

Do Hindus have a future in Independent Bangladesh?

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Eminent economist and researcher DrAbulBarkatrecentlypublished a book, Political economy of reforming agriculture-land-water bodies in Bangladesh. DrBarkat is also a professor of Economics Department of University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

In his book DrBarkat highlighted the reform Bangladesh needed in achieving the economic developments it is targeting. In his book he has also painted a grim picture for the future of the Hindu Communities in Bangladesh. He predicted that 'no Hindus will be left after 30 years' in Bangladesh. He made his prediction on the basis of his research and "The rate of exodus (of Hindus) over the past 49 years"

In his research he found that from 1964 to 2013, around 11.3 million Hindus left Bangladesh due to religious persecution and discrimination,he mentioned in his address in the lunching ceremony of his book. It means on an average 632 Hindus left the country each day and 230,612 annually.From his 30 yearlongresearches, Barkat found that the exodus shamefully and mostly took place during military governments after independence in 1971.

Before the Liberation War of 1971, the daily rate of migration was even higher at the rate of 705 per day while it was 512 during 1971-1981 and 438during 1981-1991. Then the number acceleratedto even higher than prelibation period to 767 persons each day during 1991-2001 while around 774 personsleft the country during 2001-2012, the book says. There is nothing to suggest that exodus of Hindus has decelerated in recent months and years.

These findings of Dr Barkat reinforced the concept that the fundamentalist Islamic forces have a clear agenda to root out Hindus from Bangladesh. They have been very successful in staging violence against Hindus in year after year without any difficulty of facing the justice in Bangladesh. Equally, the political hierarchy and the criminal justice systems both have failed to protect the religious minorities in Bangladesh. There has been no trial of any violence committed against the religious minorities in Bangladesh except only one.

Following the 2001 election serious violence was brutally unleashed on Hindus in Bangladesh. Subsequently a judicial commission was set up to prove it. The commission found that a total of 355 politically motivated murders took place while 3270 incidents of rape, arson, looting and other

atrocities were recorded but not a single person stood trial in independent and claimed to be secular democratic Bangladesh.

The prediction of Dr Barkat echoes the prediction of Professor MizanurRahman former head of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) when he said in 2014 that there will be no Hindu citizen left in Bangladesh after 20 years. "Because we did whatever is needed to force them [Hindus] out of the country and we have always failed to do what was needed to protect them." The percentage of Hindu population has come down from 13% in 1974 to a single digit figure according to the latest census in Bangladesh.

Ajoy Roy, Professor of the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh was present at the book launching ceremony and on this occasion he said that the government grabbed the properties of the Hindus during the Pakistan regimedescribing them as enemy property and the same properties were taken by the government after independenceas vested property. It is worth mentioning that he is still crying for more tan 2 years for the justice for the brutal killings of his son by the religious fanatics.

Retired Justice KaziEbadulHaqueadded his concern mentioning that the minorities and the poor were deprived of their land rights. The deprived people remain deprived in the independent democratic secular Bangladesh , he said, adding that the land management system should be reformed.

Dhaka University teacher Prof FaridUddin Ahmed said that the government has to ensure that the indigenouseople would not be affected or harmed. "The government must ensure that the people do not think aboutleaving the country for once."

Even taking into account of the very recent incidences it does not feel like the exodus of the Hindus would be less than what DrBarakatassessed. According to a report compiled by Bangladesh Jatiyo Hindu Mohajote (BJHM) at least 98 people of Hindu community were reportedly killed and 357 others were attacked physically in the year to 29 December 2016. The same report also claimed that "At least 22 Hindus are still missing and over 26 Hindu women were raped in the country." It says "at least 141 temples were vandalised and torched while at least 165 Hindu houses were attacked by the same period of time."

Therefore, the systematic cleansing of Hindus in independent Bangladeshgoes on. Hindus are leaving their ancestral home for the fear of their safety and security. They are leaving Bangladesh in an ever increasing number at least 774person per day. Now the question is do they really have any future in Bangladesh?