the details and the nuances of this massive movement. He argues that, in Bangladesh the success of tabligh is heavily dependent on the religious reform aspect of the movement. On the other hand, the success of the movement in the UK is founded on social aspects like ability to provide solutions to the insecurity, complexity, and frustration derived from a westernized lifestyle. He in his article he discussed how the Ijtema plays a role in the life of Bengali Muslims, and how it made its place as a new form of pilgrimage. He argues that the Ijtema obtained an image of new

pilgrimage because unlike Hajj (the most prominent Islamic pilgrimage), Ijtema is not a class based pilgrimage [he argues that Hajj is a classed pilgrimage as it is required to have a certain level of wealth to attend Hajj. On the other hand, Ijtema does not have any of these prerequisites.]. He also argues that, Urs, the traditional form of pilgrimage in Bangladesh, lost its popularity after the emergence of Ijtema. He adds that, the participation of people from outside Bangladesh has also played a role in increasing the popularity and acceptability of Ijtema.

Rana on the other hand, views Tabligh as a new form of observing Islam. He argues that Tabligh helped Islam to reinvigorate in the changed context of Bangladesh. He argues that in the context of Bangladesh the openness of the movement and simple representation of Islamic rules and regulations resulted in diversified understanding of Islam. He in his article also discusses how the movement is intertwined with the life of the participants. He argues that by participating in Tabligh, the social, political and family life on an individual changes immensely.

This study is a narrow attempt at the bigger picture attempting to understand the underlying mechanism of the preaching style of Tabligh, how the events changes an individual and how they deal with their new life. In this study I tried to bring out the journey of a new member of Tablighi Jamaat. This study resonates with Metcalf's and Rana's findings. Yet, this study is focused mostly on how the individuals interpret the teaching of Tablighi Jamaat.

Part one: Background and history of *Tablighi Jamaat*.

What is *Tablighi Jamaat*?

The Tablighi Jamaat is a religious movement which initiated in India in the 1920s. It is a non-political, transnational Islamic reform movement (Siddiqi 2010). The founder of the Tablighi Jamaat, Moulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (1885-1944), initiated the Tablighi movement in India of with a desire to make the Muslims of that time into “true Muslims”. The movement he started in the 1920's was known as '*Tarika-e-Iman*' or the movement of faith (Sikand, 2002). How and when the name '*Tablighi Jamaat*' came to use is not documented. The word 'Tabligh' means the transmission of a message, and the word 'Jamaat' means a group of people. As the focus of this movement is to disseminate the message of Islam, the followers might have started to refer to themselves as 'Tablighi Jamaat'. Many people described this movement in many deferent ways. Metcalf (2003) describes it as "a movement of encapsulation". Siddiqi (2010) calls it as "a transnational Islamic reform movement". Huq (2010) describes it as a "neutral" movement. Many Tablighi Jamaat activists describes it as a mobile training center for '*Deen*' (religion). This movement is solely focused to preach what they consider to be the true idea of Islam among the Muslim community. Mawlana Ilyas started this movement from the urge to make the Muslims of India into 'true Muslims'. His call was "*হে মুসলমান! তোমরা মুসলমান হও*" (Muslims! Become Muslims) (Rana, 2018). However, the movement is solely focused to preach among the Muslim population. The members do not preach outside of the Muslim population. The movement has a following of millions.

The movement is focused on trying to pursue people to live by the rules of the Quran and Sunnah. The activists tries to inspire their fellow members by referring to the Quran and Sunnah.

One of the most referred quotes from the Quran is:

"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be successful."

(The Quran, 3:104)

This verse refers to a group of people among others who will convey the message of Allah to others. In the Islamic faith, it is believed that God sent many prophets to different communities at different times. However, the line of prophecy is ended with the last prophet, Mohammad (s.a.s); there will be no more prophets. However, verses like these indicate that the duty to spread the message is now upon the followers. The members of Tablighi Jamaat interprets these verses in such a way that always indicates them as the one who are on the right path. They call their work "নবীওয়াল কাাজ" (the work of prophets). Prophet Mohammad (S.A.S) said:

"নিশ্চয়ই এই উম্মতের শেষের দিকে এমন জামায়াত তৈরী হবে, যারা প্রথম জামানার লোকদের ন্যায় সওয়াবের অধিকারী হবে। তারা সৎ কাজের আদেশ দিবে এবং অসৎ কাজ থেকে নিজেদের বিরত রাখবে। আর তারা ফিতনাকারীদের সাথে (হাত দিয়ে বা জবান দিয়ে, বা কলম দিয়ে) মুকাবিলা করবে।"

(বাইহাকী শরীফ)

Translation: *"And surely there will be a group among my followers in the last era who will be rewarded as the first of my followers. They will advocate for good deeds, and keep others away from dishonesty. And they will fight with those who create chaos (either by*

force, or by words or by writing)."

(Baihaki sharif)

This Hadith indicate to a group of people in the last era of earth, () who will preach goodness, purity and the truth. And they will be rewarded as those who helped to spread Islam in the bigining. Tablighi Jamaat followers uses this verse to refer to themselves as this fortunate group of people.

Tabligh Jamaat has an open non-political standpoint. The members are always actively expressing this non-political identity. Other Islamic political parties however question the non-political status of Tablighi Jamaat (Rana, 2018). Some scholars and some critics of Tablighi Jamaat criticize that Tablighi Jamaat is inactive during any crisis moment of Islam. Tablighi Jamaat is more focused on the afterlife rather the worldly life; while Islam puts great emphasis on both. Veer (2001) on the other hand argues that the 'non-political' status of Tabligh is actually a tool to construct their selfhood and identity. This is also a tool to expand their operation and make it more acceptable to people. He also argues that the 'non-political' stand of Tabligh is non-existing and the self-identity Tabligh creates is surely political one. Again, the goal of Tablighi Jamaat is to bring bigger social changes through self-change (Metcalf, 1998) and any organization that has similar goal is never truly apolitical. This brings forward a discourse between a linier Islamic tradition and a localized Islam (Rana, 2018). This discourse needs to be kept in mind while trying to understand Tablighi Jamaat.

Tablighi Jamaat is based on 6 main attributes, known as the six seefats of Tabligh (তাবলীগের ৬ উসুল) or the six numbers of Tabligh. The book containing and explaining these main attributes is called 'ফাজায়েলে আ'মাল' ('Fazaele amal'). This is considered as the main book of Tablighi Jamaat.

The book is written by Mawlana Mohammad Zakariah. The six main attributes are, Kolema, Salat, Ilm & Zikr, Ekraam al-muslim, and correction of intention and Dawah & Tabligh. The first point is kolema, which is the basic article of faith that makes one Muslim. The kolema goes like: There is no other to be praised except Allah, and Mohammad (s.a.s) is His rasool. The second point is Salat, which is the daily five times prayer. The third point is Ilm & Zikir, Ilm means knowledge, and zikir means remembrance of Allah. The fourth point, Ekraam al-muslim means that putting the benefit of the Muslim brotherhood above ones' self. The fifth point is Correction of intention, means sincerity towards Allah; whatever we do we should do only for the cause of Allah. The final point is Dawah & Tabligh, which is fulfilling the duty to invite and convey Islam to people of this world. A member of the Tablighi movement is expected to obey these six points along with all the other duties Islam poses.

'*Dawah*' or Preaching is one of the core concepts of this movement. '*Dawah*' means to call or to invite. In this particular case, invitation for people to come back to what is perceived as proper Islamic observance. The main goal of this movement is to establish a spiritual closeness with Allah, facilitated through preaching. Thus, preaching is an integral part of the movement. The preaching journey includes both activities with other people in one's own locality and missionary journeys to other places. One must take part in a preaching campaign. The campaigns have a different time span. One must go for a 3-day campaign every month, on a 40-day campaign every year, and a 4 months campaign once in their lifetime. During these missionary journeys, the Jamaat stays in a mosque. There is another kind of missionary journey, this is for the women members. This type of journey is called Masturat Jamaat. Women members can go on Dawah journey either with their father, brother or husband. They are not allowed to travel alone with a male Jamaat. The male members of the Masturat Jamaat stays in the mosque as usual. On the

other hand, the female members stay at the home of a fellow Tablighi brother. While the Jamaat is staying, no male members are allowed to enter that household.

Apart from the missionary journey, or as they call it, *Dawah* journey, a member of Tablighi Jamaat must complete some regular tasks. These tasks are bounded in their own area. These are called 'মসজিদ ওয়ারি পাঁচ কাজ' (the five tasks). These five tasks are:

- Dedicating two and a half hour of every day to inspire people to join Tablighi Jamaat.
- Attending the *Taleem* (study) sessions every day.
- Attending the *Mashohara* (daily meeting).
- Attending two *Gusth* (preaching visit) every week.
- Going on a three day *Dawah* Journey every month.

These five tasks are designed to maintain the practice of *Dawah*. Every member of Tablighi Jamaat is expected to attend these tasks regularly. The tasks are observed in the same way all over the world.

Apart from these, there is an annual meet-up called the *Ijtema*. *Ijtema* is not a compulsory meet-up, rather it is a voluntary one. *Ijtema* which takes place every year in Dhaka, Bangladesh is considered the largest. People from different countries come to join the *Ijtema*. In Bangladesh it is known as *Biswa Ijtema*. This is the second largest gathering of people of Muslim faith, next to *Hajj*. For the Tablighi Jamaat members as well as those who are not actively engaged "*Ijtema* acts as a significant pilgrimage outside *Hajj*." (Siddiqui 2010). According to many authors, the first *Ijtema* that was organized in 1930's in Delhi. Moulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi, the founder of Tablighi Jamaat, regularly used to take part in *Ijtema*. In 1954, for the first time *Ijtema* was held in Dhaka. The venue was at *lalbagh shahi mosque* at firsts, but due to the

growing popularity, it was shifted to Tungi in 1965. It has been regularly organized there since then.

Tablighi Jamaat is managed under a democratic system. Tablighi Jamaat is ran and coordinated through centers called Markaz. The international headquarters of Tablighi Jamaat is situated at Nijamuddin Markaz, in South Delhi, India. Every country where Tabligh operates has a country headquarters. The country headquarters of Bangladesh is situated in Kakrail Markaz, Dhaka. There are also regional Markaz, which organize and coordinate regional activities. The supervisor of the movement is called Ameer. The first Ameer of Tablighi Jamaat was Mawlana Mohammad Ilyas. The Ameer of Tablighi Jamaat is appointed for life. The rank of Ameer is based on quality of faith. Now, the Ameer is appointed by the decision *Shura* committee and elders of the Tablighi Jamaat. In 1992 Mawlana Inaam ul Hasan, the then Ameer of Tabligh, established a ten member *Shura* committee to appoint the next Ameer. Before the *Shura* committee the regional Ameer could make some regional decisions; now everything is controlled by the central *Shura* committee. The current Ameer of Tablighi Jamaat is Mawlana Muhammad Saad. However, there have been polarizing among the Tablighi Jamaat regarding some of Mawlana Saad's statements. He declared himself as the final decision maker of the *Shura* committee, and he allegedly gave some questionable statements regarding The Qur'an and Hadith (Rana, 2018).

The origin of Tablighi Jamaat:

Tabligh as a non-political religious reform movement has a big following base. The movement is active in almost 223 countries over the world, and it has approximately 150 million followers (Rana, 2018). There are many theories on when and how Tablighi Jamaat was founded; among them two are dominant. The first theory suggests that, Tablighi Jamaat was the brainchild of Mawlana Mohammad Ilyas, who initiated the movement in the 1920s. This theory implies that Tabligh is more of an Islamic reform movement and points towards the socio political atmosphere in India as a catalyst for the popularity of Tablighi Jamaat (Rana 2018). On the other hand, the second theory suggests that Tablighi Jamaat is not a contemporary movement, rather, it was pioneered by prophet Mohammad (S.A.S), and it was made *Faraz* (mandatory) for the followers of Islamic faith. This theory is based on the idea that prophet Mohammad (S.A.S) took part in Tablighi work himself, and he promoted it with great emphasis. S.M. Salehin in his book 'কুরআন ও হাদীসের আলোকে তাবলীগের প্রশ্ন-উত্তর' (Quran O haditser aloke tabligi proshner uttor) mentioned that during the lifetime of Prophet Mohammad (S.A.S) he sent 123 Jamaats to promote Dwin in Mecca and Medina. According to this theory, Tabligh is not an Islamic reform movement that originated in 1920's (Rana 2018).

Mawlana Mohammad Ilyas was born in 1885 (1302 Hijri). He was a student of Rashid Ahmed Gangohi. He was also a student of Darul Uloom Deoband. Darul Uloom Deoband is the Darul Uloom Islamic School in India where the Sunni Deobandi Islamic movement began. There is two different theories regarding how Mawlana Mohammad Ilyas got the inspiration to start the Tablighi Jamaat. The first theory supports that he was instructed in his dreams to start the Tabligh movement; the second theory suggests that he decided to start the Tablighi movement to make his teacher Rashid Ahmed Gangohi's dream come true (Masood, 2000). The Tablighi

movement started in 1926, after mawlana Mohammad Ilyas returned from his second Hajj. To make this movement easier and more acceptable to the masses, he also implemented some policies. He sent a Jamaat of 10 people to Mewat (a north Indian district). In 1938 he went to Mecca to meet the Badshah of Saudi Arabia; thus Tabligh started operating in Saudi Arabia. The movement picked up pace in the 1940's. During this time period Jamaat entered Bangladesh and Pakistan (Rana 2018). In the 1970's Tabligh reached Europe, Africa and North America. The global head quarter of Tabligh is situated in Nizamuddin Markaz in Delhi, India.

Tabligh in Bangladesh:

Religion occupies a special place among the cultures of South Asia. Bangladesh is no exception. Religion is held at a higher place in both social and political sphere in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country. The biggest Tablighi congregation, Biswa Ijtema is held here; in which millions of people from both home and abroad take part. The following base of Tabligh in Bangladesh numbers in millions. There are a few theories on how Tablighi Jamaat reached Bangladesh. One of the theories suggest that in the 1940's a Jamaat was sent to Bangladesh (Bengal province of British India). Afterwards the movement kept growing in Bengal, making Kakrail Mosque in Dhaka the country base. The Kakrail Mosque in Dhaka is the country headquarter of Bangladesh. Another theory supports that Tabligh reached Bengal in the 7th century with the help of Prophet Mohammad's (S.A.S) maternal uncle Sa'd Ibn Abi Wakkas (R). Abi Wakkas (R) was tasked with spreading Islam to China. On his travels, he made a stop in Chattagram port and then reached China (Rana, 2018).

To understand the position of Tablighi Jamaat in Bangladesh, first we need to understand the role religion plays in this country. Islamisation process of Bengal has a great effect on the place

religion holds in contemporary Bangladeshi society. Islam reached Bengal in 8th century. However, the process of Islamisation picked up pace in the early 13th century. The Turkish and Mughal empires acted as a catalyst for this. However, Bengal was sort of neglected as a region in the early days of Turk-Afghan rule. The new masters were not interested in converting the local people, as they feared that it might lead to rebellion. Mughal emperor Sultan Husain Shah was the first to feel the need to integrate Bengal into the equation. This alongside with the tax-free tenure of the Sufis led to the mass Islamisation (Eaton, 1993). During Mughal rule, Sufi holy men were given the privilege of bringing underdeveloped forests into civilization on the condition of building a mosque for the community. The Sufis played a huge role in the islamisation process of Bengal. The Islamisation of Bengal introduced a new caste system. Unlike the caste system in Hinduism, this caste system is not very prominent; yet its presence was strong. The Islamisation produced two classes of Muslims, the *Ashrafs* (aristocrats, finding their lineage to the Turks and Afghans) and the *Atrafs* (newly converted peasant class). The Islamisation of Bengal however was not a straightforward and linear process; rather it was a syncretistic process. Islam in Bengal intertwined with Hinduism and became the religious practice of the masses. The 19th and 20th century Bengal experienced quite a few religious reform movements, Tablighi Jamaat is one of them.

Bangladesh emerged as a secular country in 1971 after a nine month long liberation war. Previously known as East Pakistan, Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan since the partition of British India in 1947. The partition was made on the basis of religious majority, and Pakistan was the Muslim majoritarian country. However, the alliance did not sustain more than two decades. After a long period of discrimination and exploitation, Bangladesh declared war against Pakistan. Bangladesh became independent on 16th December 1971, after a nine month long war.

The four fundamental principles of the republic was nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. In spite of being founded on a secular notion, religion quickly occupied a significant place in the political sphere. Today we can see hardliner religious parties at play in the nations politic. Parties like Jamaat-e-Islami and Hefajat-e-Islam are active today and have a significant sway over the national politics. Ali Riaz (2012) in his article "Inconvenient truths about Bangladeshi politics." argues that the reason for the rise of hardliner Islamist in the political sphere results from "the crisis of hegemony of the ruling bloc". Analyzing the history of Bangladesh's political field for the past five decades will help us to understand the claim.

In the first independent regime of Bangladesh, President Sheikh Mujib introduced the idea of secularism and started a process of secularizing the state. However, Islam as an identity was established way before the birth of Bangladesh and the secularization process was not accepted easily. This is identified as the cause behind the Islamization of the political sphere by many political analysts. The next fifteen years after Sheikh Mujib's death is marked as military dictator regime. However, General Zia, who preceded Sheikh Mujib after a series of coup and contrecoup, identified this issue and used it to his own benefit. Zia appealed to that very base by introducing "Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim" and slowly integrating the Islamists like Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), who were banned from operating in Bangladesh by Sheikh Mujib Government. Zia also introduced many initiatives that changed the religious and political landscape, an initiative such as state patronizing the madrasa students, introducing the ministry of religious affairs and more. After the assassination of Zia, Lt. General H.M. Ershad came to power. He also appealed to the same base by introducing Islam as the state religion. However, it failed to work as he did not have the Islamist backing, despite having used religion as a political tool. The dictator rule ended with the pro-democracy movement by AL, BNP and JI. From this point onwards, Islamist

parties became an important aspect of the political sphere of this 'secular' nation. For example, JI played an important role in king making since 1990. As the JI gained more and more support and vote base, the alliance became more and more important. Islam had been and also is being used as a powerful ideological tool. From using “Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim” in the constitution to declare Islam as the state religion, from Sheik Hasina covering her head to BNP's collaboration with JI, all was to use the religious sentiment as ideological support.

From this analysis, we can understand the role religion plays in the political sphere in Bangladesh. Whenever religious agencies come in to the political sphere, they become a hardliner political party. They undertake political agenda as any other parties. Now, Tablighi Jamaat has an open non-political agenda; thou it is criticized by some scholars. Some scholars argue that the apolitical nature of the Tablighi Jamaat is the reason why it is so popular. Again, the path of Tablighi Jamaat is viewed as a very prestigious path. The participants are promised the highest honor and reward in the afterlife. This duty is compared with the duties of the prophets. The fact that Tablighi Jamaat and the followers are given so respect is another reason behind the mass popularity of the movement. Many participants of the movement refer to this verse from Al Quran:

"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoy what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient." (Al Quran: 3:110)

This is interpreted in such a way that it portrays the Tablighi Jamaat as the best example for mankind. Verses like this from Quran and Hadith is used to express the glory of the movement.

Another point is, Tablighi Jamaat do not support hierarchy. The members are all treated equally. No matter from which walk of life they belong to, all members are treated as brothers. This aspect makes Tablighi Jamaat more acceptable to the masses. The third chapter of this paper discusses in detail about what makes Tablighi Jamaat this much popular.

Part two: Teaching of Tablighi Jamaat in day to day life

Tablighi movement is essentially a religious reform movement. Mawlana Mohammad Ilyas initiated this movement with a desire to make the Muslims of that time into “true Muslims”. The duties a person takes on after joining Tablighi Jamaat has a big effect on their day to day life. As mentioned earlier, Tablighi Jamaat is focused on preaching the true meaning of Islam to the Muslim community. To achieve that goal, the members of the movement has to undertake several duties. This part of the paper is focused on how these duties affect the participants and how they intertwine them in their life.

The Tablighi six number:

Tablighi Jamaat is based on six main tasks, these are known as the six Seefats or six number of Tabligh. The book 'Fazaele amal' explains these duties and the benefits of observing them. The book is written by Mawlana Mohammad Zakariah. Fazaele amal is also considered as the main hand book for Tablighi Jamaat. The six points are one of the most discussed topics in a sermon. Some of the points of Tablighi six number overlaps with the five pillars of Islam; and question might rise whether Tabligh Jamaat is a newer version of Islam or not. It is important to understand that these six points or Seefats are different than the five pillars of Islam. The five pillars of Islam are: Kolema, Salat, fasting during the month of Ramadan, Zakat, and Hajj. These five duties are Faraz (one must observe to be a Muslim). On the other hand, the Tablighi six number or six Seefats are the six qualities that must be present in a member of Tablighi Jamaat. The Six points of Tablighi Jamaat are: Kolema, Salat, Ilm & Zikr, Ekraam al-muslim, and correction of intention and Dawah & Tabligh. A member of the Tablighi movement is expected to obey these six points along with all the other duties Islam poses.

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The first two qualities of Tablighi Jamaat overlaps with the first two pillars of Islam; Kolema and Salat. The first point is kolema, which is the basic article of faith that makes one Muslim. The kolema goes like, لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (There is no other to be praised except Allah, and Mohammad (s.a.s) is His rasool). Every Muslim must have unquestionable faith on the Kolema. In Tablighi Jamaat, Kolema is given a high priority; as it is the base of Islamic faith. one must always have the kolema in their heart, they should chant this as often they can and with proper faith. The second point is Salat, which is the daily five times prayer. A Muslim is required to pray five times a day, with proper etiquette and on a set timetable. The five time salat is what makes the outline of a Muslim's day. Tabligh puts emphasis on going to the mosque and praying

with the Jamaat. For Mawlana Mohammad Ilyas, regular prayer is second most important thing, after Kolema. Prayer helps to forbid a person from bad deeds.

The third quality of a Tablighi Jamaat member is Ilm and Zikir. Ilm means knowledge and Zikir means remembrance. In the context of Tablighi Jamaat, Ilm or knowledge is referred to as the knowledge that help someone to stay on the religious path as well as the knowledge of what is required to lead life in the religious path. Gaining knowledge of Islam is also given a top priority in Tablighi Jamaat. The sermons and Taleems are designed for the members to gain Ilm. In almost every sermon the speaker stresses over the necessity of Ilm. Expressing the necessity of knowledge, a participant Jalal (23) said, "একটা সাইকেলে যেমন চালক দরকার, তেমন সামনের চাকা ও দরকার, পেছনের চাকা ও দরকার। তো সামনের চাকা হচ্ছে তাবলীগ, আর পেছনের চাকা হচ্ছে এলামে। আর চালক হচ্ছে নাফসের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই। আমার কাছে তাবলীগের পথ আছে, আমার নাফসের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধের ও ইচ্ছা আছে, কিন্তু আমি যে ভালো বা খারাপ কাজ করতেছি, এই বোধটা যদি আমার মাঝে না আসে, তাহলে কিভাবে আগাব? তাই তিনটাই দরকার, সামনের দিকে পথ দেখাবে তাবলীগ, পেছন থেকে শক্তি দিবে এলেম, আর চালক হিসাবে থাকবে নাফসে বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধ। (A cycle needs a rider, a front and back wheel. The front wheel is Tabligh, the rear wheel is Ilm, and the rider is someone with the will to fight against desire. I have the guidance of Tablighi Jamaat, I have the will to fight against desire, but if I cannot distinguish between good and bad, I cannot go ahead. So, we need the guidance of Tablighi Jamaat, we need the will to fight against our desire, and we need Ilm to give us power.)"

Many members of Tabligh feel that gaining religious knowledge is more important than studying other subjects. Many members prefer to send their children to Madrasa, rather than general schools. One participant Salahuddin (33) expressed: "আমার দুই বাচ্চা। বড় ছেলে আগে বাংলা স্কুলে পড়ত, এখন তাকে হাফেজি পড়াচ্ছি। আর ছোট মেয়ে এখনো ছোট, তাকেও ইসলামী লাইনে পড়ানোর ইচ্ছা আছে। (I have two kids. My eldest son used to study in a Bengali school, now he is studying Hafezi. My younger one is a daughter, I want to enroll her in madrasa as well)". The second part of this quality is Zikir, Zikir

means remembrance of Allah. Zikir is also held at a high position in Tablighi Jamaat. The highest degree of zikr is that a believer should be entirely devoted to Allah, and should never forget Him. This standard of zikr is achieved by constant spiritual exercise, and by continuous remembrance of Allah. When asked about Zikir, Abdur Rahman (44) explained, "জিকির হচ্ছে ইমান কে চার্জ করার পাওয়ার হাউজ। (Zikir is like a power house, or a battery. It keeps the faith charged)".

The fourth point is Ekram-ul-Muslimin, which means putting the need of a Muslim brother before one's own. The gist of this lesson is that every Muslim should realize the rights of other Muslims, and should observe them practically, according to the order of the classes and ranks of his brethren in Islam. Particularly, he should have great regard for the honor of a Muslim, who deserves reverence by all means, for he has the light of faith in his heart. This particular quality or teaching of Tabligh is one of the reasons that Tabligh Jamaat has a huge following base. The members of Tabligh Jamaat call each other "সাব্বী" (companion) or "brother". The members respects the other members and their opinion, regardless of their worldly position or rank.

The fifth quality is Correction of intention. It indicates that, whenever a person is intended to do good deeds, they must do it for Allah, not for any worldly rewards. Also, Muslims should have total faith in the rewards Allah promised for every good deed. This quality is directed towards purifying the mind. Tablighi Jamaat is more focused towards the after world and the rewards of after world. This attribute hints that more. All the rewards for this attribute is promised to be given in the afterlife.

The final quality is Dawat-e-Tabligh. Dawat means to invite or to call. Dawat-e-Tabligh means to call towards Tabligh. Dawat-e-Tabligh mainly has two versions, one is the weekly gust that takes place in the local mosque, and another is missionary journey. There are five duties (মসজিদ

ওয়ারী পাঁচ কাজ) that a member of the Tablighi Jamaat should observe, Dawat is one of these five duties. Weekly gust takes place twice in a week. Gust usually is held on a Thursday or Friday after Asar prayer (the evening prayer). The members divide themselves in two groups. One group stays in the mosque and listen to Boyan (sermon). One member is chosen by all the other members to deliver boyan. These sermons usually cover topics like the six points of Tabligh, the benefits of joining Tabligh and so on. The second group goes out in the streets. They invite people to join the sermon that is going on in the mosque. The second group is mostly led by a local. The leader again is chosen by other members. This group goes around the block and invites people on the road to attend the sermon. The second type of Dawat is a missionary journey. Missionary journeys has different time span. A member of Tabligh is supposed to go on a 3 day's journey every month, a 40 day's journey or chilla every year and on a yearlong journey in their lifetime. The missionary journeys are held at a high place in Tablighi Jamaat. The members of Tabligh view these journeys as a chance to make their faith strong, not as a journey to recruit others. When asked, Abdur Rahman (44) explained: "মানুষের জন্মের পর থেকে একটা রূপান্তর শুরু হয়। মানুষের ৪০ দিন পর পর একটা পরিবর্তন হয়, তার রক্ত মাংস সব পরিবর্তন হয়। এই দিকে লক্ষ্য করে হাদিস-কোরআনের ভিত্তিতে এটা রাখা হইছে। এটা জরুরী না। কউ যদি ৩৯ দিন সময় দেয় ও সেটাও সমস্যা না। এর উদ্দেশ্য হচ্ছে আমার ঈমান-আমল কে ঠিক করা। তাবলিগের মূল উদ্দেশ্য হল, আমার, আমাদের না, আমার নিজের ঈমান আর আমল কে ঠিক করা। এর জন্য যত সময় লাগবে। এর জন্য সময় লাগানো। আল্লাহর রাস্তায় না গেলে ঈমান বাড়ে না, এই জন্য আল্লাহর রাস্তায় যাওয়া। (The process of change starts after a person is born. In every 40 days there is a change in their body, their blood. Keeping this in mind and basing on Hadith and Quran the 40 days limit is set. The time span is not important. If someone spends 39 days, it is still okay. The focus of this journey is to make my faith stronger. The main focus of Tabligh is to make 'My' faith stronger, not 'Our' faith. And we should spend as

much time as we need to achieve this. If we don't go on a journey for Allah, our faith will not be stronger, this is why we go on journeys.)".

The six points of Tabligh encapsulates all the areas of a person's lifestyle. From Kolema to Dawat-e-Tabligh all the six points is directed towards helping a member to stay on the true path of Islam. The members take these as a guideline to lead a pious life. These six points are the first things that a person is taught when they join Tablighi Jamaat. Every member try to abide it with total faith.

The five tasks (মসজিদ ওয়ারী পাঁচ কাজ)

Apart from the missionary journey, or as they call it, Dawah journey, a member of Tablighi Jamaat must complete some regular tasks. These tasks are bounded in their own area. These are called 'মসজিদ ওয়ারী পাঁচ কাজ' (the five tasks). These five tasks are:

- Dedicating two and a half hour of every day
- Attending the *Taleem* (study) sessions every day.
- Attending the *Mashohara* (daily meeting).
- Attending two *Gusth* (preaching visit) every week.
- Going on a three day *Dawah* Journey every month.

These five tasks are designed to maintain the practice of Dawah. Every member of Tablighi Jamaat is expected to attend these tasks regularly. The tasks are observed in the same way all over the world. These tasks acts as an institution for the members. These are designed in such a way that the members who observe these tasks are in a recitative practice circle.

Going on a *Dawah* Journey:

'*Dawah*' or Preaching is one of the core concepts of this movement. '*Dawah*' means to call or to invite. In this particular case, invitation for people to return to what is perceived as proper Islamic observance. The main goal of Tablighi Jamaat is to establish a spiritual closeness with Allah, facilitated through preaching. Thus, preaching is an integral part of the movement. Tablighi Jamaat is solely focused on preaching to the Muslim community. The preaching journey includes both activities, with other people in one's own locality and missionary journeys to other places. One must take part in a preaching campaign. The campaigns have several different time span. One must go for a 3-day campaign every month, on a 40-day campaign (Chilla) every year, and a 4 months campaign (3 chilla) once in their lifetime. When asked about the importance of *Dawah* journey, Abdur Rahman replied: "আমাদের প্রতি বড়দের নির্দেশ হল, এক চিল্লা বা ৪০ দিন, ৭ দিন, ১০ দিন, ২০ দিন, যার যত ওয়াক্ত (সময়) আছে, দিতে পারো। কিন্তু চিল্লা হচ্ছে ৪০ দিন, আর তিন চিল্লা হচ্ছে ১২০ দিন। চিল্লা দিলে কি হয়? মানুষের জন্মের পর থেকে একটা রূপান্তর শুরু হয়। মানুষের ৪০ দিন পর পর একটা পরিবর্তন হয়, তার রক্ত মাংস সব পরিবর্তন হয়। এই দিকে লক্ষ্য করে হাদিস-কোরআনের ভিত্তিতে এটা রাখা হইছে।... এর উদ্দেশ্য হচ্ছে 'আমার' ঈমান-আমল কে ঠিক করা। তাবলিগের মূল উদ্দেশ্য হল, 'আমার', আমাদের না, আমার নিজের ঈমান আর আমল কে ঠিক করা। এর জন্য যত সময় লাগবে। এর জন্য সময় লাগানো। আল্লাহর রাস্তায় না গেলে ঈমান বাড়ে না, এই জন্য আল্লাহর রাস্তায় যাওয়া। উদাহরণঃ একটা চুলা; আপনার দাদা, তার দাদা, তার দাদা, একই চুলায় রান্না করতছে। হাড়ী উপরে রাখছে, নিচে লাকড়ি দতিছে। বলেন এটা কয় টন কাঠ খেতে পারে? বহুত। কত আগুণ জ্বলছে ওইখানে? বহুত। এখন, ঐ চুলা থেকে যদি একটু মাটি কাটা হয়, আর ঐ মাটি যদি পানিতে দেওয়া যায়, ঐ মাটি গলবে কি গলবে না? চুলার মাটি পানিতে দিলে গলবেই। আগুণ কম দিছেন? না দেন নাই। কিন্তু গলছে। অথচ নিয়ম হইল মাটির সাথে যদি আগুণ লাগে তাহলে মাটি শক্ত হয়ে যায়, গলার কোন কথা না। ঠিক এমন, একটুকরা কাদার দলা নলিলাম। তাকে ছেললাম, বালু মিশালাম ফর্মে দিলাম, ইট বানালাম, একটা নির্দিষ্ট সময় তাপ দিলাম, একদিন বা দুইদিন বা ৭২ ঘন্টা। এরপর ওইটা বের করে নিয়ে আসলাম। এই যে মাটিটা ৭২ ঘন্টা তাপ দিয়ে ইটে পরিণত হইছে, এটা কি পানিতে দিলে কি গলবে? না গলবে না। কেন গলবে না? কারণ, মাটির সাথে, বালুর সাথে, শ্রমের সাথে, ম্যানেজমেন্টের সাথে তার

একটা মিস্ত্রার হইছে, তার পর নিজের শ্রম দেওয়া হইছে, নিজের অঙ্গপ্রত্যঙ্গ দিয়ে, দীল-দিমাগ দিয়ে, একটা নির্দিষ্ট সময় তার উপরে মেহনত করা হইছে। ঐ কাদার উপরে মেহনতে করে তাকে ইটের নকশায় আনা হইছে।... একটা নির্দিষ্ট তাপ দেওয়ার কারণে ইটে পরিণত হইছে। সে এমন পরিবর্তন হইছে যে যে কোন জায়গায় দিলে এখন আর গলবে না, নষ্ট হবে না। এখানে লাকড়ি কয় টন লাগছে? একদম কম। সময় কত লাগছে? একদম কম। কিন্তু কি করা হইছে? একটা প্রসেসের ভেতরে একটা নির্দিষ্ট গতির মধ্যে রাখা হইছে।...ঠিক এইভাবেই ঈমান আর আমলের মেহনত, তাবলীগের মেহনত হল মানুষ কে বানানোর জন্ম। মানুষ যদি এই ছাচে তৈরী হয়, এই ছাচে আমল করে, চিল্লা, ৩ চিল্লা, ৪ মাস, বছর, ধরে যদি মেহনত করে তাহলে তার একটা নতিজা (ফলাফল) আসবে। সেটা হল কি? তার ঈমান আর আখলাক ভালো হয়ে যাবে। (our elders ordered us to go on dawah journey, may it be for 40 days or a chilla, 7 days, 10 days or 20 days, to spend as much time as we can. Chilla is for 40 days and 3 chilla is for 120 days. What happens when we go on chilla? The process of change starts after a person is born. In every 40 days there is a change in their body, their blood. Keeping this in mind and basing on Hadith and Quran the 40 days limit is set... The focus of this journey is to make my faith stronger. The main focus of Tabligh is to make 'My' faith stronger, not 'Our' faith. And we should spend as much time as we need to achieve this. If we don't go on a journey for Allah, our faith will not be stronger, this is why we go on journeys. For example, if there is a clay stove that have been used in your family for generations. All your ancestors cooked on it for decades. Now, if you take a piece of that stove and put it in water, will it dissolve? It will surely dissolve. But, you have used a lot of fire. And common sense is, if you bake a ball of clay in fire, it will not dissolve in water. And again, if you take some clay, add proper material, form it in a box and bake it for 72 hours, it becomes a brick. Will it dissolve in water? No chance. Why won't it dissolve? Because, it was mixed with proper materials, it had labor given in it, it was done in a uniform way. Did it require tons of wood? No it didn't. Did it require decades to form? No it didn't. But, it went through a process... Similarly, the work we do for our faith in Tabligh is to

make ourselves. If someone goes through this process, goes on a chilla, or 3 chilla or for a year, they will have some outcome. And what will it be? His faith will become stronger").

The person who goes on dawah journeys is promised great rewards. A commonly referred Hadith is: *'A morning or an evening on the path of Allah is better than the world and whatever it has.'* (Bukhari Sharif). This Hadith is interpreted as,

There is also a missionary journey for the women members. This type of journey is called Masturat Jamaat. Women members can go on Dawah journey either with their father, brother or husband. They are not allowed to travel alone with a male Jamaat. The male members of the Masturat Jamaat stays in the mosque as usual. On the other hand, the female members stay at the home of a fellow Tablighi brother. While the Jamaat is staying, no male members are allowed to enter that household. When asked about the importance of Masturat Jamaat, Shiraj (30) replied: "আমাদের যেমন দীন দরকার, তাদের ও দীন দরকার। তারা দীন শিখবে আমাদের মাধ্যমে। তারা একাকী কোথাও যেতে পারে না। তাদের জিন্মা তো আমাদের হাতে, আল্লাহ তাদের আ,দের হাতে সপর্দ করে দিচ্ছে। (Religion is important for both men and women. They [women] will learn about religion from us. They cannot go outside by themselves. We are given the responsibility by Allah to teach them)". Again, the male members always respect their wives. Many participants expressed that they help their wives with the household work. However, looking closely, we can see that Tablighi Jamaat is not trying to change the already existing patriarchal norms. In terms, Tabligh is conforming the male dominance in the society by placing the male members at a superior position.

The effect of Tabligh in a person's life

Tablighi Jamaat has a sure and prominent effect on its participants. Most of the participants expressed that, the change they went through was the effect of taking part in the Dawah duty of

Tablighi Jamaat. They say that, the teaching of Tabligh has an undeniable effect on their personal, social and family life. Participants also expressed that, the change they had helped them to lead a happier life.

When a participant joins Tabligh, they undergo a series of change. They change their appearance, the members of Tabligh prefers to follow the Sunnah way of dressing. They like to wear long panjabi, have long beard and always wear a taqiyah (small round scalp cap). One participant Abdur Rahman (44) said: "তাবলীগের মধ্যে আল্লাহতাল্লা এমন একটা মেশিন দিচ্ছেন যে আপনি ইন করবেন একটা জিনিস, আউট হবে আরেকটা জিনিস। ইন করতেছেন একজন দাড়ি টুপি ছাড়া আর আউট হচ্ছে একজন দাড়ী আর টুপি তাবলীগওয়ানা। পুরা চেঞ্জ হয়ে যাচ্ছে। (Allah installed such a machine in Tabligh that you input and the output is something else. You are entering as a beardless-taqiyah less [faithless] and coming out as a bearded Tablighi activist. Total change.)". He explained the mechanism of the machine is Tablighi work. Here we can see how Tabligh changes the appearance of the members. Appearance is a simple yet big part of a person's identity, and Tabligh surely leaves a mark on it.

Most of the participants expressed that they feel like a new person after joining Tablighi Jamaat. They expressed that, Tabligh gave them a new view of life. When asked what they like most about the Tablighi lifestyle, Shiraj (30) said: "আমার যেটা সবথেকে ভালো লাগে, নিজের বডির ভেতর সুন্নতের যে আমল। আমরা অনেকে আমল করি, কিন্তু বলতে পারবে না; একজন পুরুষের জন্য সুন্নত হচ্ছে দশটা। এই যে একটা বডির ভেতর একটা আমলের পরিবেশ, এটা আমার কাছে খুব ই ভালো লাগে। অন্যরা আমল করে, কিন্তু এভাবে করতে পারে না। (What I like most is the practice of Sunnah in my body. Most of us may not know this; there are ten sunnahs a man should follow. I feel really good about the feeling of sunnah in my body. Others may pray but they cannot follow islam like this.)".

For some, Tabligh rescued them from a worse life. While talking about what changes they encountered after joining Tabligh, Juwel (22) said: "তাবলীগে যোগ দেওয়ার আগে আমি সব সময় বন্ধুদের সাথে ঘুরে বেড়াতাম। আমরা ক্লাস ফাকি দিয়ে ঘুরে বেড়াতাম, আড্ডা দিতাম। আমার কাছে মনে হইত এইটাই তো জীবন। আমি মানুষের সাথে খারাপ আচরণ করতাম। আমার বাবা মা আমার উপর সন্তুষ্ট ছিল না। আমার বাবা আমাকে জোড় করে এইচএসসি এর পরে চিল্লায় পাঠায়। চিল্লায় যেয়ে আমার জীবন পরিবর্তন হয়ে যায়। এখন আমি জানি যে এটাই সঠিক পথ। এখন আমি সময় নষ্ট করি না। পুরাতন বন্ধুরা ডাকতে আসলে আমি যাই না। আমার পড়াশোন বেশ ভালো চলছে, আমার বাসায় ও বাবা মা খুশি। Before joining Tabligh, I used to hang out always with my friends. We used to just waste our time by gossiping or roaming around. We used to bunk class and do many mischeaves. I thought that was my life. I always misbehaved with other. My parents were not happy with me. My father forced me to go on a chilla after my H.S.C. After going on a Chilla, my life changed. Now I know that this is the right path. I don't waste time anymore. When my old friends call me to hang out with them, I refuse to go. Now I am doing well with my studies, and my parents are also happy with me." Here we can observe how the participant's life choices changed after joining Tabligh.

From this analysis we can see that, Tabligh is eventually presenting a reformed way of life. Tabligh is creating a new identity, a new agency for the members. It is deconstructing and at the same time, constructing identities. This can be observed by contrasting it with Victor Turner's idea of 'Liminality'. For Turner (1987), liminality is an intermediate state of being "in between". Through this, individuals transit to the other side. This transformation is soft and hard to notice. Even the individuals who go through it cannot explain the changes they are going through. Here we can see exactly that. Tabligh is creating a new identity for the members and the Dawah

journeys are acting as the transition. This coupled with the discursive Islam creates a new way of following Islam.

Part three: Joining Tablighi Jamaat.

The main focus of Tablighi Jamaat is to bring the Muslim community back on proper Islamic faith. The apolitical reform movement has a big following base over the world. It is active in 223 countries over the world. Usually, there are two sets of narratives. One, from the point of view of the preacher. The preacher has a journey, a spiritual call. This journey often starts from a point when they were not at all religious or spiritual. This narrative helps the recruits to connect with the preacher. The other narrative is from the recruit's point of view. They often feel alienated or out of their element before being recruited. This chapter deals with how these two narratives fold out in terms of Tablighi Jamaat, and analyze how the recruits are being preached and what they make out of that preaching.

From the preacher's point of view

Tashkil:

Tashkil simply translates into forming; in this context, forming a Jamaat. Tashkil is an important part of the preaching technique. Tashkil is usually conducted by one member of the Jamaat. When a Jamaat is on a dawah journey, they usually conduct tashkil after the boyan. Tashkil is an excellent opportunity to experience the preaching technique. During tashkil, the preacher uses verses from Quran and Hadith to emphasize the importance of going on a dawah journey. One example: "সাহাবারা তো জীবন দিয়া দিছেন, যখন জিজ্ঞেস করা হইছে যুদ্ধে যাবার জন্য, জীবন দেওয়ার জন্য, শহীদ হবার জন্য কে তৈয়ার আছি, সবাই দাঁড়ায় গছেন। বাচ্চারা পর্যন্ত যুদ্ধে যেতে তৈয়ার হয়ে গছে।তো ভাই, সাহাবাদের ভেতর প্রতিযোগিতা লাইগে যাইতে কে যুদ্ধে যাবে। আর আমরা চল্লিশ দিনের জন্য তাকিল হইতে পারতেছি না। আমাদের ঈমান কোথায় গিয়ে দাড়াইছে বলেন! এই ঈমান আমার ওই পর্যায়ে নিয়ে যাইতে হবে, আমার দুনিয়ার মহব্বত ছাইড়া আখেরাতে মাহব্বত দিলের ভেতরে ঢুকাইতে হবে।...আল্লাহর রাস্তায় যেইয়ে যে নিজের উপর এক টাকা খরচ করবে, সে সাত লক্ষ টাকা দান করার সোয়াব

পাবে। যে আল্লাহর রাস্তায় একটা নেক আমল করবে, সে ঊনপঞ্চাশ কোটি নেক আমলের সোয়াব পাবে। নবীদের মত দোয়া কবুল করার ওয়াদা আছে ভাই... গেলে লাভ আছে, লস নাই। (The Sahaba's were ready to give their lives, when asked who is ready to go on war, everyone were ready. Even the young children were ready to become martyr. They used to compete over who will go to war. Can't we make up our mind for 40 days? What have our faith become! We need to take our faith to that level, we need to replace our love for worldly position with love for love for the afterlife.... If you spend one taka on yourself while on the journey for Allah, you will be rewarded as if you donated seven hundred thousand taka. If you do a good deed on the path of Allah, you will be rewarded as if you did 490 million good deeds. Our prayers are promised to be accepted as the prayers of the prophets were accepted. There is no loss on the path of Allah, only rewards.)". Form this, it is prominent that while preaching for joining Tabligh, how the rewards are brought forward so that the recruits are tempted to join. The verses from Quran and Hadith are explained in a changed context. Again, using the Quranic verses and Hadith in a changed scenario helps the recruits to connect with them. They do not feel alienated, rather it becomes something of common understanding. Here, Islam is presented as a discursive tradition. Asad argues that Islam as an analytic category is best understood as a tradition that links the past to a future through the present. Here we can see that the preacher is doing exactly that.

Another example: "আমার আপনার ব্যবস্যা ছাড়তে ভয় লাগে। সময় লাগানোর জন্য বললে বলে ভাই এখন নতুন নতুন ব্যবসা দিছি, এখন কিভাবে ছেড়ে যাই? একটু দৌড়ানো হোক। এরকম সবার ভেতর কাজ করবে। আমার ভেতরেও কাজ করতে। ব্যবসা ছাড়াতে আমরা ভয় লাগত।... আপনি যদি আল্লাহর জন্য চাকরি, ব্যবসা, দোকানদারি ছাড়েন, আর এই চল্লিশ দিন সময় লাগিয়ে ফেরত আসার পরে, আবার দোকানদারি কে আল্লাহর জন্য ধরবেন, এই দোকানদারি, চাকরী, ব্যবসার ভেতরে বরকত বাড়ায় দাবিনে। আর হুজুর সঃ এর সুপারিশ তার নসিবে হবে। হুজুর সঃ এর হাউজে কাউসারের পানি তাকে পান করানো হবে। (

We are scared to leave our business. If I invite someone to join Tabligh and spend some time for Allah, they say that, my business is still new, how can I leave it? Let it pick up pace. Everyone thinks like this. I used to think like this too. I was scared to leave my business too... If you leave your business, your job for Allah, spend these 40 days for Allah, and after coming back you resume your business for Allah, Allah will increase your business. You will get recommended for Jannah by Prophet Mohammad (S.A.S). You will drink from the pond of abundance.)". Here we can see that the preacher is referring to his past life, where he was doing business for the sake of his own profit. And linking the past with the future, or the afterlife through his present, which is doing business for pleasing Allah. Again, on the topic of what would happen to their work or business when they will go on a chilla, Tabligh members say, 'let Allah be the judge of that'. This is important to unfold because while Islam puts emphasis on both the worldly life and the afterlife, Tabligh prefers to focus on the afterlife. Participants refer to this verse from Quran: "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers." (Al Quran, 34:39). Tablighi Jamaat is allegedly more focused on afterlife than the worldly life. Here we can see an example, that the worldly 'loss' is promised to be repaired in the afterlife. Again, admitting that the preacher himself were hesitant to leave his business, helps the recruits to connect with him. The recruits can relate with the preacher, thus they become more emotionally involved. This in turn helps the recruits to accept the invitation and join the movement. This resonates with Susan Harding's claim, that the preacher gives doses of reality through his personal experiences as a way to influence the listeners. The reality of the afterlife is made concrete through the preacher's narration of his own dilemmas.

While preaching listener are often portrayed as 'lost' or away from the 'correct' path and the preachers are the ones who are 'saved', as they walk on the 'correct' path. Thou subtle, it can be observer in almost every preaching session. One example: "আল্লাহর রাস্তায় গেলে দুইটা জিনিস হয়। এক তার ভুল ভেঙ্গে যায়। তার যে সব আল্লাহর হুকুম ছুটে গেছে, সেই বিষয়ে সে ওয়াকিবহল হয়। আর দুই, আল্লাহর রাস্তায় সফরে গেলে আল্লাহ তার জন্য দুনিয়া কে সহজ করে দিয়ে। আল্লাহ তালা কোরআনের আয়াতে বলছেন, "যে আমার দ্বীনে সাহায্য করবে, আল্লাহ তাকে সাহায্য করবেন"। এই জন্য ভাই নাম লেখায় দহে। সবাই তো এখান থেকে চলে যাবে। কেউ আল্লাহর রাস্তায় বের হবে, আর কেউ মহল্লায় বন্ধু বান্ধবের কাছে ফেরত যাবে। কিন্তু ভাই দামী কোনটা হবে? যে আল্লাহর রাস্তায় যাবে সে দামী হবে।(If we go on a journey for Allah, two things happens. One is, we learn our mistakes. We learn about the orders of Allah we failed to observe. And second is, if we go on a journey for Allah, Allah will make the world easy for us. Allah promised in Quran: 'Those who helps my religion, I will help them.' We all will go out from here, some of us will go on the path of Allah, and others will return home to their peers. But, who will be more praised? Who went on the path for Allah will be the most praised.)". Here we can see how tablighi Jamaat is held at a superior, more prestigious position. This play on 'lost' and 'saved' let's those who joined know that they are on the right path as well as show those who are lost what they can become (Harding, 1987).

From the listener's point of view:

Focusing on the recruit's point of view, we can understand how the preaching affected them and why they joined the movement. While asked, most of the participants responded in a similar tone. They agree that Tablighi Jamaat is the correct path, and by following this one can become a

true Muslim. When asked why they join the movement, Sahjalal (25) replied: "তাবলীগ আমাকে আল্লাহর হুকুম পুরাপুরি বুঝতে সাহায্য করছে। তাবলীগে আসার আগে আমি ভাবতাম নামাজ আর রোজাই বোধহয় ইসলাম, কিন্তু এখন জানি মুমিনের আরো অনেক দায়িত্ব আছে। (Tabligh helped me to properly understand and observe the orders of Allah. Before joining Tabligh, I used to think that praying and fasting was the only duties of a Muslim, but, now I know that there are many other duties that a muslim should observe.)". Another participant Juwel (22) replied, "আমার বাবা আমাকে জোড় করে এইচএসসি এর পরে চিল্লায় পাঠায়। চিল্লায় যেয়ে আমার জীবন পরিবর্তন হয়ে যায়। এখন আমি জানি যে এটাই সঠিক পথ। (My father forced me to go on a chilla after my H.S.C. After going on a Chilla, my life changed. Now I know that this is the right path.)"

Some participants expressed that they felt alienated before, after joining Tablighi Jamaat they feel as they found their place. For these individuals, the society they live in is corrupt and they want to shield themselves from this. To them Tabligh Jamaat is the only way to stay true in the corrupt society. Shahin (26) explained: "আমরা যে সমাজে বাস করি, তা আমাদের ভালো থাকতে দেয় না। সমাজ আমাদের সৎ কাজ করতে দেবে না, আমাদের অসৎ পথে ঠেলে দিবে, আমাদের দ্বারা খারাপ কাজ করাবে, এটা আমাদের ধ্বংসের দিকে নিয়ে যাবে। আমাদের দিল নফরতে পূর্ণ হয়ে গেছে। আমরা অন্যকে খুশি দেখতে চাই না, আমরা সব সুখ নিজের জন্য চাই। কিন্তু একমাত্র ইসলাম আমাদের শান্তি দিতে পারবে। আর তাবলীগ আমাদের দ্বীনের পথে চলতে সাহায্য করবে। একমাত্র দাওয়াতের মাধ্যমেই আমাদের দিলে শান্তি আসবে। (The society we live in will not allow us to be good. It will not let us be honest, it will push us to do bad, it will push us towards our demise. Our heart is filled with hatred, we cannot stand to see someone else happy, and we want all the happiness. But, only by following Islam we can be happy. And Tabligh helps us to follow Islam properly. The only way we can bring peace in our heart is by Dawah.)". Here we can see that Tabligh is

providing these individuals with a new moral world. And this new moral world is always in a conflicting position with the already existing moral world (Ashraf & Camellia, 2008).

For some, Tabligh is a separate world that provides them an escape from their own world. One participant in particular expressed that he uses Tabligh as a coping mechanism in the fight with depression. When asked why he joined Tabligh, Arif (17) replied: "ছোট বেলা থেকে বাবা মা আমাকে এলাকার পোলাপান দের সাথে মিশতে দেয় নাই। এর ফলে আমার মধ্যে একটা ডিপ্রেশন তৈরী হইছে যে আমার বন্ধু নাই, আমি ঘর থেকে বের হতে পারতেছি না। আমার মামার কাছে আমি নালিশ দিলাম যে আমাকে ঘর থেকে বের হতে দেয় না। তো, মামা বলল যেহেতু ঘর থেকে বের হতে দেয় না, চল তাবলীগের সাথে সময় লাগায় আসি। বলল যে তিনদিন করে সময় লাগাও, তোমার মন ভালো হয়ে যাবে। তো, এইভাবে আমি বের হইলাম। মামা বলত যে তোমার যে তাবলীগের সাথে সময় দিলে একঘেয়ামীটা দূর হবে, ডিপ্রেশনটা দূর হবে। এই ডিপ্রেশন দূর করার জন্যই বের হওয়া। আমি যখন তাবলীগের সাথে কাজ করি, তখন ডিপ্রেশনটা ভুলে থাকি। এখন যেমন ইজতেমায় আসছি, এত মানুষের মাঝে ভালো লাগতেছে। যদি বাসায় থাকতাম, তাহলে এখন একা একা ডিপ্রেশনে ভুগতাম, বন্ধুদের ম্যাসেজ দিতাম। (When I was young, my parents didn't allow me to play with other children. So I was depressed that I don't have any friends and I couldn't go out. So I went and complained to my uncle. He told me let's go and spend time with Tabligh. He told me if I spent time with Tabligh, I will get a change from my monotonous life and my depression will go away. So I joined Tabligh to get away from depression. When I work with Tabligh, I don't feel depressed. Now I am here, at the Ijtema, I feel good among all these people. If I were at home, I would be alone and depressed and sending messages to my friends.)".

A new world view:

This portion of the chapter deals with how Tablighi Jamaat constructs a new world view through its promises. From the previous discussion we analyzed how individuals create a way to resolve their moral dilemma by interpreting the teaching of Tablighi Jamaat. Here we will discuss the new world view Tablighi Jamaat puts up for the members and how it is shaping an individual's perspective. Tabligh started out in 1920s as an Islamic reform movement in the Indian subcontinent. Mawlana Ilias initiated this movement to prepare a Muslim community who will carry out the work of the messenger, Hajrat Mohammad (S.A.S). The path Mawlana Ilias led was prescribed by the Quran and Sunnah of the prophet. Tablighi movement currently has a follower base of millions and it is operative in more than 200 countries. The image of the world that Tabligh produces is another reason for its popularity.

Tabligh initially portrays an image of Islamic blessed life. The Tablighi movement is focused more on individual improvement and betterment than group improvement. The teaching of Tabligh is designed in such a way. When asked about it most of the participants expressed that their personal life has went through a series of changes. They also expressed that these changes were for their own betterment, these changes made them a better person, a better Muslim. Shiraj Ali (30) expressed: এর আগে যাদের সাথে চলাফেরা করতাম, তার এই পথে ছিল না। নামাজ কালাম পড়তাম না, রোজাও ঠিক মত রাখতাম না। নিজের মন মত চলতাম, যখন যেমন মন চায় চলতাম। এখন মনে হয় যে একটা নীতিমালার মধ্যে আমার চলা উচিত, একটা সিস্টেমের মধ্যে চলা উচিত, সেই সিস্টেম টা হচ্ছে তাবলীগ।(Before joining Tabligh, I used to hang out with people who are not on this path. I didn't use to pray regularly and also I ignored fasting. I used to go about my will. Now I think I need to follow a path, follow a system, and that system is Tabligh.). Rana in his article also argues about this phenomenon. He argues that the Islamic life Tabligh portrays is very simple, bound by sunnah and Hadith, yet, the rules of Tablighi Jamaat

provides a fluid guideline. Rana argues that this is one of the main factors associated with the wide acceptance of Tablighi Jamaat.

Tabligh also portrays an image of Muslim brotherhood. Tabligh code of conduct binds its members in a sense of Muslim brotherhood. The members refer to each other as “সার্থী-ভাই” (Brother). It does not matter from which walk of life they are from, every member is treated equally. The members always act politely with others and give them proper respect. This is also a reason for the huge popularity of Tabligh. During boyan (sermon) these points are given more emphasis on. A sense of global muslim brotherhood is also present here. Tabligh operates in the same manner all over the world. The values and the code of conduct is the same no matter where it is. Also, the regular visits from foreign Jamaats helps to solidify the sense of global brotherhood. The biswa ijtema also helps to solidify the idea. Tabligh provides its members with a sense of global brotherhood which otherwise would not be possible. This also contributes to the new world view that tabligh generates. This idea is resonated in Siddiqui's article. Siddiqui in his article discusses that the unclassed nature of Ijtema helps the wide acceptance and thus contributes towards Tablighi Jamaat's popularity.

Tabligh also promises a better life. While preaching, Tabligh upholds a lifestyle that seems simple yet attractive. The promises of rewards and punishment in the afterlife accordingly to the individual's earthy action, is one of the core concepts of the Islamic faith. The teaching Tabligh wraps around that concept and presents the agendas of Tabligh in such a way that promises help to achieve Jannah easily. The promises of Jannah and saving themselves from Jahannam acts as an inspiration for the members. However, while core teaching of Islam puts equal emphasis on worldly action and spiritual action; the teaching of Tabligh is more focused on spiritual action. One example from a Tashkil would help to understand more:

যে নবী ওয়ালা ফিকির, ওই উম্মতের দরদ নিয়ে ফিকির করবে, আলগাহ পাক তাকে সফলকাম করবেন। তার কোন দুনিয়ার যোগ্যতা, ডিগ্রি, কোন কিছুর প্রয়োজন নাই, সে তো আখেরাতের ডিগ্রি পায়ে গেছে, তার দুনিয়ার মাল-দৌলত-বাড়ি-গাড়ি এইগুলো সে পরোয়া করে না। সে আখেরাত কে মহব্বত করে। (Those who think to carry out the duty of the prophet, Allah will make them successful. They will not need any worldly degree, they already got the degree of afterlife. They do not care about worldly positions like money-house-car. They love the afterlife.) "

From this analysis, we can see that, individuals interpret the teaching of Tablighi Jamaat in different ways. For some, Tabligh is a way to resolve their moral dilemma, for some tabligh is a way to lead a simple life, while for some, it is an escape from their world. Nonetheless, the members always put forward the humble nature of the participants. Tabligh, through its discursive nature, brought the high culture of Islam closer to the people in Bangladesh. The easy nature of preaching technique reaches through people. The fact that there are no prerequisites to join, treating the members equally regardless of class, and an apolitical work ethic is how Tabligh managed to maintain a huge following base. If we look closely, these all are preaching techniques used by the movement. However, it is safe to argue that Tablighi Jamaat comes forward with a non-linear style of practicing Islam. The diversity of the participants, the diversity of background, and the hard but fluid nature of the movement breaks the traditional understanding of Islam.

Conclusion:

The focus of this thesis was to provide an ethnographic account of the preaching method of Tablighi Jamaat. This study is a narrow attempt to understand the different dimensions of Tablighi Jamaat. Throughout the paper, I tried to keep true to my focus. The history of Tabligh is important for understanding the position it holds in Bangladeshi society. The tasks Tabligh prescribes acts as an institute for the members. These tasks are designed to keep the members in a repetitive practice. Among the tasks of Tabligh, Dawah is a central one. The new recruits are incorporated in the movement through Dawah journeys. Dawah journeys are like a training session for the new recruits. The preaching techniques used by Tabligh is unique. The nature of the movement, as well as the tasks and the reputation works as the preaching technique. The rewards promised for the members also contributes to the preaching technique. However, the new world view that tabligh portrays is mostly not delivered. Tabligh promises to solve the dilemma of the members but tabligh itself creates dilemmas. The new world view is often at a clash with the real world. To some extent tabligh helps to overcome the moral dilemma an individual is suffering from, but the fragmented subjectivity between the moral and the real world can be very problematic from time to time. A part of the reason why followers remain attached is because participation in Tablighi Jamaat allows them a space to constantly engage their minds and bodies towards overcoming the perceived paradoxes of everyday life where the “real” and the “moral” constantly lay competing claims.

To conclude, in the context of today's global situation, religion needs to be understood on its own terms. Again, with the rising Islamophobia and terrorism in the name of Islam, we need deeper understanding of what a movement like Tablighi Jamaat entails. Tabligh with the focus of bringing out the true essence of Islam across the borders and an apolitical standpoint surely is a

movement with unorthodox dimensions. Tabligh for the members is more than a movement, it is a lifestyle. For some, it is a divine calling. For others, Tabligh is a shield to save themselves from society. As we analyzed, Tabligh acts as a transitional phase. While Tabligh Jamaat had the focus to make Muslims true Muslim, it is safe to argue that Tabligh opens up a path to a diversified practice of Islam.

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ঢাকা।