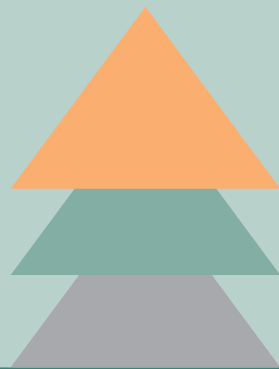


# Religions and Development Research Programme

## **Marker of Identity: Religious Political Parties and Welfare Work - The Case of Jama'at-i- Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh**

**Masooda Bano**

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Working Paper 34- 2009



# Religions and Development

## Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

# Religions and Development Working Paper 34

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## Summary

Why do so many religious political parties have substantial welfare programmes? Is their welfare work merely a means of winning votes or does it serve other purposes?

An investigation of the welfare programmes of the Jama'at-i-Islami parties in Pakistan and Bangladesh shows that they

- are involved in a wide range of charitable, welfare and service provision activities, including health care and training, education, emergency relief, water supply and orphan support.
- charge a basic (below market rate) fee for the services they provide (except to those who cannot afford to pay), which users are prepared to pay because of the perceived good quality.
- are organized in very different ways for historical, political and practical reasons: in Pakistan the Jama'at has established its own network of specialized or multi-sectoral welfare and service delivery organizations, whereas in Bangladesh (where the Jama'at has periodically been restricted or banned) Jama'at members play key roles in the management of apparently independent organizations.
- demonstrate the parties' commitment to their religious ideology, especially social justice, which is seen as central to Islam.
- require a very organized party structure, meaning that not all religious parties are able to maintain large welfare programmes: only well-organized religious parties with substantial income from their members' donations and other religious sources are able to make such sustained investment. In Pakistan and Bangladesh none of the other Islamic parties are as large as the Jama'at and their welfare networks are less extensive.
- deliver their services through networks of voluntary organizations, which rely on managers who are party members and volunteers, rather than paid professionals.

The claim that political parties are 'membership groups' that compete with other membership groups for citizens' loyalty and resources is borne out by this study. Rather than providing forums for public deliberation on the full range of issues on the public agenda, the religious political parties' emphasis on creating a cadre of ideologically committed members supports the argument that they are driven primarily by their religious ideology. Their engagement in welfare programmes is regarded as critical to their identity as parties and for mobilizing party members; the possibility that welfare provision might win votes is a less important motivation.

The study shows that religious political parties are more complex organizations and have more complicated relationships with the state than is recognized by political theorists. Further research is needed to assess whether:

- they do in practice provide good quality, sustainable and appropriate services;
- the voting behaviour of beneficiaries of the welfare services they provide does in fact change.

Religious political parties or their associated organizations are potential development partners for governments and donors concerned to improve the delivery of welfare and services, because

- the parties have established networks of voluntary organizations
- their programmes may be more cost-effective than those of other non-state providers because of their reliance on committed party members and volunteers.



# 1 Introduction

Religious political parties have been labelled the 'orphans' of political philosophy<sup>1</sup>. Despite the current debates on multiculturalism in most western countries (Schuster, 2007), the continued presence of religion within the public sphere in most developing countries, and the shift of Islamic groups in many Muslim countries towards electoral politics, little attention has been paid to understanding organized religious groups. Political philosophy has traditionally been concerned with tolerance of different religions and how to maintain the separation of state and church rather than with study of the organization of religious groups. There is little work analyzing the empirical realities of religious political parties and illuminating the processes through which they build their niche within society (Schuster, 2007).

One of the distinctive characteristics of religious political parties is that many of them invest heavily in social welfare work. This paper attempts to understand an important aspect of the reality of religious political parties in South Asia through study of their welfare programmes. It addresses three key questions: why do religious parties engage in welfare work, what enables them to finance and deliver welfare work, and is the focus of these activities driven by religious precepts or the needs of the local context? Analysis of these questions will indirectly help in developing a wider understanding of what shapes the agenda of religious political parties, how they are organized and whether they mould religious ideology to the realities of particular contexts. Jama'at-i-Islami, with its strong network of welfare activities and multiple organizations, provides an interesting example of the working of religious political parties. This paper examines its organization and welfare activities in the contexts of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

## 1.1 Religious political parties in political theory

Religious political parties present a dilemma for liberal-democratic theory. It has paid little attention to them, especially in the context of developing countries, and what attention has been given is mostly negative. Religious parties are not viewed as 'real parties'; they are said to be opportunistic and not committed to electoral democracy; they are regarded as intransigently ideological, uncompromising, militant and extremist; their religious political claims are said to aim at ensuring that public policy conforms to the imperatives of a single faith as interpreted by a religious establishment; it is asserted that they are authoritarian in their organization and goals; and their hold on their members is alleged to be through the coercion of the faithful by clerical authorities rather than voluntary identity politics (Rosenblum, 2003). Liberal political theory thus argues for limiting religious parties because they are

considered to be incompatible with democratic government, which demands the supremacy of reason, compromise between interests, and neutrality with respect to private beliefs. Yet liberalism and democracy also demand that people should be left to live their lives as they see fit. This implies that religious politics is legitimate insofar as it is supported by part of the population (Schuster, 2007). This proposition, however, has been accepted only reluctantly within liberal theory.

Similar suspicions are extended to analysis of the engagement of religious parties in welfare work. It is assumed that they offer welfare services as part of patronage politics. Political scientists argue that in Israel, for example, the religious parties attract voters through the provision of material benefits like schools, construction of housing and their political positions (Rosenblum, 2003). Nancy Rosenblum, a Harvard-based political theorist, is one of the few authors to steadily counter such claims and expose the limited understanding of religious political parties in current political thought. She argues that they are best conceptualized as associational nexuses:

By means of the associational nexus religious parties integrate political activity with social and spiritual life. Seen as part of this web of associations with overlapping affiliations, religious parties appear more like membership groups than other parties (Rosenblum, 2003, p. 33).

She argues that a necessary condition for the inception and sustenance of a religious political party is the conviction that religious doctrine or more abstract religious values should guide every aspect of life and thus that faith cannot be privatized. In her view, it is not necessary to argue that religious political identity is independent of a quest for material benefits or social status, nor to disparage 'interest-based' reasons for adherence as somehow inconsistent with religious partisanship. Instead, she argues, it should be recognized that an identity group is not reducible to an economic interest group, because identity defines its interests (Rosenblum, 2003). Religious political parties, in her view, play an important role not just in expressing but also in constructing and mobilizing political identity. They transform 'group identity' into an 'identity group'.

This paper focuses on the Jama'at-i-Islami, the largest Islamic political party in South Asia. In particular, it focuses on the operations of its sister organizations in Pakistan and Bangladesh in order to better understand the working of religious political parties. Before describing the party, however, a word is due on methodology.

## 1.2 Methodology

Making any argument about the motives that lead people or groups to engage with certain activities is always a challenge because motives are difficult to study. This paper attempts to understand the reasons religious political parties engage in welfare work through study of their welfare programmes and analyzing who they cater to, why and how. It does so by engaging with the discourse and practice of party members, in order to understand the rhetoric and reality of the engagement of religious political parties in welfare work. The research started by contextualizing the welfare work of Jama'at-i-Islami within the broader ambit of political parties in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The idea was to test the validity of the assumption that religious political parties are more likely to either maintain or be engaged with welfare organizations than regular political parties. The research then focused on Jama'at-i-Islami, which is the largest Islamic political party in both Pakistan and Bangladesh. Information about the working of the party and its ideological positioning was drawn from three data sources: secondary literature, party literature and fieldwork in the two countries.

During the fieldwork, which was conducted in January and February 2008, interviews were conducted with four key groups: party leaders, senior managers and officials of the welfare organizations linked to the party, party members, beneficiaries of welfare services provided by the party (interviewed at selected project sites), and local academics and analysts. Interviews with the party leaders and the senior managers of the welfare organizations focused on understanding the party's position with respect to its engagement in welfare work. Interviews at the project sites, on the other hand, tried to understand the nature of the services provided, the motives of the staff and the views of some beneficiaries. The latter were asked why they chose to use the services provided by the party rather than government or other private providers, how long they had been using the facilities, how they had learnt about them, and whether they knew that the services were being provided by a political party. If the answers to these questions were positive, they were then asked whether they had voted for that party. During the interviews, the study also tried to identify the sources of finance that enable the Jama'at to undertake welfare activity. Since the parties engage in both emergency relief and development work, it was decided to focus on long term development projects rather than those set up in response to emergencies, as the former require routine commitment and management structures on the part of the party. Within the range of services provided, the two dominant social service programmes (education and health) were selected for further investigation.

Despite the expected difficulty of building trust with the Jama'at leadership in the two countries, where in the post-September 11 context Islamic groups tend to be suspicious of research originating from western-based institutions, it was relatively easy to gain access to the Jama'at leadership in both countries. The primary reason was that this research drew on many of the contacts and networks developed in the two countries during fieldwork conducted as part of a study of the nature of state-madrassa engagement a few months earlier. In Pakistan, the Jama'at runs one of the five official madrasa *wafaqs* (umbrella bodies), where contacts had been developed with the Jama'at leadership. In Bangladesh, since Aliya madrasas have support from the Jama'at, links within the Jama'at leadership had been developed during the study of state-madrassa relationships.

## 2 Understanding the Jama'at

This section provides an account of the history of the Jama'at and its basic philosophy before recording some of its basic welfare activities.

### 2.1 The history of Jama'at-i-Islami

The Jama'at-i-Islami, which is the largest Islamic political party in Pakistan and Bangladesh, was established in 1941 by one of the most important Islamic ideologues of the twentieth century, Syed Abul Ala Maududi. Maududi began his career as a journalist, becoming the sub-editor of the al-jama'at wing of the Jamiat al-Ulama-i-Hind (the largest Islamic party in India at that time) in Delhi. While living in Delhi he published two major books: *Al-jihad-fil-Islam* (Holy War in Islam) came out in 1929 and in 1932 *Towards Understanding Islam* was published. The latter became one of the required texts for Muslim senior matriculation students throughout India. In 1932, he launched his own publication, *Tarjumanul-Quran*. Maududi was a strong believer in Islam and in its propagation, which paved the way for the launching of the party.

The Jama'at-i-Islami's (party of Islam) main objective was to work towards establishment of a state based on the injunctions of Sharia (Nasr, 1993). The party argues that belief in *tawheed* ('the unity of God') implies that at "the core of the Islamic religious experience... stands God, Who is unique and Whose will is the imperative and guide for all men's lives." Building on this, Muslim political thought affirms that there can be only one sovereign and that is God (Maududi, 1967). It argues that without attempting to establish the religion of God in this world salvation in the other world is difficult.

Maududi argued that the political system of Islam is based on three principles: *tawheed* ('the unity of God'), *risalat* ('prophethood') and *khilafat* ('caliphate'), and that it is difficult to appreciate different aspects of an Islamic polity without fully understanding these principles (Kramer, 1997; Maududi, 1967). All schools of thought within Islam agree that acceptance of *tawheed* is the core concept of Islam. Although it may be expressed in many different ways, it is simply defined as "the conviction and witnessing that 'there is no God but God'", the consequence of which is that at "the core of the Islamic religious experience, therefore, stands God Who is unique and Whose will is the imperative and guide for all men's lives" (Maududi, 1967).

In Maududi's view, this does not imply that Islam rejects the idea of a democratic political system; rather it demands that the system be framed within the worldview of *tawheed*. He argued that to understand the significance of *tawheed*, it is important to fully understand the notion of *khilafah* (God's agents on earth). In Maududi's view, the association of the notion of a caliphate with a monarchical form of government is a misrepresentation of true Islamic principles. Instead, he asserts that sections of the Qur'an can be interpreted as identifying human beings in general as God's agents on this earth (Esposito and Voll, 1996). Thus, all humans are *khalifas* and it is up to them to select one individual to lead the others in establishing a society that is in line with divine wisdom.

Though Maududi did not support the Pakistan movement, arguing in an essay on 'Muslims and their present political struggle', published in 1940, that Muslims should not regard themselves as a nation in the western sense of the term and demand the establishment of a separate homeland. Instead, he asserted, they should struggle for the propagation and adoption of an Islamic ideological concept throughout the whole of India. If they did this, he suggested, it was very likely that within a few years the whole of India would become *Dar-ul-Islam* (a Muslim homeland). However, he did move to Pakistan once it was created and actively argued for the imposition of Sharia. Upon partition the Jama'at was classified into two independent organizations: the Jama'at-i-Islami Pakistan (385 members) and the Jama'at-i-Islami Hind (240 members).

With the secession of East Pakistan into the separate state of Bangladesh, the Jama'at-i-Islami East Pakistan wing became a separate party. Today, Jama'at is the largest Islamist political party in Bangladesh but it has a tainted past. During the war of liberation in East Pakistan, the Jama'at strongly opposed the movement, siding with the Pakistani military, as it saw the war of liberation as being against the interest of Islam, since it was pitting Muslims against Muslims. The result was that Jama'at was banned after the victory of Mukti Bahini, and its top leaders fled to West Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first president of Bangladesh, cancelled the citizenship of Golam Azam, the leader of Jama'at, who then moved to London, while other leaders moved to the Middle East. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination in 1975 led to the appointment of Major-General Ziaur Rahman as chief of army staff and then president. He allowed Jama'at to resume its political activities in Bangladesh, also allowing Azam to return to Bangladesh as its leader.

The history of Jama'at involvement in the electoral process in Bangladesh is summarized in Table 1. Irrespective of its political successes and failures, the Jama'ats in both countries have invested heavily in welfare work.

**Table 1: Jama'at performance in parliamentary elections in Bangladesh**

Year of elections	Jama'at's position
1973	Jama'at was banned
1978	Jama'at was allowed to start political activities
1986	Jama'at did not participate
1991	Jama'at won 18 seats
1996	Jama'at won 3 seats
2001	Jama'at won 18 seats and formed the government with 3 other parties

## 2.2 Jama'at and welfare work in Pakistan and Bangladesh

In Pakistan, with small exceptions, none of the mainstream political parties has a tradition of welfare work. The two main parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League, do not maintain any formal welfare networks. Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), one of the ethnically-based parties in Sindh province, has a small welfare arm. Its Khidmat-e Khalq Foundation (KKF), established in 1998, drew on a welfare committee formed in 1978 and shoulders responsibility for engaging in welfare work. The activities of the Foundation are, however, limited in terms of service areas as well as scale; they focus on one-off activities rather than ongoing programmes. Key activities include the monthly disbursement of financial aid to the poor and needy, provision of dowries to destitute and orphan girls on marriage, free medical treatment and provision of medicines to the poor, and free legal aid on a limited scale. Tehreek-i-Insaf, the political party of the former cricket star Imran Khan, also has a strong ethos of public service. Even before the party was formally established, Imran Khan established the Shaukat Khannum Cancer Hospital, which gives large subsidies to those who cannot afford treatment. The party itself, however, has as yet not established a formal welfare organization to undertake social welfare projects on a routine basis. In contrast, the Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan formed a welfare wing in the early 1950s. Today, the party maintains a very large and complex network of welfare organizations, which provide a large variety of social services. It is also very effective in organizing emergency relief services.

The areas of operation of the welfare organizations established by the Jama'at include education, health, water and sanitation, and poverty relief. These organizations are registered separately from the party itself under the regulations governing voluntary organizations, such as the Societies Act XXI of 1860 and the Companies Ordinance. This decision to register the Jama'at's welfare or semi-commercial organizations as separate entities was taken in the 1960s when it was realized that a military government's decision to ban political parties could result in closure of the party's welfare outlets as well. Many of the organizations associated with the party specialize in specific sectors, for example Al-Hira Trust and Al-Ghazali Trust focus exclusively on education. However, Jama'at's flagship welfare organization remains the Al-Kidmat Foundation, which operates across the social sectors. It runs numerous programmes, including hospitals, schools, women's vocational centres, orphanages, Ramadan support programmes, medical camps, social and medical assistance for prisoners, vaccination programmes, dispensaries, emergency relief/rehabilitation, women's empowerment programmes, ambulances, drinking water provision, and a Qurbani (animal sacrifice) programme.

Jama'at-i-Islami Pakistan also maintains an international support programme in countries like Lebanon, Palestine, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. In Lebanon it has delivered life saving drugs, funded the purchase of ambulances, set up a mobile clinic service, and arranged with a German foundation to deliver food and dry rations in the south of Lebanon. In Palestine, it provides funds to purchase relief items, like food and medicines. In Nepal, it provides funds to support educational institutions. In Sri Lanka, it has provided funds to purchase ambulances in Colombo and fishing boats in Galle, and has supported a self-employment scheme in Hambantota.

The nature of engagement of political parties in welfare work is no different in Bangladesh: neither of the two main political parties maintains a formal organizational structure to run welfare programmes. Jama'at is the party most actively engaged in welfare work, although its operation differs greatly from the working of Jama'at in Pakistan. In Bangladesh, Jama'at's involvement in welfare work is more informal, though no less significant than in Pakistan: Jama'at members sit on the boards of directors of many Islamic institutions involved in welfare work, which may be legally registered as a voluntary organisation under the Societies Registration Act or a company. For example, the project selection and execution of the Islamic Bank Foundation, the welfare arm of the Islamic Bank in Bangladesh, is



closely supervised by Jama'at members. The Foundation is registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies of Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh under no S-1214 (25) 1988 (Islamic Bank Foundation 2007) (see also Section 5.1). Similarly, Jama'at in Bangladesh maintains an active presence in disaster relief work. The reason for the difference is itself worth closer analysis, which will be undertaken in the last section of this paper, because it helps reveal why a party driven by a similar religious ideology follows different routes in different socio-economic and political contexts. Before that analysis, the paper addresses the primary concern: why get involved in welfare work at all?

### 3 Religious political parties and welfare: why invest?

A common assumption within political theory is that religious political parties indulge in welfare work as a form of patronage politics, distributing free services primarily with a view to winning votes (Rosenblum, 2003). This study of the working of Jama'at-i-Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh reveals the limitations of such an assumption and supports the work of Rosenblum (2003), who argues that the motives for engagement in welfare are much more complex than mere material opportunism. Since the conventional argument is based on an assumption, it is important to discuss the analytical strengths and weaknesses of this assumption before moving to examine the empirical evidence about the Jama'ats' motives for engagement in welfare work. Inherent in the argument that religious political parties undertake welfare work to mobilize votes is the implicit assumption that any beneficiary of their services will be so beholden to them that he or she will express this commitment by voting for them in elections.

This in turn is based on three further assumptions: one, that the nature of the service being provided is significant enough to make the beneficiary base a voting decision primarily on receipt of the service; two, that the beneficiary is honest, in the sense that if he or she utilizes the services provided by a religious political party then an obligation is felt to repay the party by supporting it at election time; three, it ignores the temporal dimension, assuming that beneficiaries of a service will owe allegiance to the party even if elections are not to take place for another four years. If all these underlying assumptions are kept in view, then it becomes clear that the implied links between welfare service provision and converting beneficiaries into voters is not as straightforward as assumed in conventional political theory.

The assumptions are further challenged when studying the case of Jama'at in the context of Pakistan and Bangladesh, where four factors demonstrate their limitations: party ideology, the link between social service provision and the mobilization of members, the parties' response during periods when they were banned, and the nature of the welfare services provided. What the cases show is that converting beneficiaries into voters is at most a secondary concern; instead the primary motive for engagement in welfare work is to win the trust of party *members* by establishing the party's commitment to the implementation of religious precepts. It is important to begin the analysis by engaging with the parties' ideological positioning on their engagement in welfare work.

### 3.1 Social work and party ideology

As noted in the previous section, the Jama'at aims to establish a society based on the rule of God. This provides a motivation for seeking political power, leading the party to engage in electoral politics. However, it is important to note that the capture of state power is considered as the means and not the end: the end is establishing God's rule, which implies establishing a just society. Syed Qutb, a leading Islamic intellectual of the twentieth century, has highlighted how 'social justice' is critical to very notion of politics in Islam (Qutb, 2000). Muslim teaching emphasizes that society should treat everyone as equals and should provide the mechanisms that enable all to act as equals. The reform of the state is one way to ensure this, but the other is individual effort, engaging in giving and charity, and feeling mutual responsibility for one's fellows. This idea of mutual inter-dependence and brotherly care is central to the organization of the Jama'at-i-Islami.

The Jama'at literature repeatedly refers to these ideas, drawing on verses from the Quran and Hadith to support them, for example: "Momins (true believers) are brothers." For Tehreek-i-Islami workers (*karkuns*) mutual responsibility is fundamental. One of the Jama'at publications (Murrad, 2006) argues that the Islamic Tehreek's (movement's) aspiration for a collective revolution requires that its workers connect to each other on the basis of some core principles. Such relationships have, in their view, to be based on common beliefs and ideologies. Such an emphasis should ensure that no-one is left helpless. For an Islamic revolution, these mutual relations are the critical foundation of the joint struggle. This notion discourages mutual disagreement, which in turn benefits party discipline. The following verse of the Quran is quoted frequently in Jama'at literature: 'Hold God's rope tightly and don't go for dispute.' Thus, the idea of ensuring social justice through providing care for each other is central to the party's philosophy and to its strategy for seeking political power by the imposition of the word of God.

In the 1958 elections in Pakistan, Maududi noted the importance of welfare work for the Jama'at as follows: "first of all it brings intellectual change in the people; secondly (it) organizes them in order to make them suitable for a movement; thirdly, it reforms society through social and humanitarian work, and, finally it endeavours to change the leadership."<sup>2</sup> As a Jama'at member in Bangladesh added during an interview:

Welfare work is the foundation of Islam. This is a critical aspect of Jama'at's work. Maududi placed a lot of emphasis on it and termed it as one of the principal activities of the Jama'at. Even during 1971-1975, when the Jama'at was banned, its members continued to work through engagement in social service activities.

Thus, investment in social welfare work is regarded as another route to the end of establishing the rule of God on earth. In the words of Syed Bilal, a senior member of the Jama'at in Pakistan, who has also managed many of its welfare programmes, "Politics and welfare are actually two sides of the same coin, both are means to fulfil God's instructions. Both help to seek God's pleasure." This is also noted in a Jama'at publication: "The Jamaat-I-Islami Bangladesh upholds Islam in its entirety. It aims at bringing about changes in all phases and spheres of human activities on the basis of guidance revealed by Allah and exemplified by his Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Thus the Jama'at-I-Islami Bangladesh is at the same time a religious, political, social and cultural movement." (JIB, 1999, p. 4). The question, however, is whether its welfare work is undertaken because of this religious commitment or whether the ideological justification is just lip service, while the real motive remains conversion of beneficiaries into voters. The research demonstrated that the party's engagement in welfare work cannot be explained without understanding the importance of party members (*rukan*) in the organization of the Jama'at and how social welfare work is critical to their mobilization.

### 3.2 Social welfare and party members

Jama'at-i-Islami, by its very organizational structure, is dependent for its working on a strong base of members. At the time of its inception, the Jama'at consisted simply of the office of the Ameer (head), the central Majlis-e-Shura (executive committee) and its members (*arkan*; singular *ruckn*). These members were drawn from a wide group of adherents, who provided the main financial support for the organisation, did much of the intelligence work and also liaised with the *ulemas* (religious scholars) and politicians. Between 1941 and 1947, supporters were organized on the basis of the extent of their commitment to the party. The hierarchy that resulted began at the bottom with those who had merely been introduced to the Jama'at's message (*muta'arif*), moved up to those influenced by the Jamaat's message (*muta'athir*), then sympathisers (*hamdard*) and at the top the members (*arkan*). The first three categories played no official role other than serving as a pool from which new members were drawn and helping to relay the Jama'at's message. All the categories provided workers (*karkuns*) who were employed by the party to perform political and administrative functions and to work in party

campaigns. The hierarchy was revised in 1950-51 to consolidate the Jama'at's structure. The categories of *muta'arif* and *muta'athir* were eliminated and a new category, the affiliate (*mutaffiq*), was added. Affiliates were those who favoured an Islamic order and supported the Jama'at but were not members. They were, however, under the Jama'at's supervision and were organized into circles and clusters. Affiliates stood higher in the hierarchy than sympathizers. The Jama'at devised a rational and centrally controlled structure, which clustered affiliates by organizing them into local units and chapters.

From the very beginning, the Jama'at was very careful in its selection of party members. Like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the party drew on educated professionals rather than madrasa students. Maududi was clear that he was in no rush to popularize the Jama'at's programme among the masses, instead being primarily interested in conveying his message to the educated. According to Maududi, 90 per cent of Muslims, who are poor and uneducated, are deeply devoted and loyal to Islam, but do not understand even the basic principles of the religion; their love of Islam has, he believed, been exploited by so-called 'religious merchants' and westernized leaders. Out of the remaining 10 per cent, he asserted, the four or five per cent who have not been contaminated by Western influence and culture are loyal or practising Muslims. It is these Muslims that the Jama'at was interested in training as potential leaders and active members, to spread the 'real Islam' to the other 90 per cent of Muslims. Maududi's aim was to choose those individuals who had been convinced by his way of thinking for training as future leaders of the masses. These members were selected through a long probationary period, during which they were observed at study group meetings, in social welfare projects and at prayer.

At the beginning, the conditions for membership were tough: the constitution of the Jama'at-i-Islami of Undivided India clearly laid down that to become a member it was not enough to be a Muslim but that the individual should observe all the practices of the Muslim religion. If a member of any Constituent Assembly, a member was required to resign his membership, and if connected with any un-Islamic government in the capacity of governor, minister or judge, he had to relinquish those roles (Sayeed, 1957). How rigorously the process of selection was pursued may be seen from the fact that at the time of partition the Jama'at only had 625 members. When the Jama'at was divided into its Indian and Pakistani parts, the Pakistani Jama'at had only 385 members.

Eight years later, the Munir Report (1954) mentioned that there were 999 members. Starting in 1941 with only 75 members, who came from all over the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent, the number of permanent members (*arkan*) of Jama'at rose to 10,330 in 1996 (Punjab: 6027, North West Frontier Province: 2000, Sindh: 2019, Baluchistan: 239). There were 795 permanent women members and 1,261 male and 329 female candidates on the waiting list. This 50-year growth pattern in Pakistan indicates that the Jama'at has been very strict in selecting its members. Since 1997, it has introduced a provision for people to become ordinary 'members' as distinct from formally recruited members (*arkan*). As a result, 2.2 million members had been registered by mid-August 1997.

Committed members devote their financial resources as well as their time to the working of the party. To build up such a core group from the educated middle classes has not been easy. These are conscious individuals who question and do not have blind allegiance to the party. As a senior member of the Jama'at argued: "The party members have full regard for the system. They have regard for Allah. But they question bluntly and work very confidently. We are not working for the Ameer (head), though there is respect for him all the time. We are working because we believe that the party is committed to the cause of establishing a just social order." So the question is how do members become convinced?

For educated, independently-minded individuals, a commitment to a party only occurs if they agree with its objectives and are convinced of the commitment of the leader of the party to work towards the stated ends. The Jama'at takes care of the former by introducing the potential members to the writings of Maududi. As elaborated by a Jama'at member, "People joining Jama'at are basically motivated to join it after the reading of its literature. You can't be members unless you have read certain books and the Quran and have memorized a couple of Surahs (verses) and Hadees as well." Thus, no one can become a member till they have read a certain number of prescribed books from the Jama'at literature and have consciously made up their minds that they agree with the ideology of the Jama'at. However, when it comes to establishing the commitment of the party to Islamic ideology, this is done not through the text but by demonstration of efforts to ensure the establishment of a just social order.

This is done through major investment in welfare work, which becomes a sign of the party's commitment to Islamic values. It also acts as a demonstration of the ability of the party to serve the people effectively if it ever successfully gains political power. At the same time, the party's involvement

in welfare work plays another critical role: it gives the members a sense of achievement and keeps their morale high even when they are not in power. Given the high emphasis placed within Islam on engaging in welfare work, a party member, by engaging in this activity, has a constant sense of personal religious gain. This is also noted in Jama'at literature (JIB, 1999): "The aim and objects of Jama'at-i-Islami Bangladesh is to achieve the pleasure of Allah and salvation in the life hereafter by making ceaseless efforts for establishing social order in Bangladesh." Therefore, if the objective of seeking political power is to establish a society based on God's word and the personal motive for engagement is winning God's approval, the core purpose for an individual member is met by engaging in welfare work even if the political activity is less successful. The Jama'at thus provides members with an opportunity to execute their religious duties by voluntarily managing and contributing to its welfare programmes. During the fieldwork, it was clear that the members who were voluntarily managing these welfare organizations were driven by religious commitment and the search for other-worldly rewards. Even if the party is out of power, this active welfare work gives its members the confidence that they are contributing towards the main goal of bringing about social justice. In order to sustain the spirit of voluntary engagement, the Jama'at ensures meeting points for its members. It hosts frequent meetings at both the local and national levels, at which personal, local and national issues are discussed and every member gives an account (*muhasibah*) of his week's activity to the superiors. If a member misses these meetings without a valid reason, he can be expelled from the party. Since every local Jama'at unit is part of a larger unit, each of which holds meetings of its own, members can end up attending several meetings each week. These meetings reinforce the spirit of collective responsibility, reminding the members of the importance of the work they are doing. The benefit for the members themselves of engaging in welfare work is also captured in the Al-Khidmat Foundation's mission statement:

"All of us at this forum, volunteers and employees, are grateful to Allah for selecting us to proceed and to care for our brethren in need. A very large number of victims of wars, conflicts, calamities, accidents and mishaps are innocent people. Most of them are women and children. It is, therefore, imperative to help them on short term as well as long term basis."

### 3.3 Welfare work during political bans

That the reason for intervening in welfare work involves more than mere winning the support of voters is also visible in the fact that in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Jama'ats continued their welfare work even during the periods that they were banned. Soon after the establishment of Pakistan, the Jama'at was declared a pariah by the then government. During Ayub Khan's regime, the Jama'at's problems with the government were compounded when the party and everything associated with it were banned. The Jama'at, however, kept its welfare work alive during this time. Indeed this period saw a further expansion of its associated organizations. In Bangladesh, members stayed involved in welfare activities during the time when the party was banned.

Further, during the fieldwork it was very clear that the Jama'at in both countries was increasingly conscious, for reasons discussed in the following sections, of the need not to associate its name with its welfare activities. In Bangladesh, this has been the case from the very beginning, given the banning of the Jama'at after the creation of the country. Its members engaged in welfare work on an individual basis rather than using the Jama'at platform, an issue discussed in detail in Section 5. In Pakistan also, due to external pressures linking the Jama'at with extremist groups, the party is distancing itself from its welfare groups. As a senior official of the Al-Kidmat Foundation noted: "Whenever the military came into power, it put restrictions on our political work; this also restricted our welfare work. That is why we thought it is best to make our welfare wings completely separate. More recently, the foreign pressure on the Jama'at has made us make the Al-Kidmat Foundation totally independent of the party." The same point was made by a senior official at Ibn-e-Sina Hospital in Dhaka, which is run by Jama'at members but is not advertised as a Jama'at institution: "After the banning of the party, it was easier to undertake social service work through establishment of independent trusts rather than through party platforms." Thus, if the party in each country is keen to carry on its welfare work, even when it prefers not to associate its name with these activities, it is clear that the purpose of engaging in welfare activities goes beyond conversion of beneficiaries into voters.

### 3.4. The nature of welfare services provided

The nature of the welfare services provided by the Jama'at in both countries raises another interesting issue. Except for a few programmes aimed at specially marginalized populations, the services of the religious political parties are not entirely free; in most cases they are just subsidized. In Pakistan,



during the fieldwork, interviews were conducted in a school, a girls' college, and a mother and children's care hospital. In all three places, the beneficiaries paid a basic fee. However, the fee was less than the market rate and respondents considered that there was a better guarantee of the quality of the services than available from other providers, especially the public sector, where the quality of services is doubtful. There was, however, provision for free services to those who could not afford to pay at all (decided on a case-by-case basis).

The same was the case in Bangladesh, where most services are provided at twenty-five per cent below the market price. Here too, completely free services are provided to those who cannot afford them on a case-by-case basis. It was reported in Bangladesh that the Jama'at prefers to provide subsidized rather than free services because, given its extensive network of welfare activities, it is conscious of the need to ensure sustainability. The Jama'at's main aim is therefore not to provide free services, but to ensure good quality services at subsidized rates. As a senior member of Jama'at in Dhaka explained:

“Our contribution is to provide good quality service to people at lowest possible rate. We recently administrated hepatitis vaccine to over one hundred thousand people. People trusted us because of our identity. The vaccine was half price and people had the confidence that it was not fake. Every day more than 400 people took the injections.”

Seen through this lens, it appears that the nature of the services provided is not sufficient in itself to ensure that beneficiaries vote for the parties. Rather than promising free services, what they are doing through this work is to illustrate to the public their commitment to establishing efficient delivery mechanisms - unless the person in need cannot afford to pay. Thus, the reasons for the Jama'ats' engagement in welfare work are much more complex than simple patronage politics, although the possibility that their service delivery work makes an indirect contribution to increasing their electoral support cannot be ruled out. For example, within the Jama'at education institutions, students are likely to absorb the Jama'at ideology and may thus be more likely to support the party as adults. Thus, although the children attending Jama'at institutions often do so because their parents already have a religious mindset or a specific affiliation with the party, the parties' education work may have long-term electoral benefits.

If the motives for engagement in welfare work throw some light on the working of religious parties, the parties' ability to make this heavy investment in welfare work, which is the subject of analysis in the next section, is equally illuminating of the human and financial resource base of the religious parties. Again, it appears that the answer partly rests on the role of the party workers.

## 4 Religious parties and welfare: what enables the investment?

Welfare work, even if a major part of it is subsidized rather than provided free, requires major investment of time and resources. The question is what enables the Jama'ats to undertake extensive welfare activity. The answer is again partly attributable to their strong membership base. However, the easier access the religious parties have to religious donations compared with secular parties is also important. All these factors facilitate the Jama'ats' ability to undertake welfare work.

### 4.1 Members as donors and volunteer managers

One reason that the Jama'ats can invest in welfare work is that, as a party policy, all Jama'at members are required to donate 5 per cent of their annual income to the Jama'at fund. As one Jama'at member highlighted, "We have to give 5 per cent of our income to the Jama'at fund. A committee is formed. There is a central fund but all the branches are also asked to set up funds. The provision of this fund helps us move into action at once."

In addition to making financial contributions, the members also play a critical role in running the welfare organizations by taking on managerial positions within them without drawing a salary. The motive for undertaking this work is religious reward. In the words of senior member: "We put the fear of the Day of Judgment (*akhrat*) in the people. If for long one keeps getting Allah's blessings (*karam*) then there is desire to express one's gratitude to him, and undertaking voluntary work for public benefit is one way of doing that." In all its welfare organizations, the Jama'at appoints senior members to management positions. As one senior official explained: "Every member has to contribute. We can ask them to come forward and contribute. Jama'at workers contribute regularly to the welfare work. In these programmes, women also come forward very quickly." Another member elaborated the point in this way: "The Jama'at worker does not do this work for any political motivation. Basic intention of this work is not political. They do this work because of their inner satisfaction. When there is any need, they have a desire to do relief work. They serve public irrespective of whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims."

This emphasis on undertaking voluntary welfare work ensures that the Jama'at has a core group of committed volunteer workers to lead its welfare organizations and manage the programmes without being paid a salary. In both countries, these volunteer managers come not just from Jama'at's own cadres but also from many of its non-political affiliate organizations - Islami Jami'at-e Talaba (student wing), The Peasants' Board, The National Labour Federation, The Toilers' Movement (*Tahrik-e*

*Mehnat*), The National Labour Federation, etc. As a senior member of Al-Khidmat Foundation explained:

“There is no change of jobs in Al-Khidmat. In NGOs there is frequent change of jobs. These are money-based jobs. We are motivated by the satisfaction that we have provided relief to some people. If one is driven by selflessness than doing voluntary work does not feel like any sacrifice. In totality the motive of the members to get involved is one: to seek the pleasure of God. This in turn ensures that the operational costs of Jama’at linked welfare organizations are much lower than regular NGOs.”

The Jama’at in both contexts has a complex organizational structure comprised (with some variations) of the offices of *ameer*, *deputy ameer* and secretary-general, and the *shura*, at the provincial, divisional, district, city, town/zone, and village/circle levels. Its structure in each case is thus based on a series of concentric circles, going all the way down to Jama’at’s smallest unit (*maqam/halqa*), consisting of two or more members. After the office of *ameer* (leader), the next most important pillar of the Jama’at’s organizational structure is the *majlis-e shura* (Executive Committee). This committee has managed the evolution and implementation of the party’s ideology and controls the working of its constitution. The lower-level *shuras* replicate the functions of the central *shura*, but they do not carry equal weight. Members of *shuras* at all levels are elected. Each represents a constituency geographically defined by the secretariat. A *shura* member must be resident in his constituency. The secretariat structure of the Jama’at is duplicated in the party’s women’s wing (*halqah-e khawatin*), which was established in the 1950s. Women have a central *shura* and an office of the secretary general (*qayyimah*). The secretary general of the women’s wing is appointed by the *ameer*, in consultation with women members. Their headquarters are situated in the central compound, from where the work of *nazimahs* (organizers) of lower-level units is supervised. The women’s wing is primarily involved in propagating the Jama’at literature and ideas among Pakistani women. It also brings out periodicals and runs various programmes focusing on the educational and welfare needs of women.

It is these members, drawn from the Jama’at’s broader network of organizations, who help keep the cost of welfare work low in both country contexts. As a Jama’at member in Bangladesh explained: “As far as implementation is concerned, JI has its extensive network of members. At the same time, having different organizations also helps undertake the welfare work more effectively. We are able to run the hospital [Ibn-e-Seena in Dhaka] efficiently because we have also established a medicine factory. Thus different parts help each other.” Staff are employed only for the actual implementation work. The same is true of Jama’at welfare work in Pakistan. For example, the Al-Khidmat head office

in Lahore has only four regular staff members, mainly in administrative positions, who are paid very basic salaries. The members are able to mobilize other people within the society when there is a need. As one official highlighted:

“Members are also required to put forward the Jama’at philosophy to other people they know and to make those who are inclined towards this thinking join the Jama’at. Those who are inclined towards Jama’at thinking but are unable to take the full responsibility of a member should be encouraged to join the bigger pool of Jama’at sympathizers.”

Thus, the presence of a core group of volunteer members who manage the welfare programme is critical to the basic operation of the organizations.

## 4.2 Natural access to religious giving

At the same time, the Islamic religious obligation to pay *zakat* plays a key role in mobilizing resources for religiously approved welfare work. *Zakat* is one of the five pillars of Islam, denial of any of which is considered tantamount to disbelief. It is a compulsory tax on all affluent Muslims. A specified amount (2.5 per cent) is to be deducted from their wealth each year. Occurring thirty-two times in the Qu’ran, the word *zakat* is often joined with the command to offer prayer, the second key pillar of Islam, thus highlighting its importance to believers. Islamic jurisprudence maintains that *zakat* is the right of the poor to the wealth of the rich, as determined by God. It has two purposes: to refine the conscience of donors, and to foster a belief in the inherent solidarity of mankind (Qutb, 2000). *Zakat* aims to eliminate poverty and destitution from society.

In addition to *zakat* donations, collection and sale of skins of animals sacrificed at Islamic rituals is an important source of funds for the Jama’ats’ welfare work. Jama’at is the largest collector of hides in Pakistan. The parties also explore all other possible sources of Islamic funding. As an official of Al-Khidmat Foundation explained:

“The collection of skins of animals for *qurbani* (sacrifice in the name of God) is the single biggest source of income for the Al-Khidmat Foundation. We collected Rs. 10 million (£10,000) from collecting the animal skins in Lahore in one year alone. Al-Khidmat works independently of the party now though its work philosophy is shaped by the party spirit and party members continue to work in it voluntarily. Our donor base is mainly local people. Some projects also get support from foreign donors but not many. There are problems of mindset. Our working style is different from NGOs. We see what is the need; our work is according to the society and not framed to fit the preferences of specific donors.”

In Bangladesh, the Islamic Development Foundation, established by the Islamic Bank Bangladesh and with many Jama'at members on its board, draws resources from multiple sources, including *zakat* collected by the Islamic Bank Bangladesh Ltd, other institutions and persons; donations or gifts from any person or institution; income of the Islamic Bank which is not interest-free, which is spent on the welfare of the poor through the Foundation rather than being included in the profits of the Bank; and income from projects run by the Foundation.

### 4.3 Entrepreneurial skills

What the welfare activities of Jama'at in both countries also reveal is the entrepreneurial skills of Jama'at members and the steady shift towards providing a combination of low-cost high-quality services to ensure sustainability, rather than offering completely free services. As a senior Jama'at official, who also plays a central role in the management and running of Ibn-e-Seena Hospital in Dhaka, argued: "Ibn-e-Seena was established in 1981. We have a medical college as well, a pharmaceutical industry, a one hundred bed hospital and 500 bed referral and training hospital. We offer the best facilities at 25 per cent less than the market rate. However, every year we also spend Rs.10 crore to provide free services to poor people." This highlights the way in which Jama'at members have invested strategically in sister concerns to expand the services provided, as well as emphasizing cost efficiency, which is seen to be a major advantage, as stated by an official of Al-Khidmat Foundation: "Our main advantage is that we are more cost-effective than other NGOs. We have established 361 water wells in Tharparkur, which are being run with the support of the community."

Thus the use of senior party members selected from the ranks of the Jama'at and its affiliate organizations to manage its various welfare organizations on a voluntary basis, rather than paid professional managers, combined with their claim on religious resources, play a critical role in enabling the Jama'at to undertake welfare work. What this also shows is that, while all religious parties want to demonstrate their religious credentials through welfare work, undertaking such work requires a very organized membership. Less organized religious parties are less able to undertake welfare programmes. For example, Jama'at-I-Ulema, another Islamic political party in Pakistan, which is less member-driven, is also a less active provider of welfare services.

## 5 Ideology or context: what defines the specific welfare interventions?

The paper has argued that welfare work is critical to party identity due to the emphasis placed on social justice within Islam. Does this imply that religious precepts determine the nature of interventions chosen by the party in each country and the method of their execution? This study of the welfare activities of the Jama'at in Pakistan and Bangladesh shows that, while religious ideology provides the broader parameters of interventions, the selection of specific programmes and their method of execution are determined mainly in response to the demands of the context. To demonstrate this, it is first important to compare the nature of the Jama'ats' welfare activities across the two countries.

### 5.1 Jama'at and welfare: Pakistan and Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>

As briefly discussed in the initial section, the Jama'at in Pakistan maintains a more formal network of registered voluntary organizations than in Bangladesh. These are loosely affiliated with it by virtue of having Jama'at members as senior managers. At the heart of the welfare work rests the Jama'at's Al-Khidmat (literally meaning 'the service') Foundation, with a mission statement which emphasizes that it has been given the task of "serving all those who have been deprived of their genuine rights to live with dignity." The Al-Khidmat Foundation of Pakistan has been involved in relief and philanthropic work for over fifty years; it set up branches all over East and West Pakistan as early as 1951. It took its present name and form in 1992 and was registered as an NGO under the Societies Act XXI of 1860. According to its brochure: "By adding up our services at home and abroad, without any fear of contradiction, we can claim to be the biggest network of humanitarian services in Pakistan."

Al-Khidmat started its welfare services at the inception of Pakistan, when thousands of families were seeking refuge. Initially it established health units and then moved on to provide education facilities to girls and boys in backward areas of the country. It currently maintains over 1,200 schools. Other important programmes include ladies' vocational centres; adult literacy, refugee care and prisoners' welfare programmes; women's empowerment projects; fully-fledged hospitals; mobile dispensaries; orphan sponsorship projects; home (Baithak) schools; drinking water supply in remote areas; subsidized vaccination against Hepatitis B; emergency relief in the form of dry rations, tents, blankets, building materials and medicines; medical aid; and renovation of Nangarhar University in Afghanistan. During periods of emergency, Al-Khidmat Khwateen (Ladies') Wing becomes very active. Though, as discussed above, it is important for the members of the party to agree with its Islamic ideology, that is not the case for the beneficiaries of its welfare services. Al-Khidmat aims to provide 'Service to

Humanity' without discrimination on any basis and to maintain dispensaries even in non-Muslim majority population areas.

In addition to the Al-Kidmat Foundation, the party has numerous other welfare organizations that work in specific sectors. One of these is the Al-Khidmat Welfare Society (AKWS), which is a non-government and non-profit organization engaged in helping the poor and destitute. Formally registered in 1976, it started its welfare mission with the creation of Pakistan on 14 August 1947, working with refugees. It established relief camps, provided emergency services and engaged in rehabilitation work. The main source of funding for its activities is the skin of sacrificial animals collected during Eid-ul-Azha. The Society has established ten educational institutions, 30 Baithak schools and orphanages. It also runs an orphans' support programme that caters to the needs of local as well as Afghan orphans by providing them with education, health facilities, clothing, regular food packages and shelter. The Ghazali Education Trust is another major initiative within the education sector. Its mission is to produce a better society through value-based education. It was established in 1995 by a small group of friends who were also Jama'at members, some of them professors at the University of the Punjab in Lahore. Ghazali Trust has a wide range of programme areas in the field of education. Currently, it operates in five key areas, including rural education, women's education, human resource development, financial aid and educational services, especially in remote, deprived and rural areas. Its Pakistan Rural Education Programme was established ten years prior to the research and has flourished: there are currently 267 schools working in 29 districts of Punjab, with 1,363 teachers and more than 30,955 students. The Pakistan Rural Education Programme, which adopts a single-class and single teacher model, focuses on quality education to encourage the adoption of modern and progressive ways, keeping in view Islamic values and ethics.

Rural Education and Development (READ) Foundation is another Jama'at-affiliated organization involved in education, with the mission "To provide superior value based services by strengthening, rebuilding, educating and training the younger society in the less providential regions (of Pakistan)." As opposed to the rural education programme of the Ghazali Trust, where the emphasis is on increasing access, in the case of the READ Foundation the emphasis is on quality. Currently, the Foundation has an enrolment of over 60,000 children in its 323 schools. READ Foundation also provides free education to over 5,800 orphans. There are many similar organizations, including the Al-Hira Trust.



The Jama'at's welfare work in Bangladesh presents a very different scenario. Here the Jama'at has hardly any affiliated welfare organizations, yet that does not mean that the emphasis on welfare work among its members is any less than in Pakistan. The difference is that in Bangladesh, members take on welfare duties in an individual capacity in many organizations engaged in the provision of social services that apparently have no formal links with Jama'at. The only area where the Jama'at in Bangladesh maintains its own organizational structure is in emergency relief. It also supports some educational programmes, including in some reformed madrasas.

The philosophy guiding Jama'at's work in Bangladesh is the same as in Pakistan. As a Jama'at brochure states:

“The Jama'at aims at bringing about changes in all phases and spheres of human activities on the basis of the guidance revealed by Allah and exemplified by his Prophet. The aims and objects of the JI are to achieve the pleasure of Allah and salvation in the life hereafter by making ceaseless efforts for establishing the Islamic social order in Bangladesh” (Jama'at pamphlet).

However, as Barrister Razzak, a senior Jama'at official, highlighted: “The emphasis is not on maintaining a large scale of Jama'at-owned welfare institutions but encouraging its members to undertake these activities in their individual capacity or by supporting other like-minded institutions involved in such activities.” The dominant mode of engagement of Jama'at members in welfare programmes in Bangladesh is therefore through acting as an adviser or a member of a board of advisers to many social service organizations inspired by Islamic values. The nature of activities and programme priorities are similar to those in Pakistan: education, health and emergency relief work are the priority areas. For example, Ibn-e-Seena, a prominent hospital in Dhaka, which provides high quality health facilities at 25 per cent below market price to users, is not a Jama'at institution, although Jama'at people run it. Its philosophy is provide good services at low cost and to break even financially.

Another example is the Islamic Bank Foundation, which is an initiative of the Islamic Bank Bangladesh. The Bank created a charitable fund named *Sadaqah Tahbil* on 4 July 1983, immediately after its inception on 30 March 1983. Following an increase in the volume of activity, the fund was renamed the Islamic Bank Foundation on 20 May 1991. The Islamic Bank Foundation works as a subsidiary organization of Islamic Bank Bangladesh Ltd., with separate accounts and administration. An 11-

member committee headed by a chairman, with two vice-chairmen and a member-secretary conducts all the activities of the Foundation, which also has a team of staff to execute the programmes. This committee is nominated by the board of directors of the bank for a period of three years. Most of its members are from the Jama'at: "There are 11 members at the Islamic Bank Foundation Committee who assess whether the project can be viable. Most of the members are from the Bank and Ibn-e-Seena Trust, who are also Jama'at people," explained a Foundation official. Due to the heavy involvement of Jama'at people in such organizations, the distinction between them and Jama'at is not easy to maintain: "Jama'at people are running these organizations so eventually there is some connection that people make between the Jama'at and these organizations," added the same official.

The fundamental aim of the Foundation is to work for the sustainable socio-economic development of the country and its objectives are to promote people-oriented mass education; provide health and medicare facilities; help the development of culture, art, literature, science, technology and sports; assist in the research and propagation of Islamic ideology; create facilities for productive self-employment; and develop human resources for enhancing economic growth and quality of life. Its activities include programmes for income generation; education; health and medicare; humanitarian help, relief and rehabilitation; and *dawah* (propagation of Islam).

Under its educational programmes, the Foundation has the following activities to improve education in Bangladesh: a model Forquania Maktab (a higher level madrasa); financial support for educational institutions; scholarships for poor and meritorious students and students of higher studies; and lump-sum grants for poor students, etc. Within the health sector, it has established medical centres and dispensaries, and supported treatment of poor patients and construction of sanitary latrines. Its humanitarian programme has included establishment of orphanages, provision of funds for the marriage of girls, and assistance to indebted people. It operates relief and rehabilitation activities during natural calamities like floods, tornadoes, tidal surges, river erosion and fires. It also supports *dawah* by disseminating the knowledge and teachings of Islam, to make both the common people and the elite familiar with the concepts of Islam. The programme distributes Islamic research magazines, audio-video cassettes, and Taleemul Quran's videos, etc. Thus, the nature of its programmes is very similar to those supported by the Al-Khidmat Foundation in Pakistan. The difference is that in

Bangladesh the Jama'at has no formal links with the executing organisation, although Jama'at members are in charge of the policies and programmes.

When establishing any project, the Islamic Bank Foundation requires the local Jama'at leaders to assess a community's need and demand before the project is approved. Thus, the Jama'at organizational structure and ground level leadership is as involved in approving and monitoring these projects as it is in setting the Foundation's policy guidelines and overall plan of action. As a senior official at the Foundation explained: "In order to support projects in any area we rely on recommendations of a local committee formed of local prominent personalities and Islamic figures. At the time of starting our project we select some people who are Islamic-minded and followers of Jama'at. They are prominent in the locality. They must be honest."

The final example of a Jama'at-associated organization visited during the fieldwork is the Sylhet Women Medical College, which is led by a senior Jama'at member from the area. The rate of literacy in Sylhet is presently the lowest in Bangladesh and there was a demand in the area to establish a medical college for girls that could offer them a safe and secure campus, well-protected hostel facilities, a well-stocked library with IT facilities, and highly skilled and experienced teachers. After assessing the local need, the College was established, with the active engagement of local Jama'at members. It was established as a company, with the intention that within ten years of its inception in 2005 it should break even. This again highlights the entrepreneurial dimensions of Jama'at's social service work in Bangladesh. As a local Jama'at member, Dr Shafique, explained: "In the name of Jama'at there are no institutions. Our private company provides all funds for this College. The first target is to present an ideal institution for the society. The second is to make it financially viable. The College is designed to recover all costs within 10 years." The College brochure places an equal emphasis on moral training and medical education: "The College aims to make women self-reliant, self-confident, self-governing and develop professional excellence together with high norms and unique moral values in them."

## 5.2 What shapes the interventions?

The question then is why the Jama'at in each context chooses to support particular activities. The inspiration for choosing specific activities was reported by informants to come partly from religion and partly from the needs of a community. Education is clearly important within Islam and for Jama'at that

is an important reason for its investment in education. But education is also emphasized because it is seen to be an important social and economic need and critical for individual and social development. As a senior official of the Jama'at in Pakistan explained:

“When expanding in new areas, one has to prioritize as there are many areas within the same communities that require help. We of course prioritize according to the needs of the community. We try to go there where the local community is willing to help with donations and volunteer work. Then poverty is another factor. In Chitral we have established a hostel for students as they have to travel from long distances to study in the schools and colleges in the city.”

The fact that Jama'at members are constantly exploring opportunities to execute development projects is also visible in the establishment of the Association of Muslim Welfare Agencies in Bangladesh (AMWAB) by Jama'at members. AMWAB is an apex body of Muslim NGOs in Bangladesh. Its main responsibility is to coordinate its member organizations and to provide training and technical assistance to them. The member organizations work in different areas and remote villages of Bangladesh in the fields of poverty alleviation, health and sanitation, supply of pure drinking water, formal and non-formal education, family welfare, aquaculture and poultry keeping. These organizations work with the poorest segments of the population of Bangladesh, such as destitute women and children, the landless and slum dwellers, with the aim of developing a sound social and economic base for them based on the Islamic spirit and principles.

As a senior member of Jama'at who is actively involved in the running of both Ibn-e-Seena Hospital and this network explained:

“Ninety per cent of our member organizations, now numbering more than 300, are registered Non-Government Organizations (NGOs). Over half of these NGOs work for their local communities, which have an income of under US\$ 1 dollar per day. These NGOs are focused on improving education, health or social support for people in need, while the remainder work for a wide range of causes and visions, from environmental issues to social welfare... As a large voluntary sector umbrella organization, we want to help all our members, whatever their mission or size, maximize their impact and effectiveness. We do so in three ways: providing accurate and timely information; offering practical guidance and support; and encouraging our members to network with and learn from each other.”

Why did the Jama'at's senior members develop the idea of establishing a network of Muslim minded organizations? The answer rests not in the ideology of the Jama'at but in the strategic planning of its member organizations and their ongoing reviews of their needs and activities. The critical factor in the rise of the network was competition from secular NGOs in the aid and development context of Bangladesh. As one member explained,

“One important thing was that students who were affiliated to Jama'at's student wings in colleges and universities were actively referring to big NGO networks like BRAC, Proshika, and Grameen saying that these organizations are getting onto a par with the government. Looking at their activities, the Jama'at students started to say that they have to do something. They got disheartened. We were observing this. We thought we must do something to help them. Some of them started work with BRAC but realized that its activities contradicted some of their beliefs. We, therefore, established this network to provide support to these young people. Many of them are not part of Jama'at and will never be. However, they share the Islamic values that Jama'at holds.”

Thus, the network came about as a strategic response to current socio-economic and political needs. The purpose of the action was indeed to protect Islamic ideology, but the intervention itself was context-dependent and relied on strategy and innovation on the part of the Jama'at members rather than sticking to tradition.

This is also reflected in the objectives and actions of the network, which aims to shape development in the light of Islamic precepts but phrases these activities in development-related language. An extract from its 2006 annual report (AMWAB 2007) summarizes this consciousness:

“The conventional development concept is changed. Development is now perceived to be very much participatory, community-led and people-centred as opposed to top down prescription by the higher echelon. The conceptual premise as well as ground realities are putting mounting pressure on the development organizations to transform its role from traditional hierarchical to bottom-up and community-led. AMWAB is also gradually transforming and keeping pace with the changing scenario. The AMWAB is rethinking and revitalizing its strategies and approaches to meet the development challenges we have to confront with. The international communities under the banner of the United Nations have adopted 8 Millennium Development Goals for sustained growth and development of global communities.”

In terms of its working also, the network has similar activities to the secular development networks. For human resource development, it organizes training programmes, seminars, symposia and study circles. It also organizes workshops to share the experiences of member organizations and contemporary development ideas. The Jama'at maintains that the programme aims at building the capacity and skills of the persons working for its member organizations in various sectors to deliver appropriate services promptly. It also works to ensure co-operation between members and to facilitate resource mobilization.

A similar emphasis on constant review and strategizing to best protect the interests of their welfare organizations and to advance their welfare work is also visible in the recent decision of the Pakistan Al-Khidmat Foundation to dissociate itself from the Jama'at and claim an independent NGO status. It did this in order to protect itself from international pressure after September 11, as some international analysts suspect Jama'at of having links with fundamentalist groups. The other purpose for taking on NGO status was to broaden its reach and attract more development donors. During interviews with the current board members of the Al-Khidmat Foundation, they were keen to present the Foundation as a regular NGO, which no longer has a formal affiliation with the Jama'at, even though Jama'at members are still running the organization.

### **5.3 What determines the route to implementation?**

The question then is why the Jama'at parties in the two countries, though focusing on similar kinds of social service and welfare projects, have chosen different routes to execute welfare projects. While Jama'at in Pakistan has opted for the establishment of a large number of affiliated welfare organizations, in Bangladesh it has preferred to undertake this work through representation of its members in other organizations involved in social service provision. This is particularly pertinent, given that the Al-Khidmat Wings were established both in East and West Pakistan at the time of the partition of India. A closer examination highlights that the historical positioning of the party in the two countries has much to do with the contemporary differences. In Pakistan, the party went into mainstream politics confident of its demand for Shariah, given that the country was created in the name of Islam. Even when banned, it preferred to invest in many organizations involved in *dawah*, as well as in welfare work, to expand its social base. It all along operated from a position of strength.

In Bangladesh, on the other hand, the Jama'at was isolated in society in the post-liberation period. The Jama'at as a party had resisted the war of liberation, instead opting to support the Pakistani army, because it viewed the break up of Pakistan as against the interest of Islam. The result was that after the creation of Bangladesh, Jama'at as a party was banned and its leaders had to find refuge in Pakistan. It was allowed back as a party in 1975, but it continued to be stigmatized and even today there is still talk of some of its members being tried for war crimes. The Jama'at had, therefore, to develop a different strategy to rebuild its roots within the society. It encouraged its members to engage in welfare activity and build networks within communities, but did not explicitly set up Jama'at-labelled welfare organizations, at least partly because to have done so would have generated a strong negative reaction at the time. It was thought to be a better strategy for Jama'at members to become engaged in the provision of social services through platforms that were not explicitly linked to the Jama'at and, in this way, to both fulfil their religious obligations and build networks and individual trust.<sup>4</sup>

If an individual builds credibility through good social service work and gradually also becomes known to be engaged with a specific political party, it is expected that he can lend that party credibility. Thus, in the hostile context in which Jama'at found itself in the newly established state of Bangladesh, it was more feasible for it to encourage its members to gain individual credibility than to build party credibility through major investment in social welfare work. Over time this consolidated into a tradition, so that even today Jama'at prefers its members to engage in welfare work individually rather than to indulge in very visible welfare ventures itself. This focus on the individual can be discerned in the statement of a senior official of the Jama'at in Bangladesh: "Every individual should do welfare work. Every Jama'at family should be known in their area as welfare family." The context-dependent nature of the work of the religious political parties was captured by one Jama'at member in the following words: "Maududi emphasized welfare work but he did not visualize all the things that could be done. There are legal issues and opportunities that together determine the nature of welfare work." Thus, the comparison of Jama'at's operations in the two countries shows that religious political parties are indeed led by religious ideology but also have to constantly shape their actions to fit the socio-economic and political contexts within which they operate.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has argued that religious parties present a much more complex phenomenon than recognized by political theorists. It supports Rosenblum's (2003) claim that political parties are 'membership groups' that compete with all other membership groups for citizens' loyalty and resources. As membership groups they in theory provide inclusive fora for public deliberation on the full range of issues on the public agenda. The emphasis on creating a cadre of ideologically committed members, as has been elaborated in the case of Jama'at, also supports Rosenblum's argument that religious political parties are not driven primarily by material interests: they might reap such benefits incidentally, but their primary driving force is their religious ideology. The paper thus highlights the limitations of current political theory in understanding the complexity of religious political parties and notes the need for more empirical work to test common assumptions about their characteristics and operations. For example, further work is needed to assess whether they do in practice provide good quality, sustainable and appropriate services; and to analyse whether the voting behaviour of beneficiaries of the services they provide does in fact change.

The research reported on here has shown that religious political parties in South Asia undertake welfare work because it is critical to their identity as a religious party. It is not voters but party members that a leader has to convince and keep mobilized through welfare work, justified by the great emphasis on social justice in all religions, including Islam. Undertaking welfare work, however, requires a very organized party structure. This means that not all religious parties are able to maintain big welfare programmes: it is only the well-organized religious parties that are able to make such sustained investment. In Pakistan and Bangladesh there are other Islamic parties but none are of the scale of the Jama'at and none has as extensive welfare networks as the Jama'at. On a development policy level, the paper illustrates the potential these parties provide for becoming partners in development, due to their extensive networks of voluntary organizations, which have potential to be more cost-effective than regular NGOs as they rely on managers from within the party rather than paid professionals.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A religious or ethnic party is one that appeals to voters as the champion of the interest of one ethnic group, typically but not always to exclusion of others. It draws upon already formed identity groups and aims at organizing and mobilizing them electorally to win office (Chandra, 2005).
- <sup>2</sup> Short Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Conference, Jamiat-i-Islami, East Pakistan, March 14-16, 1958, p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> This section documents the wide range of welfare organizations established by Jama'at or its members in the two countries. It does not provide an independent assessment of their performance, as that was beyond the scope of the fieldwork.
- <sup>4</sup> It could also be that the NGO model in Bangladesh was by then so strongly established and supported that it may have seemed the obvious way of proceeding.

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