



Cultural Value Orientation and Inter-Ethnic Relation: A Case of Majority and Minority Ethnic Group in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *Cultural value orientation patterns vary not only across the world cultures but also vary among sub-cultures within a given society. Based on Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck's analytical framework and descriptive case study method this paper reviews relevant literature to compare value orientation patterns and also discusses its effects between majority (Muslim) and minority (Hindu, Santal, and Oraon) ethnic communities in Bangladesh. Following the model cross-cultural literature and also result of descriptive case study method revealed that there were significant differences in value orientations between the majority and minority ethnic communities in Bangladesh. The variations in cultural value orientations were more likely to affect inter-ethnic social relations (e.g., socio-cultural deprivation and threat) for the minority ethnic groups, especially Santal and Oraon in north-western region. These findings may be implied in social philosophy and social practice to improve inter-ethnic social relations in Bangladesh.*

Keywords: *Cultural Value Orientation, Cross-Cultural Comparison, Ethnic Community Relation, Social Practice, Bangladesh.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic community people (e.g., Muslim, Hindu, Santal and Oraon) living in Bangladesh have certain perceptual and cognitive view to the social and physical universe. According to their cultural point of view, they direct their personal, familial and community behavior to solve human problems faced in those universes. Actually, Bangladesh is an agrarian rural country where most of the Bangladeshi's Muslim and other minority ethnic groups such as Hindu, Santal and Oraon characterized by low socio-economic status and using primitive agricultural technologies live in subsistent peasant economy in which they are directly related to and dependent on the nature indicated above for their living and sustenance. Among them the tribal groups, especially the Santal and the Oraon and others live in starvation and severe chronic poverty with the scarcity of and deprivation from social opportunities and natural resources (Ali, 1998; Bondopadhyay, 2003; Kispotta, 1997; Paul, 2006; Rahman, 2004; Rafi, 2006) as are many lower class Muslims and Hindus inhabited in the northwestern region and all over the country (Sarker, 1997; Uddin, 2006; Uddin, 2008a).

Although the ethnic communities are communal, collectivistic, and patrilineal in nature, and live in the same geographical (physical universe) and socio-economic conditions, they follow and observe different value orientation patterns (VOPs, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961) embedded in their respective religious ritualistic cultural knowledge systems to solve their human problems faced. The religious ritualistic cultural knowledge systems of the communities, that are mostly sacred in nature, are widely different in Bangladesh: the Muslim firmly believe in Monotheism, the Hindus in polytheism, and both the Santal and Oraon in animism that are the mediating force or forces (Supreme Being or Beings) to relate human beings to control the physical forces and social relations within community or between ethnic communities, practicing different modes, manners, and rituals (Narayanan, 2004; Maloney, Aziz & Sarker, 1981; Sarker, 1997; Uddin, 2008b).

Based on the religiously sacred knowledge systems of the communities several periodical culture specific and/or cross-cultural studies indicate that the Muslim, the Santal and Oraon generally direct their behavior to the total subjugation-to-nature in different modes, while the Hindus orient their behavior as compromise-with-nature (Bondopadhyay, 2003; Maloney, Aziz & Sarker, 1981; Sarker, 1997); the Muslim in human nature orientation follow more good (Alam, 1995; Lari, 1997), the

Hindus are the good and evil (Maloney, 1974; Brodov, 1984), and still the Santal (Marandy, 2006; Mathur ed., 2001) and the Oraon (Joshi et al., 2006; Xaxs, 1998) both believe in evil direction; in time orientation the Muslim (in linear mode) and the Hindus (in cyclical mode) are more or less present (Raju, 2003), and the Santal and the Oraon are past oriented (Bondopadhay, 2003; in activity orientation the Muslim, Santal and Oraon are being oriented (Mathur, 2001; Joshi et al., 2006; Zaharna, 2008), while the Hindus are, to some extent, being-in-becoming oriented (Nakamura, 1971); in human relation, the Muslim, Santal and Oraon prefer more egalitarian norms focusing on mutual support and group goal (Ali, 1998; Uddin, 2006; Uddin & Arefin, 2007; Uddin, 2008c), but the Hindus are more linear-hierarchical value oriented (Roland, 1989; Sarker, 1997).

The differences in VOPs between majority (Muslim) and minority ethnic groups may also affect their inter-ethnic community relations (e.g., inequality and deprivation in social opportunities, social threat, conflict etc.). Despite this very fact in variations in VOPs and inter-ethnic group relations, there is little systematic investigation on the crucial issue in Bangladesh (Uddin, 2009). Using Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) Value orientation model (e.g., man-nature, human nature, time, activity & relational orientation), first purpose of the study is to review relevant literature to find out variations in value orientations between majority (Muslim) and minority ethnic group in Bangladesh. Second, whether variations in value orientation affect inter-ethnic community relations in Bangladesh. Lastly, the paper draws conclusion and discusses implication.

2. METHOD AND DATA

The ideas and data on description of cultural value orientation and its impacts on inter-ethnic relations used in this study were secondary in nature and were obtained from the scientific articles (Sodowsky et al., 1994; Uddin, 2009), books (Ali, 1998; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961) and reports (Kispotta, 1997). The data that were derived from the sources were more reliable and valid in the logics that were collected through systematic methodology by the world recognized experts in the given field. In addition, due to variations in cultural value orientations its effects on inter-ethnic group relations were inevitable, especially minority ethnic groups. To substantiate old (also secondary) findings on cultural value orientations and its effects on inter-ethnic relations, we used case method. These methods and its analysis were fruitful to analyze variations in cultural value orientation and its effects on inter-ethnic community group relations in Bangladesh.

3. CULTURAL VALUE ORIENTATION

3.1. Man-Nature Orientation

The works of philosophers and culture historians suggest that there exist the three-point range of variations in the man-nature orientation- Subjugation-to-Nature, Harmony-with-Nature, and Mastery-over-Nature (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961). Muslim culture in Bangladesh and throughout the world gives us ideas that specify Subjugation-to-Nature orientation. Because the Muslim all over the world believe in Islam, which includes the Oneness of God or Monotheism (Tawhid), Holy Qur'an as His Devine laws and principles, Muhammad (sm) as His nominated last Prophet and his Hadith (Sunnah) as practices of saying. These fundamental aspects of Islam develop ideas of nature and human relationship (Levy, 1962).

According to Islamic point of view Islam means "Surrender", "resignation", and "Submission" to Allah. A person, who submits to the will of Allah, the one and the only God, is called Muslim. This subjugation involves a total commitment in faith, obedience, and trust to this one God (Eshleman and Cashion, 1985: 276-377). Because Islam affirms that God is almighty, omnipresent, and invisible sovereignty of the universe in which He is the Creator, Master, and the Sustainer of all things-living beings and objects, visible and invisible, and the every thing existed in the universe is operating and controlling to His planned order. The things He has created have identified as sacred and profane. The sacred things must be observed, required doing, and the latter is strictly prohibited, forbidden, and disapproved to the men and women who believe in Islam. Since He is possessed of purity, justice, virtue, mercifulness, etc., and He has created Adam and Eve from His qualities that have posited all human beings on the highest position among the species. So, He always calls for His believers- all men and women- to act according to His guidance that have revealed in *Qur'an* and His nominated Prophet Muhammad (sm)'s *Sunnah* (Levy, 1962; Ahmad, 1977). In this respect Md. Kamal Hossain, aged 60, occupation farmer, said.....

"Allah has created all things around us that we have no power to change these things. According to him we only follow these according to Quran and Sunna." Md. Hazrat Ali, aged 65, occupation Molobhi, said me, "without order of Allah nothing do occur in the universe."

One the other hand, according to Santal myth and legend Santal culture is identified as Harmony-with-Nature orientation. Because the Santal in Bangladesh and India believe in Animism, which includes nature worships. The natural phenomena such as birth, death, illness, sun, moon, stars, rain, air, cyclone and other natural disasters which dominate and control human life, and that are detrimental to human life, please them with worships. They think that natural phenomena are forces or spirits, which are Goddess, such as bongas. The chief of the bongas is marang buru, mirolkoturoiko, jahar era, gosae era, pargana bonga and manjhi bonga. The first five bongas reside at the *Jaherthan*, the sacred grove found near their village and *Manjhi bonga* is located at the manjhithan inside the village. According to them these *bongas* are national. The other regional bongas include Sima bonga, Bahre bonga, and the family bongas: Orak bonga, abge bonga, and ancestral bonga. These bongas are hierarchically ordered Supreme Beings who control and determine Santal way of life (Ali, 1998). The Santal are called himself as '*hor*' man, those who believe in *bongas* are called Santal. The man santal is derived from samantapal. According to Bandyopadhyay (1999):

"Towards the rising of Sun (East) was the birth of man. At first there was only water, and under the water there was earth. Then Thakur Jiu created the beings that live in water first, and thereafter he made two 'Has Hasil' birds. Thakur called earthworm to bring earth. The earth was brought. Then Thakur sowed seeds of different kinds of plant. They grew up. Then two birds laid two eggs wherefrom two human beings were born, one boy and one girl. Then 'Has Hasil' took them to Hihiri Pipiri. The name of these two human beings was Haram and Ayo. Some people call them Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Budhi. They learned to prepare fermenting staff from Lita (Maran buru) and being drunk they had sexual intercourse, which led to the birth of seven boys and seven girls. Then all of them grew up and became pairs of their own accord. Haram and Budhi put one pair in each room. This is how their marriage was performed. After this, they also got children. Then they were divided into septs by Haram and Budhi who forbade marriage within the same sept. Then long time passed and they multiplied exceedingly. Thereafter, they went to Khoj Kaman. There mankind became bad and Thakur destroyed them by fire-rain excepting two who listened to Thakur's word. They were in the care of Harata Mountain. Those who got children, multiplied very much. Then they came from Harata Mountain to Sasan Beda. They divided into twelve septs"(pp. 51-52).

Uddin's study (2009) revealed that the Santal (88.96%) and the Oraon (86.21%) compared to the Muslim (77.33%) compared to the Hindu (56.55%) were more subjugated to nature and less compromise with (9.66% for Oraon, 7.59% for Santal, 18% for Muslim, 35.86% for Hindu) and mastery over nature (7.59% for Hindu, 4.67% for Muslim, 4.14% for Oraon, 3.45% for Santal) as well. These frequency distributions on man-nature orientation, according to Pearson's Chi-square results, were significantly different among the communities at ($n = 585$, $df = 6$, $value = 55.56$) $p < 0.01$ levels.

3.2. Human Nature Orientation

Basically, human nature in time and space is the same of all races, castes, classes, religious and regions. It has both physical and psychic energies, forces, and spirits that are developed and evolved from birth to death. Because every human baby is born with innate drives such as hunger, thirsty, sex, aggression etc. and is gradually developed with motor, cognitive, emotional, social or moral drives, such as rationality, love, sex, anger, aggression, hostility, altruism, sympathy, empathy, creativity and innovation, virtues etc. These qualities are always rooted in human nature of the human beings and work side by side. So, no man is called totally biological or social, emotional or rational. Of the qualities of human nature some are innate and some are acquired. These qualities may be destructive or constructive, good and bad, evil and devil. These qualities of human nature are the basic foundation of any society (Gordon, 1963; Gregory, Silvers and Sutch, 1978; Berlow and Silverberg, 1980). So, philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, biologists etc. are much devoted to inquire into the human nature. According to them, human nature has three logical divisions: *Evil, Good-and-Evil and Good* (McGinnies, 1970; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961).

In this respect, Islamic viewpoint maintains that human nature is pure and good. Man has been created in the best of all forms. Man and woman are made from the same substance. Every one is born in a state of purity and innocence. Success or failure depends entirely on one's beliefs and behavior. No one is to be responsible for the shortcomings of others (Ahmad, 1977). The view also maintains that devil always misleads to make misdeeds of human mankind. In human nature orientation the data shown revealed that both the Santal (80.69%) and the Oraon (82.07%) were more evil oriented and less in the other ranges of direction, while most of the Muslim were good (68%) but the Hindu were good and evil (82.76%) and less in the other (evil and neutral) directions. Results of Pearson's Chi-square test suggest that these frequency distributions were also significantly different at ($n = 585$, $df = 9$, $value = 578.09$) $p < 0.01$ levels (Uddin, 2009). Regarding human nature Karim Box, aged 58 said....

"Allah is innocent, pure and possessed of qualities from which He has created His followers, human beings: men and women with the same characteristics, although to some extent there are differences between them. So I firmly believe that if we follow Allah's Quran, we must be good in nature as like as our Prophet and Khalipas".

In contrast, the Santal view that every good deed and misdeeds are rooted in human nature. Susan Baskee of Santal community aged 50, day laborer, said.....*"Human nature is formed by physical qualities with which we are born and that is transformed by social and natural forces in which we are developed. All the good and bad qualities we are possessed affect us. So some time we are good and some time we are aggressive and destructive".*

However, basic human problems are embedded in human nature. What ways a society or community nurtures human nature, what ways a society or community controls negative aspects of human nature, depend on innovation and creativity of culture. In spite of it there are human problems that are beyond the control and solving by human efforts such as illness, death etc., where the Creator is only controller.

3.3. Time Orientation

Human life is framed in time. Everyone passes on his/her life with the three-point range of time: Past, Present, and Future. Everybody stands in particular age which is always changeable, and that has past experiences, and hope, expectation in future. Human beings pass on from one stage to another in their life cycle. In every stage of the life cycle, human beings expect special needs and desires. In this way from birth to death human beings need a set of needs and assign on a set of activity. However, when we eat, sex, love, communicate, marry, work, sleep, urinate, efficate, recreate, etc., are influenced and directed by time orientation. Both Muslim and Santal cultures are sensitized and influenced by time orientation.

According Muslim culture and Santal culture life cycle, in general, is divided into four stages: Infancy, childhood, adulthood and elderly in which conception, birth, puberty, marriage, death etc., are influenced by their respective cultural ceremonies, rituals, and institutions. In the range of time orientation, both communities are past or tradition oriented (Aziz and Maloney, 1985; Ali, 1998; Sultana, 2005). Regarding this Uddin (2009) found that in time orientation the Oraon (88.28%) compared to the Santal (86.90%) compared to the Muslim (78%) compared to the Hindu (68.97%) were more past directed and the Hindu compared to the other communities, such as the Muslim the Santal and the Oraon were more present (24.83% for Hindu, 18% for Muslim, 8.97% for Santal, 8.28% for Oraon) and future (6.21% for Hindu, 4% for Muslim, 4.14% for Santal, 3.45% for Oraon) oriented. Regarding this results of Pearson's Chi-square test reveal that time orientation among the communities was significantly different at ($n = 585$, $df = 6$, $value = 23.85$, $p < 0.01$) the same levels.

3.4. Activity Orientation

The activity orientation centers solely on the problem of the nature of man's mode of self-expression in activity. Every culture orients activities of human beings who learns what roles, who plays what roles and when. To gain human goals or to solve human problems, activities are ordered in rational and planned ways and distributed into male and female according to age and sex, ability, qualification, skills etc. Actually, activity orientation predisposes real behavior of people who are fit for what activities. Florence R. Kluckhohn and Fred L. Strodtback (1961: 15-17) maintain that "by activity we do not mean doing something but rather the quality of the creative activity which can

operate in one's emotional, intellectual and sensuous experiences and in one's will as well." According to them, activity orientation is the threefold: Being, Being-in-Becoming, and Doing. In the Being orientation the preference is for the kind of activity, which is a spontaneous expression of what conceive to be 'given' in the human personality. The Being-in-Becoming orientation shares with the Being one a great concern with what the human being is rather than what he can accomplish, but here the similarity ends.

Actually, the Being-in-Becoming orientation emphasizes that kind of activity which has as its goal the development of all aspects of the self as an integrated whole. The Doing orientation is the dominant one in which accomplishments is measured by standard that is related to external activity. In Muslim culture separate activities of male and female are desirable, but in Santal culture joint activities of male and female are desirable, preferable for them. In activity orientation the data presented in the table 5 show that the Oraon (89.66) compared to the other communities (87.59% for the Santal, 78% for the Muslim, and 66.90% for the Hindu) were more being oriented and the Hindu (26.90%) than the Muslim (18%), the Santal (8.28%) and the Oraon 6.90%) were more being-in-becoming and doing oriented. Results of Pearson's Chi-square test also reveal that activity orientation of the communities was statistically significant differences at ($n=585$, $df=6$, $value=32.52$) $p<0.01$ levels (Uddin, 2009).

3.5. Relational Orientation

The men live and meet human needs in relation to other men. The common human problems exist in man-to-man relations or relational orientation. This orientation has three sub-divisions: the Lineal, the Collateral, and the Individualistic. Which relationship an individual or a person is born with and developed in, depends upon relational orientation. An individual is directly cultural and biological relation with the family of orientation in which lineal principle in relationships reflects in age and generation differences and from which cultural and biological continuities go on. The individual is not only a human being and member of family of procreation, but also a member of joint or extended family relationships. There are the more immediate relationships in time and space.

Biologically siblings' relationships and relationships between two or more generations are collateral relationships. Individualistic principle in relationships prefers autonomy and gives value to individuality or individuation. However, Muslim culture in Bangladesh is dominant, but Santal culture is less dominant. In this situation, Muslim culture is internally divergent, externally consistent and integrated, but Santal culture is internally convergent, integrated and consistent. However, cultural orientation describes both Muslim and Santal ways of life that include all aspects of human life: biological, social, economic, political, psycho-emotional, spiritual and moral. These elements of human life are organized in a framework that interlocks and interconnects them into social structure at both family and community levels, and that structures at both levels are controlled, directed, and guided by their respective cultural rules, regulations, laws, codes of conduct. Lastly, in relational orientation the Hindu (85.52%) and the Muslim (76.77%) compared to the Oraon (53.79%) and the Santal (53.10%) were more lineal-hierarchical and less collateral and individualistic, but the later cases (42.76% for Santal and 40.69% for Oraon) preferred more collateral human relation than the Muslim (19.33) and the Hindu (8.97%) did. Pearson's Chi-square results also suggest that there were significant differences in human relational orientation ($n=585$, $df=6$, $value=23.85$, $p<0.01$) among the communities' respondents in rural Bangladesh (Uddin, 2009).

4. CULTURAL VALUE ORIENTATION AND INTER-ETHNIC COMMUNITY RELATION

Muslim community people in Bangladesh are socio-culturally dominant than the other communities. They authorize on social, political, economic and cultural affairs in rural and urban settings of Bangladesh. In such authorized situations, Muslim community people lead and make decisions in all spheres of the society in favor of them. Inter-community relations among Muslim, Hindu, Oraon and Santal communities are not different from societal situations. Regarding this several studies (Chun, Moos & Cronkite, 2006; Huddy, 2002; Jackson et al., 2004; Parker & Jones, 1999) hypothesize that hierarchical/vertical community power relation compared to egalitarian/horizontal power relation within a community interaction and/or between community interactions induces more stress in a given and space and time. These studies on the inter-community interaction show that people with the minority status and lower social and political dominance compared to the majority with higher social and political ones feel more stress from unequal distribution of limited social and material resources,

social discrimination, and mistreatment from the dominant cultural group, although the later group is more individualistic at personal, egalitarian at societal and political level.

Based on representative samples several cross-cultural studies in Bangladesh (Sarker, 1997; Uddin, 2009a) reveal that although the communities: Muslim, Hindu, Santal and Oraon are collectivistic in nature, the Hindu and the Muslim compared to the Santal and the Oraon are more hierarchical in power relation at familial, community and even inter-community relation. General perception and several research reports indicate that the Bangladeshi Muslims are the majority in number in population structure and socio-politically more dominant, while the Hindu are less-dominant and both the Santal and Oraon are non-dominant in the inter-community power structure. The minority groups with their lower socio-political dominance suffer more from social threats, discrimination and unequal distribution of limited resources than the dominant community in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh because of their variations in VOPs. Like the minority communities the lower social class of the dominant (Muslim) community also experience stress from intra-community group dominance, because the dominant cultural and social group tries to hold power in social structure and always favors of their fellowmen' socio-economic development and cultural change, and disfavor the lower and the minority groups in this society. As a result, the minority groups compared to the dominant ones experience more stress in association with the VOPs and its community power pattern in rural and urban Bangladesh (Uddin, 2008d).

Shamal from Santal community aged 44, says.....we are dominated in social structure because of ethnic minority. Another respondent from Oraon community... we have no power in the community, because our culture is different from dominant group.

Richard T. Schaefer (1979) rightly says about inter-group relations: Members of a minority experience unequal treatment from the dominant group in the form of prejudice, discrimination and segregation due to physical and cultural differences between them and they are aware of their subordinate status than the dominant group. Based on the Shaefer's valuable comment, present author clearly observes that the Santal and Oraon community people have been gradually marginalizing in and excluding from economic, social, political and cultural processes of the society. As a result, the Santal community people are oppressed, feared, deprived, discriminated and even violated by the Muslim community. In such situations, the Santal and Oraon community people face many economic, psycho-social and cultural problems in the village. Other researches also explored that in the village setting minority group's socio-cultural attainments are very lower than the Muslim and Hindu community due to unequal distribution of economic, employment, educational, health, political / electoral, and legal opportunities mobilized by the society (Akand, 2005; Hossain, 2005; Liza, 2005; Rahaman, 2004).

One respondent from Oraon ethnic group says.....I have no job, house and even security. Another respondent from Santal group says.... I always feel stress.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

In sum, value orientation patterns are the most fundamental existential questions for the Muslim, Hindu, Santal and Oraon in Bangladesh. Although the findings of the study explored and presented suggest that there were significant differences and inter-correlations in the VOPs among the communities in Bangladeshi villages that are consistently supported by several cross-cultural studies conducted in abroad as well as in Bangladesh, most of the respondents' statuses on the VOPs were first ranges of directions. With the value directions most of the respondents cannot solve their human problems faced in the respective environment because of their myths and legends, mystical, aesthetic knowledge system (Al-Azmeh, 1986; Choudhury, 1991; Murata & Chittick, 1995; Qureshi ed., 1984; Sen ed., 1992; Zaharna, 2008), as are in the western and European cultures because of their authentic, reliable and pragmatic knowledge (Bennett et al., 1992; Gonzales et al., 2008; Goetz ed.-in-chif, 1986; Neikrug & Blum, 1982; Nakanishi & Dawia, 2006; Oishi et al., 2004; Riyan et al., 2001; Sowell, 1991, Schwart, 2003; Surkyn & Lesthaeghe, 2004). These findings may be applied to cross-cultural social practice in Bangladesh. For example, social scientists, especially sociologist and anthropologist:

- May help to create consciousness about cultural orientation of the Muslim and Santal communities among social workers who will work in any problem-solving process with the communities.

- May also help to build up rapport with clients in problem-solving process.
- May help to develop unity in community's cultural diversity.
- May also develop skills social workers to work with community's clients.

Finally, although the article may have methodological limitations, the findings of cultural orientation of the communities may be applied in social practice in respect of consciousness and knowledge, professional relationship and skills development to establish unity in diversity in community social life. Despite these findings and its related social practice further empirical cross-cultural research should conduct on the relationship between cultural value orientation and inter-ethnic relations in Bangladesh.

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