Doctoral Dissertation

Resistance Sociality in the Shahbag Movement: A Critical Understanding of Social Media, Sociality and Resistance in Bangladesh

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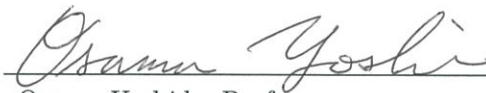Doctor of Philosophy

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We hereby recommend that the dissertation by Mr. CHOWDHURY MOIYEN ZALAL entitled "Resistance Sociality in the Shahbag Movement: A Critical Understanding of Social Media, Sociality and Resistance in Bangladesh" be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

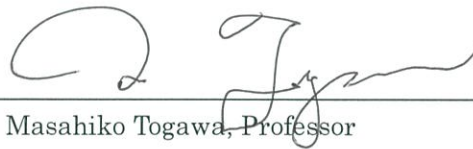Committee on Final Examination:

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Summary of the Dissertation

Have you ever wonder why a post, comment, or picture shared by users in social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blog sites) suddenly creating a significant impact among other users and resulting into massive socio-political mobilisation such as Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Gezi Park Resistance, #MeToo to # BlackLivesMatter? Many scholars tried to answer the questions, but they tried only focusing on one aspect emphasising on social media or the socio-economic condition. The digital activities, debate and discussion in the online space are translating into physical activities and actions in offline spaces, local issues spreading across the globe and engaging other people from a diverse background. At the same time, events and issues from the offline space affecting the online spaces in a congregation of ways. The advent of social media challenged the traditional idea of the public and private sphere, communication and socialisation. This challenge can be best visible during the time of social movements where social media used as a protest mobilisation tool, a space for socialisation, an online protest entity, a bridge between online and offline spaces. The process is a very dynamic and complex relationship between technology and society. This research tries to unmask this relationship in the context of the social media movement of Bangladesh. The movement is known as the 2013 Shahbag movement.

Blogger and online activists (educated, middle-class urban youth) of the online space, initiated the movement which translated into offline protest and later evolved into a mass movement which continued for one month demanding capital punishment of convicted war criminal of liberation war of Bangladesh. During this movement, numerous people showed solidarity online, 100,000-500,000 people joined in the street protest. (5th February to 5th March 2013). Spread in different cities in Bangladesh (e.g. Barisal, Sylhet). Bengali diaspora across the globe showed solidarity online and arranged street protest in different cities (e.g. London, New York). The main query in this research is, if the discussion of social media bringing substantive insights into the understanding of this dynamic relationship, concerning political public sphere? If so, how? Which way? To what extent?

The central research queries can be addressed through an analysis of the localisation process of social media, the emergence of digital resistance, dominant digital culture, forms of digital activism. Addressing the transformability of spaces through social media is also crucial because it will put light on the emergence of resistance in physical spaces. To understand what happens when digital resistance in physical space such as fluidity of collective identity, contamination of resistance-call, sporadic growth of transnational resistance activities. Moreover, the understanding of

multimodality of Resistance-Sociality of the Shahbag movement is also vital. Therefore, the following objectives were developed; the first objective is to study the localisation process of social media in Bangladesh. Second is to understand the transformativity of space and its polymorphic dynamics between digital and physical localities. Moreover, the final objective is to analyse the multimodality of social media, resistance Sociality of the Shahbag movement.

This study is focused on the relationship between social media and society, specifically dealing with social movements (e.g. Shahbag movement and HI) in Bangladesh. The principal methodology used in this study is the ethnographic enquiry of the relationship between social media and society. Participant observation and social media ethnography were conducted during fieldwork. In the case of studying social movements, using multi-modal and multi-sited designs in social media ethnography are fruitful, often connecting online and offline observations to explore a given phenomenon. It is multimodal because actions of the actors of the movement are influenced not only by face-to-face interaction in the offline space but also in the different social network sites. One online space is connected with other online spaces. As the research is exploring the online-offline relationship within a polymedia environment, the traditional media has also been included. According to the theme of the research, the social media movements of Shahbag consisting of different interconnected sites have also been identified. In the online space, the research located the digital resistance before Shahbag, as well as the digital activism sites during Shahbag. As the movement progressed, it also located activism in physical protest sites (e.g. street and other physical locality. The blended mode of social media ethnography helps in identifying various sites (both online and offline) of resistance and sociality through exploring multimodal communication process as they function in the social media movement. The rigorous and meticulous analysis of the connectivity helped in examining the dynamics of the social media movement.

The phenomenon of social media movement presents a situation which is transcending spaces, fluid in sociality, with the form of resistance being transformed through multimodal polymorphic connectivity. In order to determine the dynamic, polymorphic relationship among social media, resistance and sociality, the theoretical framework of Resistance Sociality has been developed.

CHAPTER 2 explored the historical background of social media instigated the Shahbag movement. While introducing the Shahbag movement and its relationship with social media, CHAPTER 3 analysed the relationship between neoliberal economy, technological invention and expansion of social media worldwide and the localisation of social media in Bangladesh. CHAPTER 4 focuses on the resistance Sociality in the Shahbag movement. Analysing the technology of digital sociality and its relation to different actions of the actors, this section explored the process of creating concentration and interactivity in social media, which would eventually result in a street protest. CHAPTER 5 analyses the anti-Shahbag movement and activities and how those are operated

in the digital and physical spaces. This chapter explored the connection between digital resistance against Shahbag and its connectivity to physical resistance. CHAPTER 6 focused on the online contestation and negotiation between pro and anti-liberation war bloggers and online activists. This chapter shed light on how the digital locality of Bangladesh became the protest sites for activists and how it created digital resistance, which, owing to the Shahbag movement, translated again into social media political efficacy.

This research not only explored the dynamic historical relationship between social media and society meticulously but also showed its diverse and complex outcome in social media movement. Through this, the research also developed an analytical tool of "Resistance Sociality" to analyse such phenomena across the globe.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

From the last decade, social media has infiltrated various aspects of Bangladeshi society. The Shahbag movement in 2013 exemplified this omnivorous expansion of digital resistance locality, which the world has experienced through social media movements (i.e. Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Gezi Park Resistance, #MeToo to #BlackLivesMatter). Historically, social movements have played and continue to play a significant role in many societies. In the contemporary world, especially from 2010 to 2014, protests erupted in thousands of cities over one hundred countries around the world (Castells, 2015).

Over the last two decades, social media has been integrated into our social life in such a way that we tend to forget its existence as a separate entity, such as a communication medium. Nowadays, we often consider social media as a place people go to for interaction and socialisation; not something out there, "outside" of our intimate social interaction, friendly conversations (Miller et al., 2016). It is unlike the traditional television station or newspaper offices, where news and views are published which people watch, listen and give their opinions on. Increasingly, people are made aware of social media's formidable role as a catalyst in recent social movements (Arda, 2015; BONILLA & ROSA, 2015b; Castells, 2015). From the Arab Spring to the Occupy Wall Street movements, from Umbrella Revolution to Gezi Park Resistance, from #MeToo to #BlackLivesMatter, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets, occupied urban spaces to demand changes in their respective societies and countries. They have protested against the authoritarian regime, demanded democracy, equal rights and so on. These protests have been some of the largest in history, unprecedented in their respective nature (Ortiz, Burke, Berrada, & Cortes, 2014).

These movements are often referred as social media movements (Castells, 2015). The social media movement in Bangladesh transformed resistance from the digital locality to physical locality on 5th February 2013 at 5 p.m. Members of the Blogger and Online Activist Network (BOAN)[1], students and the urban youth of Dhaka metropolis occupied the Shahbag intersection and demanded capital punishment (death by hanging) of a convicted "war criminal" of the 1971 war of liberation. Their protest was against the "lenient verdict" given by the International War Crime Tribunal (ICT)[2] Bangladesh. Shahbag, a significant traffic hub connecting the old and new Dhaka metropolis was the physical and symbolic fulcrum of what is today widely referred to as the 2013 Shahbag Movement. For more than a month, hundreds of thousands of protesters (Anam, 2013) occupied the space of Shahbag intersection, roaring *"Fashi Chai, Fashi Chai" (Hang now, Hang now)*.

1.1 Background of the Study

Bangladesh is one of the eighth most populous country in the world with immense social media penetration in its cities, especially in the capital city Dhaka. It ranked 2nd in the number of active Facebook users in 2017 (Mahmud, 2017). Since 2005, social media had begun to emerge in Bangladesh as an alternative media and helped in generating a pro-liberation war digital discourse based on online discussion and debate. Bangla blog sites such as somewhereinblog, amarblog, sachalayatanblog led the social media revolution in Bangladesh. Bloggers from the Bangla social media (also known as "Bangla blogosphere") initiated the demand for bringing war criminals to justice in the Shahbag Movement.

During the liberation war of 1971, the Pakistani Army committed one of the most

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[1] The Blogger and Online Activist Network (BOAN), Shahbag movement was initiated by the Blogger and Online Activist Network (BOAN), a group of urban youth who have been involved in online and offline activism in the past thirteen years. They emerged from the Bangla blogosphere, which comprises different home-grown blog sites, an online and alternative space for debate, discussion and socialisation that came into being during the development of Bangla social media.
[2] The International Crimes Tribunal (Bangladesh) (ICT of Bangladesh) is a domestic war crimes tribunal in Bangladesh set up in 2009 to investigate and prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistani Army and their local collaborators, Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams during the Bangladesh Liberation War.

horrific genocides in the 20th century, against the people of Bangladesh. The Pakistani Army were accompanied by local collaborators. During the war, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB hereafter)[3,] (largest religion-based political party) collaborated with the Pakistani military. The world witnessed unprecedented crimes against humanity, perpetrated by the Pakistani Army and their local accomplices (such as the Razakars, Al Badar and Al-Shams). Those Bangladeshi people who collaborated with the Pakistani army are called Razakar[4] (literally "volunteer") by the Bengali pro-liberation peoples. During the liberation war, JIB leaders supported the Pakistani army, and many were accused of joining the mass killing and rape against their fellow countrymen. They were also accused of being directly involved in selecting intellectuals as victims and helping in their murder. After the liberation of 1971, the Awami league[5] (the party which fought for liberation) came into power and the demand was slowly raised for the then alleged criminals to stand trial and be punished. In 1972, the spouses of the martyred intellectuals started the demand by public protest, although the Bangladeshi Government passed the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act (Kay QC 2010)[6], president Shiekh Mujibur Rahman leader of Awami league (Al hereafter) declared a general pardon to those Jamaat leaders.

After the liberation war, the politics of Bangladesh went through sweeping changes. The first government lead by Al, incorporated socialist democratic values. Shortly after the liberation, in 1974, the Al government introduced a one party regime, using parliamentary

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[3] Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB) is the main Islamist party in Bangladesh. During British colonial period (until 1947) Jamaat-e-Islami was founded by Mawlana Sayyid Abul-Ala Mawdudi in Lahore, Pakistan in 26th August 1941. Mawdudi was one of the most important proponents of political Islam believing in "complete obedience" to Islamic rules, an insisted that without political power Islam cannot succeed in its mission. It is considered not only a party but also an ideological movement. The Islamic organisation, aspires to transform the political, social, religious, cultural and economic structure of Bangladesh according to Islamic Sharia Law. In 1948 Jamaat-e-Islami was divided into two, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind and Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, and in 1950's began to work in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), (Kumar, 2017). During the war of 1971, Jamaat-e-Islami collaborated with the Pakistani military. They were against the liberation of Bangladesh.
[4] Razakar was an anti-Bangladesh paramilitary force organised by the Pakistan Army to assist them in defeating pro-Bangladeshi forces (e.g. the freedom fighters in 1971 and the masses).
[5] It is the country's current governing party after winning a majority in the 2014 parliamentary election. This party has been in power since 2008. The party, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, led the struggle for independence, first through massive populist and civil disobedience movements, such as the six-point movement and 1971 Non-Cooperation Movement, and then during the liberation war in 1971.
[6] The International Crimes Tribunals Act was enacted to investigate and prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistani Army and their local collaborators, Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams during the Bangladesh Liberation War.

majority and constitutional amendment. The Al leader and then president Shiekh Mujibur Rahman was killed in 1975 and military leaders took over state power.

While JIB was ban in liberated Bangladesh led by Al government, the military regime (1975-1990) reinstated JIB in mainstream politics and JIB slowly became influential in Bangladeshi politics. So much so that both Al and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP hereafter)[7], the two major political parties collaborated with JIB in different occasions in electoral politics. The demand of bringing war criminals to justice was ignored and cornered during military regime.

Throughout the political discourse which aroused after the liberation war, the socialist policies and secular rhetoric of first Al government was contested by Islamic nationalist conscience through JIB-BNP coalition. The demand of bringing war criminals to justice was remerged by the movement[8] of civil-intellectuals in 1992 lead by Jahanara Imam, mother of the martyr of war of liberation, Rumi. While successful in generating mass support this movement was silenced by the democratically elected government. The issue of bringing war criminals to justice remained unfulfilled. In 2009, Al own a landslide victory against JIB-BNP coalition. Bringing war criminals to justice was a key point in Al's election manifesto. In 2009 Al set up the International Crimes Tribunal (Bangladesh) (ICT of Bangladesh) to investigate and prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971.

The Shahbag Movement characterized itself as a "secularist" movement which demanded for the removal of Anti-Liberation war forces from Bangladesh. It called for capital punishment (death by hanging) for the war criminals of 1971. The narrative of Shahbag was aligned with reclaiming the "spirit of the liberation war" in which the vision

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[7] The Bangladesh Nationalist Party is one of the two major contemporary political parties of Bangladesh. It was founded on 1 September 1978 by former Bangladesh President Ziur Rahman (Military Regime) in the presidential election of 1978. The party also holds the record of being the largest opposition in the history of parliamentary elections of the country. It does not currently have representation in parliament after its having boycotted the BNP which promotes Bangladeshi Nationalism emphasizing Muslim Bangladeshi identity. It maintains close alliance with the Islamist party Jammat-e-Islami.

[8] Jahanara Imam (the mother of a famous young freedom fighter killed in liberation war of 1971) initiated this movement and created Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee 1992-4 (Committee to exterminate the Killers and Collaborators). This committee was consisting of pro-liberation war intellectuals, writer, poet, teachers, activists.

was a secular and fair society for all. The demands of Shahbag protesters have indicated a process of reclaiming the nation by getting rid of anti-liberation war forces such as JIB, not only from politics but also from other sectors. After liberation war JIB had been grown, spread and internalised in many sectors (i.e. banking, media, education, health) of Bangladeshi society. Thus, Shahbag, in promoting the secular Bengali identity instead of religion-based Islamic identity, was rekindling the identity which was the central theme of the declaration of independence of 1971 and Bengali nationalism. The demand of Shahbag was "*bringing war criminals to justice*" and this was echoed in their slogan, "*Ami ke? tumi ke? Bangalee, Bangalee" (Who are you? Who am I? Bengali Bengali).* The main actors in this research are Blogger and Online Activist of the Shahbag movement.

Another social movement occurred on the 5th of May 2013, following the religion-based Islamic identity. This time, the Hefazat-e-Islam[9] (HI hereafter), an Islamic coalition consisting of Qawmi[10] madrasa students and teachers, put forward "ultraconservative" demands including severe punishment for alleged "atheist bloggers" of the Shahbag movement. Branding the Shahbag movement as an anti-Islamic gathering, HI demanded the abolishment of Shahbag, shouting *"Hang the Bloggers, there is no place for atheists in Muslim majority Bangladesh!"*

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Bloggers and online activists initiated an unprecedented movement in the recent history of Bangladesh which went from online to offline. Shahbag protesters were demanding

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[9] In 2010, Hefazat-e-Islam was formed. Initially it was composed of teachers and students of more than 100 Qawmi madrasas at Chittagong, the second largest city in Bangladesh. This Islamic group is based in the proliferating Qawmi Madrasas in Bangladesh. In 2013, it emerged as an Islamic coalition and came into prominence after organising counter-protests against the Shahbag movement. On 5 May 2013, hundreds of thousands of activists of Hefazat-e-Islam gathered in Dhaka and chanted "Hang the atheist bloggers!" followed by huge protests in both Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong. They also put forward an ultraconservative 13-point charter.
[10] The Qawmi madrasa is one of the Islamic educational systems in Bangladesh. The Qawmi madrasas are not regulated by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board. As private charitable organizations, Qawmi madrasas are supported almost exclusively by donation (local and mostly from the Middle East). There are approximately 50,000 to 60.000 Qawmi madrasas operating in Bangladesh.

for the "reclamation" of the nation, which was later challenged by the Islamic coalition (HI) through "religiosity" (Haq, 2015). In the Shahbag movement, social media played a seminal role (M. Z. Chowdhury, 2012b, 2016). As can be inferred, neither the technology (social media) alone nor structural condition may have contributed to generating the social movement. The relatively new technology such as social media has a dynamic dialogical and historical relationship with society, unceasingly shaping each other. As Christian Fuchs (2012) has criticised about the techno-deterministic relationship between technology and society in the backdrop of social media movement, *It ignores the fact that technology is embedded into society, and that it is humans living under and rebelling against power relations, not technology, who conduct unrest and revolutions"* (Fuchs 2012: 387).

Castells (2015) argued that the seed of resistance operates primarily in the private sphere in an autonomous domain, where a network of individuals can evolve. In the Shahbag movement, a similar kind of network may be found amongst bloggers and online activists. Social media, in its having introduced Web 2.0 technology, challenged the traditional communication system. As Trottier and Fuchs (2015) have argued, social media not only challenged the traditional communication system but also reshaped the communication process radically, thereby creating digital sociality and locality. The Shahbag movement generated a culture of digital resistance which is transcending connectivity of spaces in physical and digital localities in Bangladesh. With the immense popularity among masses and their spontaneous participation in the Shahbag movement, blogger and online activists came into prominence in the mainstream political landscape of Bangladesh, though not as a formal political party but as an influential political entity, as a force of change led by the youth, with a non-partisan face. This study endeavours to explore the transcending, fluid, polymorphic, multimodal, connectivity of both localities and socialities which generated connective action, politics of the non-partisan, connective leadership, frontline activism, social media political

efficacy, and slacktivism. One of the aims of this research is to understand the localisation process of social media in Bangladesh, which includes social media's adaptation to the local context, the introduction of Bengali writing, community blogging, and the development of digital resistance based on local issues such as bringing war criminals to justice. Therefore, this study examines the digital resistance which translated into socialities of resistance in the physical locality of Shahbag in Bangladesh.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Research Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to analyse if the discussion of social media bringing substantive insights into the understanding of the dynamic relationship between social media and society? If so, how? Which way? To what extent is it effective?

These queries can be addressed through an analysis of the localisation process of social media in Bangladesh, the emergence of digital resistance, dominant digital culture, forms of digital activisms, the transformability of spaces, the emergence of resistance in physical localities, the dynamics of resistance in physical and digital localities, the relationship among the spaces, the intensities digital sociality produce, the multimodality of resistance activities, connective action, fluidity of collective identity, contamination of resistance-call, sporadic growth of transnational resistance activities and understanding of multimodality of resistance-socialities of the Shahbag movement. Therefore, the following objectives were developed:

1. To study the localization process of social media in Bangladesh.
2. To understand the transformativity of space and its polymorphic dynamics between digital and physical localities.

3. To analyse the multimodality of social media, resistance socialities of the Shahbag movement.

Research Questions

Social media has expanded differently in diverse regions and localities. Due to the malleable characteristics of the Web 2.0 technology, the social media localisation process generated distinctive digital culture in different parts of the world. This has occurred because social media has always been in conversation with local society and economy while simultaneously interrelating with global digital socialities. Thus, social media is concurrently global and local, public and private; in essence, different digital localities dispersed in different regions with the potential for communication at any given moment. This polymorphic connectivity intensified and produced digital socialities which may translate into physical locality. Thus it is also important to understand who provides the "authenticity" and "trust" in social media, how do they do that? When does the resistance generated in digital localities translate into physical localities that may create social media movements such as that of Shahbag in 2013? To explore this phenomenon, the following queries are examined:

1. How did social media localize and generate the digital resistance in Bangladesh?
2. How does the polymorphic connectivity generate multimodal transformativity of spaces in digital and physical localities?
3. What is the complex relationship between social media, resistance and sociality in the Shahbag movement?

1.4 Review of Related Literature

In this section, related literature corresponding to social media, the Shahbag movement, and HI will be discussed. A number of books and articles regarding the Shahbag

movement and HI movement were published during 2013 and 2014. This copious academic publication continues till this day, such as with the recent publication of (Roy, 2018) discussing the government's role in Shahbag, arguing how Shahbag might be "stolen" or contained by the Al government as a prospective emerging secular civil society. However, before going into this recent discussion, it might be interesting to acknowledge how Shahbag literature has been emerging over the years. One of such interesting streams of scholarships is the participants' and activists' account of the Shahbag movement, mostly published in 2014, during a Bangla book fair. Such account is the book of Sarker (2014) the spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho[11], titled *Shahbag: Gonojagoron o Itihasher Day* [Shahbag: Mass uprising and the Debt of History]. Academic literature about the Shahbag movement has also been on the rise, with some depicting the unprecedented nature of the movement (Khan, 2014; S. A. Khan, 2013) while others exploring the "agencies" of the Shahbag movement as well as the anti-Shahbag movement (S. A. Khan, 2013; Zaman, 2016) in the light of social movements in general. Focused on the relationship of social media and social movement, the primary purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature concerning the study objectives, and identify the gap in knowledge on the topic to be filled in by the current research. For this purpose, the literature is broadly categorised into three sections: first is the Shahbag movement and social media; next is the Shahbag movement in itself; and lastly, the Shahbag movement and HI. After a review of literature, the theoretical framework will be presented.

1.4.1 Social Media and Shahbag Movement

In Shahbag movement literature, such as by Haq (2015), the mention of social media is often confined into a short introduction about the online based activist group BOAN and

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[11] Gonojagoron Moncho is a central platform of Shahbag protesters created on 8th February 2013 by the blogger and online activist and representatives of students and cultural organisations who supported the Shahbag movement from the beginning. It was not a formal (registered) organisation as such, but rather like a political party or a cultural organisation, yet it was the central platform of Shahbag. The representatives of students and cultural organisations who joined the Shahbag movement selected Imran H. Sarker as the spokesman of the movement.

their activities with regard to the movement. However, in other literature such as by Sabur (2013), a relatively broader sketch is provided about the social media mediated nature of the movement. While problematizing the contemporary construction of the movement as "youth-new media-apolitical" (Sabur, 2013a: 10), she identified some key features of social media movement such as how social media were intersecting the complex nature of mainstream politics. Compared with Arab Spring, she found that Shahbag was also creating new political spaces and process and doing so neither by toppling the government nor by pleading for moral cleansing but by demanding retribution for the war criminals of 1971. Social media had aided social movements; it has "provided activists with platforms that transcended boundaries, escaping surveillance in real and virtual life" but "social media can neither substitute nor shrink the political space on the ground" (Sabur, 2013a: 10).

The role of social media in diffusing protest information was also discussed by Raychoudhury, Saxena, Chaudhary, and Mangla (2015). They have found that the real-world incidents related to the Shahbag movement are being replicated in Twitter. Twitter enabled the call of the movement to be globally dispersed and overcome geographically bounded territories. They have also found how Shahbag-related popular hashtags were used for personal agenda or national issues, unrelated to Shahbag. In another study, Zamir (2015) found that protesters of the Shahbag movement have strong connections with each other and maintain formal, informal and interpersonal relationships through social media. In the case of online protest networking, the digital activities of Shahbag protesters are the most critical node in the network. The act of protesters, who were involved in re-tweeting protest information, ultimately resulted in propagating the issue to a more significant number of audiences.

Despite the dearth in studies, there are writings about the emergence of Bangla social media in published books and news articles (F. Ahmed, 2013; M. Z. Chowdhury, 2016; Haq,

2011; Z. Hasan, 2014; Shamim, 2014). In this section, some will be discussed to give a brief understanding of the literature about the Bangla blogosphere. Haq (2011) examined Bangla blog's turning point from a "community chatroom" into a socioeconomic resistance, exploring the pattern of the Bangladeshi Internet community with the development of Internet-based communication and its recent trend of activism. He concluded that the Bangla blogosphere had become a place for activism through two significant changes in communication. One is how the traditional roles of writer-publisher have been changed, where the writer can now become the publisher at the same time. The other factor is the increasing participation of users in offline spaces (Haq, 2011). Bloggers themselves are excellent observers and analysts of the Bangla blogosphere. For instance, a blogger wrote a series of posts about the history and discourses generated in Somewherein...blog (https://www.somewhereinblog.net) over the years, and explained about the characteristics of bloggers (S. Rahman, 2009). Z. Hasan (2014) identified how Shahbag is connected with the online activism that had grown in the past few years in Bangladesh; however, most of the scholarly analysis lack the theoretical frame of understanding social media and social movements.

As M. Z. Chowdhury (2012b) argued earlier, the social media in Bangladesh may result in a public sphere, but in a way that is not comparable to our past experiences of public discourse. This may contribute to democracy and dialogue, but not in a way that we would expect it to, or in a way that we have experienced in the past. Later, he argued that the Shahbag movement had its historical connection which deals with secular and Islamic ideology. Both national identity and religious identity played a significant role in the movement. On one hand, a mass mobilisation through social media can be seen; on the other hand, a mass mobilisation through an organised form of social movement can also be seen (M. Z. Chowdhury, 2016). If social media were to become a public sphere under the ideal

Habermasian notion (Habermas, 1989), the public sphere must be contextualised and re-examined according to a particular social movement, history and connecting actors including social media.

1.4.2 The Shahbag Movement

There are a number of books, mostly written in Bengali, regarding the Shahbag movement. Some of them are focused on the historical connection between the movement and the Bangladesh war of liberation in 1971. As S. Khan (2013) showed, the Shahbag movement is a continuation of historical disputes embedded in the society which resulted in a public revolt and mass uprising. Thus, the movement was neither a historically isolated event nor an organised social resistance, which resulted in a movement. Another influential activist who was involved in the civil movement of bringing war criminals to justice, Kabir (2014) identified the Shahbag movement as a re-emergence of the public protest, a continuation of the social movement that was started in the 1990s. During that time, Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee [12] 1992-1994 [Committee to exterminate the Killers and Collaborators] was established, and they raised the issue of bringing war criminals to justice. As a key proponent of the war crime tribunal, he wanted to shed light on the trajectory of the demand of capital punishment of the war criminals in his book, *Gana Adalat theke Gonojagoron* [People's Court to Mass Uprising] (2014). The same line of argument which emphasised on the historicity can also be seen in the work of other scholars (Haq, 2015; Sabur, 2013b). They have also argued that the Shahbag movement is a continuation of the civil movement that started in the 1990s.

S. Khan (2013a), narrates different stages of development of the Shahbag movement and relates it with the 1971 liberation war. In his opinion, the liberation war of 1971 remains

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[12] This committee called for the trial of people who committed crimes against humanity in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War in collaboration with the Pakistani forces. The Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee set up mock trials in Dhaka in March 1992 known as Gonoadalot (Court of the people) and "sentenced" persons they accused of being war criminals. Jahanara Imam and others were charged with treason.

an unresolved issue and this is one of the key reasons for this new uprising. He argues that the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 created a new national spirit – one of national unity and secularism. However, many years after liberation, Bangladesh has failed to move towards this direction. What Shahbag was trying to provide was this "lost" (Khan, 2014: 5) direction. He concludes that "the future of this movement not only depend(s) on the verdict of the court but what would be the future of the nation depends on the expansion of this movement" (Khan, 2014: 12). Being a proponent of the Shahbag movement, he assumed it as a prelude to more significant socio-political change and envisioned it not as a mere demand for capital punishment but rather as an end to "Islamic fascism." (Khan, 2014: 12).

Justice discourse, which mainly focuses on ensuring justice of the war criminals of liberation war, played a pivotal role in the discussion of the Shahbag movement. At the same time, most of the writers (P. Alam, 2014; Haq, 2015; M. Haque, 2013b) are agreed upon the point that, in its essence, this movement is not merely demanding justice for war crimes (i.e. the capital punishment for the war criminals) but instead is providing the space for the sharing of accumulated rage against diverse social injustices which have piled up for decades in Bangladeshi society. P. Alam (2014) has argued that "the demands of the movement increased, due to the fact that the demands were waiting to be heard" (P. Alam, 2014: 47). Some have tried to explain this movement on the basis of the political motivation of the masses against the war criminals and put emphasis on the pro-liberation war spirit prevailing in society which led to a spontaneous outburst. There are some scholars, such as M. M. Islam (2014), who provide critique of the Shahbag movement claiming it to be not spontaneous, or a movement of the Al, the ruling government, in order to suppress the opposing party BNP. Islam also argued that AI was collaborating with anti-liberation party JIB in order to win the election of 2014. As many leaders of the JIB are recognised by the International War Crime Tribunal (ICT) as war criminals, JIB was silently supported by BNP (on the war criminal

issue) and was using HI to oppose the Shahbag movement; thus, showing political strength to the Al government. However, later, the political scenario changed. This line of argument may best be understood when comparing literature dealing with the two social movements, Shahbag and HI.

1.4.3 Shahbag and Hefazat-e-Islam: Contested Identity, Contested Politics, Contested Ideology

The debate and discussions about the Shahbag and Hefazat-e-Islam movement often fall into the category of "us vs them" dichotomy. For the pro-Shahbag activists and supporters, "us" is recognised as the pro-liberation war group of people, who supported the demand of capital punishment for the war criminals. On the other hand, they consider "them" as the JIB and later the HI. The popular dichotomous stand between the Shahbag movement and HI can be observed when scholars like Kabir (2014) regarded HI as the antithesis of Shahbag. He concluded that, as an orthodox organisation, HI had had an antagonistic relationship with JIB, but that during the Shahbag movement, its position changed towards pro-JIB in the matter of "Saving Islam." Haq (2015) explained HI's changing position during Shahbag movement as the result of the extended conflict between "secularism" and "religiosity" continuing in Bangladeshi society. Again, this draws the historical connection but reveals little about the dynamics during the Shahbag movement. The two components of analysis, the "spirit of Islam" and "spirit of liberation war," were frequently present in most of the studies. This common trend of scrutiny had been used by most of the scholars although their treatment of the issue has been different. Many scholars (e.g. Haq, 2015; Kabir, 2013; Ahmed, 2013) argued that in HI's movement, the "spirit of Islam" which was upheld against Shahbag, was a politically motivated construction. It is in line with the political move by the pro-JIB government when they promoted the inclusion of "total faith in Allah" in the Bangladeshi constitution. In the constitution, keywords like "freedom fighters", "razakars" and many more, were carefully excluded to ignore the spirit of the liberation war.

Keeping these arguments in mind, it would be helpful to add that the idea of "nationalism" is also constructed. A critical analysis of Bengali nationalism was quite rare among the writers. Nonetheless, scholars (J. Hasan, 2014; O. K. Islam, 2014; Kabir, 2014; Shahadujjaman, 2014 Haque, 2013) located some key points about Shahbag and anti-Shahbag movement.   First, Shahbag showed the power of non-institutionalized/non-organized movement.   Second, it helped to clarify the division of communal and secular positions existing in the society. Third, the movement helped to unmask intentions and group divisions and the individual's role which would otherwise have remained concealed. The Shahbag movement and anti-Shahbag movement helped to unearth these.

While Khan (2014) emphasised the counter actions against Shahbag, focusing on religious fascism, F. Mazhar (2013d), depicts Shahbag as the rise of nationalistic fascism. Khan's argument can be divided into two categories. One looks into using religious sentiments against Shahbag to weaken the movement while the other examines inducing communal violence through attacking Hindus and Buddhists.

F. Mazhar (2013b) argued that Gonojagoron Moncho is itself a centre of "injustice" which is demanding extrajudicial killing. He explains this phenomenon as a public lynching. He also questioned the role of Shahbag as a tool to impose illegal pressure on the judiciary system. He further explained how this phenomenon is intimately connected with political interest and state power. He continued his argument that a massive killing is underway through the collaboration of the police, governing political parties and with moral support from Shahbag because of their stand in the imprisonment of "Delwar Hossain Sayeedi" (another war criminal of the 1971 liberation war) (F. Mazhar, 2013d).

On the 5th May 2013, HI organised a massive rally in Shapla Chattar (another intersection in the business zone of Dhaka, 3.5 km away from Shahbag intersection) to protest against the Shahbag activists. HI, consisting of madrasa students and teachers, also

put forward an ultraconservative 13-point charter including capital punishment for the alleged "Atheist Bloggers" of the Shahbag movement. There came many new interpretations of the mass mobilisation in Shapla Chattar by HI. Mazhar's (2013b) interpretation of HI is crucial in many ways. First, he depicts this event as a beginning of new politics. He argued that the understanding of this population (madrasa based students and teachers) is often excluded in the socio-political understanding of Bangladesh. The dominant perspective led by the urban middle-class often conceptualises "them" (HI) as if they had never existed. Even if they did exist, "they" are under the shadow of the urban "educated" middle class. He explains how "urban gentlemen" or the beneficiary class who gets access to most of the resources and opportunities of the modern state system defines HI as "backdated" and continue to promote their exclusion from mainstream politics. He defines this process of exclusion as a new form of racism and class hatred. He is also inclined to view this position of exclusion by the urban middle-class as similar to the constructed hatred towards Islam that has been done by the imperialist states.

Before the mass movement in 2013, at Shapla Chattar, HI was a lesser known Islamic group not involved in any political activities. HI was formed in 2010 as an Islamic pressure group under the leadership of Shah Ahmad Shafi, an Islamic cleric, director of the Hathazari Madrasa (Qawmi/orthodox tradition of Islamic education) based in port city Chittagong. Though formed in 2010, HI only came into prominence after the mass rally on 5th May 2013, which would later be known to be the movement of HI. Before this movement, HI did not have any particular political affiliation in the mainstream politics of Bangladesh.

While depicting Shah Ahmad Shafi's role in the historical context of Bangladeshi politics, scholars explained his changing role as an "apolitical" and "traditional orthodox" religious cleric to the leader of an "influential" political force, HI (F. Ahmed, 2013). Before the HI movement, HI and JIB (the main Islamic party) did not have any visible coalition.

Ahmad Shafi and his followers often opposed JIB and its political activities, accusing those to be non-Islamic. Nevertheless, during the movement of HI, it can be argued that Qawmi madrassa system and its followers. which is core to HI movement, have been utilised by corrupt politics and have become an instrument of the dominant power politics (F. Mazhar, 2013a, 2013d; F. Mazhar, 2013).

The relationship between mainstream Islamic political practices (such as JIB) and orthodox Islam (such as HI) in this region is often contested. Scholars argue that "traditional orthodox" Islam resisted the trend of political Islam propagated by JIB. Even with a significant number of voters in electoral bi-polar politics, the Qawmi madrasa-based students and teachers and their leader (such as Shah Ahmad Shafi) were considered less critical and often relegated to a peripheral position in decision making. On the other hand, in mainstream politics, JIB often takes the leading position as well as in Islamic movement (F. Ahmed, 2013; S. Khan, 2013b, 2013d; F. Mazhar, 2013b, 2013c, 2013e; Wasif, 2013).

Riaz (2013) argued that in a Muslim majority country the practice of communal politics, (such as violence against the religious minority or people with a different opinion about religion) was embedded in the mainstream political practices, even from the very beginning in this nation. He argued that, in the context of reactionary use of religion in mainstream politics, both of the dominant parties (Al and BNP) used this pocket of conservative Islamic group (Qawmi madrasa-based students and teachers) on several occasions; one party more explicitly (such as BNP), the other (such as Al) more implicitly. Thus, in the process of challenging the 2013 Shahbag movement, this communal politics/reactionary use of religion again played its part by not only attacking the alleged "Atheist Bloggers" and calling for a movement against them but also by attacking religious minorities (such as Hindus) in the villages.

Thus, F. Ahmed (2013) explained that the support of the middle-class doctors, teachers, students and other professionals towards Shahbag movement is natural for their secular inclination. On the other hand, the madrasah population has its historical connection to another tradition – what Ali Riaz (2011) and Haq (2015) located as religiosity. However, this line of argument is problematic due to its understanding of tradition as separate from each other.

It was further argued that the participation of the madrasa population in the mass rally by HI, depended on the source of money. Hence, the lack of holistic education system and social disparity opened up the target group to manipulation. In his argument, the spontaneity of Shahbag is different from Shapla Chattar[13]. Because the movement was not spontaneous, the HI would not have lasted many days like the Shahbag movement did (F. Ahmed, 2013). This broader isolation of understanding is problematic because it only frames social movements as oppositional and, by doing so, often neglects the inter-connectedness between entities, between two domains.

1.4.4 Summary of Literature Review

The understanding and analysis of social media's relationship with the Shahbag movement mainly focused on the use of different social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. Focus on platforms lacked the holistic picture, expansion and immensity of the digital localities of Shahbag and the dynamics that generated across platforms.

In most of the cases, scholars were strictly focused on the technological aspect of social media, which generated technical understanding of the network and its different connectivity, but lacked an analysis of the meaning this connectivity was creating in online and offline spaces, both locally and globally. Although some scholars were locating the relationship between social media and society in regard to Shahbag movement, their analysis

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[13] Another urban centre, mainly a business zone in the Dhaka metropolis, where Hefazat-e-Islam organised a massive rally on 5th May 2013.

resulted in a static interpretation of different events in the offline spaces. The historical connection of digital resistance before Shahbag is often missing in their studies, which has led to an incoherent segmented understanding of the relationship between social media and society. In other words, the lack of historical analysis concerning digital activism created a void in the understanding of online to offline translation through digital resistance. This void in understanding is unavoidable due to its direct correlation to the social movement.

In literature on the Shahbag movement, the recurring theme is that Shahbag is the continuation of a historical process, which emerged after the 1971 liberation war but had remained tamed in society. This process included sustained conflict in the political arena and in the society; such as pro and anti-liberation war ideology, civil movement of bringing war criminals to justice and so on. Shahbag is regarded as a re-emergence of the lost spirit of secularism and national unity against anti-liberation war socio-political forces through social movement. On one hand, scholars were mainly focusing on the historical socio-political changes, while on the other hand, they were legitimising the "spirit of Shahbag," through discussion of nationalism, national identity, and secular history.

The lack of discussion about social media and the role of online activists indicated the overemphasis in socio-political conditioning and discourses. The deficiency of arguments about the diverse role of online activists resulted in non-critical, non-contextual discussions regarding spontaneous mass participation.

While literature regarding the counter-movement against Shahbag focused on the "us vs them" dichotomy and depicted the confrontation in an ideological plane, it lacked the critical analysis of anti-liberation war digital discourses that operated in the Shahbag movement. At the same time, studies also failed to locate the anti-liberation war digital discourses historically. It is submitted that this is a very crucial piece in the puzzle to better understand the digital resistance that led to physical resistance in the Shahbag movement.

The anti-Shahbag digital sociality also played a significant role in influencing the dynamics of Shahbag movement to the extent that this counter narrative was generated using the practices of digital culture and digital content in localised social media. The lack of discussion about anti-Shahbag digital presence initiated by different stakeholders created the void in understanding of contested digital localities. This is crucial because it contributed to influencing two social movements in the physical localities.

The endeavour of understanding social media, public sphere and social movements can be mainly divided into two schools of thoughts. One school of thought, called techno-optimistic, conceptualises social media as the core determining factor of social movements, while another school of thought, referred to as techno pessimistic, considers the promises of social media to be hyperbolic and superficial (Dustin & Keith, 2016). As Bayat (2015) argued in the context of Arab Spring, this movement mainly occurred due to the resistance of the "abject poor" in that region. While in the case of the Gezi Perk movement, Arda (2015) showed how the idea of a "collective identity" is not appropriate to analyse the new sociality that has emerged from the movement. In the case of Shahbag, the emphasis is often made on the structural condition of the movement and the assigned role of social media. While social media is recognised as a tool for a social movement, the historical and contextual connection between society and technology is often missed. This study intends to fill this gap of understanding of how social media, like society, is in the process of becoming. It is submitted in this research that social media and society are continually creating each other. Thus, the theoretical framework for analysing such process of the simultaneous unfolding of social media and society should be conceptualized for this study.

1.5 Theoretical Framework: "Resistance-Sociality"

This researcher focuses on resistance-sociality which may contribute to a better understanding of social media, sociality, resistance and social movement. Social media emerged as an apparatus of neoliberalism (Castro, 2016; José van Dijck, 2012), which provided a space for the performativity of the entrepreneurial self which resulted into injunction of connectivity, visibility, agency, plasticity, accomplishment, enjoyment, measurability, and normativity in an online space. This online space in relation to offline space, especially in the case of social movements, generates transformativity of spaces, such as local-global, public-private as observed in social media movements. The following section explains the theoretical framework of resistance sociality which will help to analyse the social media mediated movement in Bangladesh.

As Castro (2016) argued, historically, the emergence of social media is closely related to the interconnectedness between neoliberalism and development in technology. In the US the international capital flow started in the 1970s, undermining national economic policy and paving the way for neoliberalism to flourish. Supported by the deregulation of policy and privatization encouraged by neoliberalism in the sector for information and communication technology, the development in internet technology progressed through innovation and entrepreneurship (e.g. Silicon Valley, Microsoft, Apple, Mobile technology, Amazon) which signifies the neoliberal market logic (Fuchs, 2012). Coherent to neoliberal market logic, Web 2.0 technology was introduced to showcase that the Internet after the dotcom bubble could still have a future as a business with its focus on the transformative notion of the consumer to a content producer or "prosumer" (Heyman, R., & Pierson, J., 2015). While the Internet was established as a horizontal network, it allowed many to many communication and encouraged the production and sharing of more content, connectivity and digital activities through social media.

Habermas (1989) argued that *"The Sructural Transformation of the Public Sphere"* (STPS) in 19th and 20th century Western Europe resulted in the breakdown of boundaries between spheres such as state, economy, socio-cultural and private spheres. As such, "private economic units" attained "quasi-political character" (Habermas, 1989: 148) and resulted in the rise of the political public sphere, where people act as citizens who vote and hold a political opinion. The civil society which was previously the "realm of commodity exchange and social labour" (Habermas, 1989: 30) transformed into the political public sphere independent of state and market. Nonetheless, Habermas' (1989) proposed bourgeois public sphere was based on many exclusions.

As Calhoun (1992) showed, the weakness in Habermas' work "tend to be problems of underdevelopment or omission of significant issues" (Calhoun,1992: 8), such as women as a category, social movements, identity politics and culture, hegemonic dominance, the role of religion, inequalities of status and so on. The proposed bourgeois public sphere by Habermas (1989) categorised against women and other historically marginalised groups (Fraser,1992). She identified the fact that marginalised groups are excluded from a universal public sphere, and thus it was impossible to claim that one group would, in fact, be inclusive. However, she appealed that, outside of hegemonic bourgeois public sphere, marginalised groups formed their own public spheres, encountering the bourgeois public sphere. This is the subaltern counter public or counter-publics (Fraser,1992).

Concerning the absence of discussion about social movement in STPS, Calhoun (1992) argued that the "democratic politics and public discourse (were) crucially influenced by social movement" (p. 36). The absence of social movement discussion of the public sphere resulted in an abstraction to people's agency, to the struggles by which both the public sphere and its participants are actively constructed and reconstructed. Social movements are the events where not only issues but also "identity" had been "restructured" (Calhoun,1992:

37). Social movements are among the possible public spaces where the idea of one public sphere is challenged. Rather than one public sphere, he argued about a notion of multiple, overlapping and sometimes contending public spheres. The implication of the public sphere notion, he suggested, "lies in its potential as a mode of societal integration" (Calhoun,1992: 37-38).

Social media and the Internet have been considered as a new public sphere especially in the early phase of development of pertinent studies. Since then, the Internet as public sphere has been the topic of intense debate and discussion among scholars (Fuchs 2012; Castells, 2008; Dahlberg, 2007; Papacharissi, 2002). Generally, this debate falls into two categories. One is filled with high optimism often referred to as "techno-optimism" bloc where scholars argue that the Internet and social media would be liberating and will bring true participatory democracy (Dahlberg, 2007; Papacharissi, 2002). The other bloc doubts the liberating role of the Internet and social media and conceptualized them more from a techno pessimistic standpoint (Bayat, 2015; Hindman, 2008). The problem of the binary model of social media in relation to the public sphere is that it falls into the trap of "technological or social determinism" (Fuchs, 2012: 387). Thus, Postill (2008) argued that taking social media "as a normative, democratic ideal" (p. 417) for public sphere is problematic and often directs the focus of the research of social media to "what ought to be" rather than "what it is" (p. 417). As Fuchs (2012) argued, the over-emphasis on "techno-determinism" focuses more on technology while the over-emphasis on structural reasoning ignores the unique role of social media in making social changes. The pattern of the political public sphere through social media depends on the relationship between technology and society. What Fuchs (2012) proposed is a "dynamic dialectical relationship" between social media and society (p. 387).

The analysis of the "dynamic dialectical relationship" between social media and

society is crucial because a citizen's action as an independent body depends on the nature of this dialectical relationship. Habermas (1989) argued that in the bourgeois public sphere, a citizen can act as an autonomous body which is outside of systems of economy and the state. Trottier and Fuchs (2015) showed that the idea of the citizen as an autonomous body is problematic because modern society is based on power structures and roles are constituted through power relations. (e.g., employer-employee, state bureaucracy–citizen, a citizen of a nation-state–immigrant, manager–assistant, dominant gender roles– marginalised gender roles). Hence, to what extent, in what condition, and for whom the autonomous action of the citizen will operate are questions that seem conditional and context-specific. Citizen's action as an autonomous body should be further analysed not only in terms of socio-economic and political condition but also in the level of the communication process.

Following the Hegelian dialectical philosophy, Fuchs (2010) showed that information is a dynamic threefold process, "in which, based on subjective cognitive processes, social relations emerge (communication) in which new systems and qualities can be formed (co-operation)" (Trottier and Fuchs 2015: 114). All media, traditional and social media, play an important role in the three stages of social life.

As Trottier and Fuchs (2015), further argued, compared to traditional media, social media collapses these three processes; namely, "cognition, communication and co-operation." "Individual cognition almost automatically becomes a matter of social relations, and a cooperative endeavour" (Trottier and Fuchs 2015: 115). Social media provides three constitutive features of sociality: "integrated sociality", "integrated roles", and "integrated and converging surveillance on social media" (Trottier and Fuchs 2015: 124). Here, integrated sociality refers to the convergence of the three modes of sociality (cognition, communication, co-operation) into an integrated sociality. Integrated roles refer to the social

media profile (e.g. Facebook) where, in one profile, different social roles are integrated and tend to converge in various social spaces. The boundaries between public life and private life, such as the workplace and the home, have become fuzzy and liquid. Integrated and converging surveillance refer to various social activities in social media where different social roles that belong to our behaviour in systems (economy, state) and the lifeworld (the private sphere, the socio-economic sphere, the socio-political sphere, the socio-cultural sphere) are mapped to single profiles. This means surveillance has also become integrated and is converging in social media.

In the communication process, social media is not only challenging the separation between different spheres, such as the political public sphere and private sphere, but also challenging the assigned roles suggested by Habermas's (1989) bourgeois public sphere. It is also challenging the idea of a linear relationship between society and technology of communication. Thus, the "dynamic dialectical relationship" between social media and society should be understood as a connective process of online and offline spaces. To explore the relationship between social media and social movement, it is also important to focus on the roles and actions of different actors of the protest (in the Shahbag movement, BOAN members, Shahbag supporters) in both spaces as shown in Figure 1.
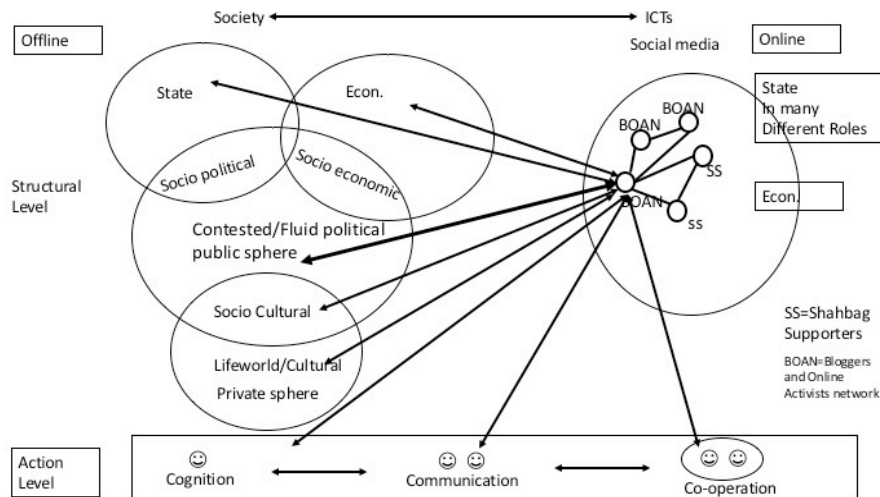
Figure 1. A model of contested political public sphere. Adapted from Trottier and Fuchs (2015), pp.123.

Resistance is something as action and non-action of people we may recognise it instantly, whenever we see it. From the scene of massive crowd protesting in the street to everyday nuances in life, daily activities incorporate the understanding of resistance in personal level or the level of the collective. It is thus locating a particular act or practice as resistance often connected to a broader realm of power and politics. As Wright (2016) showed, anthropologists have discussed the idea of resistance with some wariness, putting forward questions such as, if demonstration and movements revolts have a revolutionary outcome? Moreover, contrariwise, how do people struggle and challenge the hierarchy in unintended and un-political ways?

Ortner (1995) eloquently argued that over the years the concept of resistance losing its unambiguity due to works of Foucault (1978) which focused on less entrenched, more pervasive, everyday forms of power and Scott (1985) which focused on more inescapable, less organised everyday forms of resistance. Thus, the seemingly unambiguous binary understanding of domination versus resistance is challenged, where authority seemed relatively fixed and established a form of power and resistance primarily organised opposition to power. Although (Ortner, 1995) is not totally disagreed with the argument of

Cooper (1992) and Stoler (1986), which suggest that resistance as a category is not very useful rather vital entity is to focus on the variety of transformative process, in which many things transform, irrespective of the intentions of the players or the presence of very mixed meanings. In the long run, however, she is persistent about the importance of resistance as a category because it emphasises the dynamics power in most forms of association and action. The insight of Cooper (1992) and Stoler (1986) is useful due to their recognition of the innate quality of resistance as a transformative process regardless of actor's intentions and the presence of different intentions. At the same time, the position of Ortner (1995) is valuable when she argues, confrontation, even when vaguest, is a sensible classification, if only because it highlights the presence and play of power in most forms of relationship and activity.

The powerful insights and argument of Abu-Lughod (1990) thus seem very useful when she showed that resistance is not outward, or in antagonism, to power, but is instead a "diagnostic" (Abu-Lughod 1990: 41) of it. She suggested that resistance to local hierarchies involved a mix-up or participation with another form, such as the state or global markets. In the line of Foucault's argument which suggest that power, rather than solely tyrannical or adverse, is productive of all kinds of drill, subjectivity, and information, and is dispersed through all spheres of life; saying "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 1978: 95-96); Abu-Lughod (1990) suggested that "where there is resistance, there is power" (Abu-Lughod 1990: 42). Wright (2016) discussing the contemporary movement and protests (e.g. "Arab Spring", "Black Lives Matter") showed that these protests brought back renewed interest in resistance, social movement and activism in anthropology. She argued that the outstanding aspects of this kind of contemporary work (e.g. Bonilla & Rosa, 2015a) are the focus on media and communication technologies. Anthropologists often challenged the popular presumptions of these movements are driven by social media and pointing to the

"risky presence of protesters' bodies in public spaces" (Wright 2016: 9) while not undermining the potentials for activism opened up by social media.

Following the argument of Abu-Lughod (1990); resistance as a "diagnostic" of power it can be asserted that compare to traditional media; social media provided specific power to the users to communicate and socialise, adhering integrated roles and integrated sociality; at the same time, it also generated certain forms of control through integrated surveillance. The digital space also generates hierarchical roles based on power relations (e.g. social media authority-user, influential blogger-non-influential blogger). In social media platforms, the operation of resistance and power became more complex and fluid. Users can take multiple roles, choose actions, remain inactive or perform; both contesting and negotiating within and with the social media platform, with each other (among other users) and with the authority of the technology (social media authority). Due to the fluidity of digital sociality, the form of resistance can both be an everyday basis, individualistic at the same time more collective and intensified. The transformative characteristic of digital sociality which suggest the transcending feature of online to offline spaces, local to global, personal to public spheres, the discussion of power and resistance or vis-a-vis became more dynamic and contextual. Thus, the clarification of Wright (2016) is vital where she argued that in social media movements a critical discussion is the capacity of activists to envision and sense different sensitive and inter-personal relations in the forms of non-ranked body is vital for the potential of a political movement to offer an exhibit unconventional forms of social organisation.

Concerning the social media movement, Papacharissi (2016) pointed that social media is helping to generate "Affective Publics" where hashtags used in social media are not empty signifiers but serve as enclosing strategies that allow crowed to be condensed into the public. Social media encourage "affective attunement, support affective investment, and propagate

affectively charged expression", (Papacharissi 2016: 2). The "emotional contagion" through social media further discussed by Gerbaudo (2016), in which he argued that activists generate a moment of digital enthusiasm through immediate contamination of emotion in digital resistance. The connection between online and offline spaces through social media in a social movement is further clarified by Kluitenberg (2017) where he showed that the technological component (e.g. social media, mobile) perform a central purpose to mobilise large groups of people regarding the "issue at stake". The affective strength generated and exchanged in these processes of activation and deployment instantiated in the body of the carnal actors in the streets and squares. This indicates a persevering "bodily turn" away from the symbolic towards a physical connection, felt co-relation and strength which resonates with other bodies and objects. Kluitenberg (2017) further argued that the three-dimensional affective intensities generated in the activation process could not be shared effectively enough in intangible online interactions. The lack arouses the desire for the bodily encounter, which can only happen in a physical spatial context. Following his (Kluitenberg, 2017) insights it is also can be pointed that resistance generated in the intangible symbolic realm of online space became tangible in the offline space through physical embodiment in the street also transcend again to online space which may generate meaning, actions, performance, subjectivity concerning resistance and power. In the understanding of resistance through social media, it is argued that it can take several forms. Digital activism refers to the use of digital technologies, Internet-enabled devices such as mobile phones, computers in campaigns for social and political change. For example, one of the first social movements to use the Internet was the Zapatista movement in southern Mexico in the early 1990s. In addition, digital activism also refers to the instrumental function of digital technology, where social media is used as a tool for disseminating information, with ICT technology playing a symbolic role that can help create "connective action" (Poell et al., 2016) among participants and supporters of a

movement. In fact, social media was used as a protest site such as in blog posts, Facebook pages, twitter accounts during the Shahbag movement. It also entails information distribution through Web sites and so on, including online activities (such as social media) in support of offline protest (Wang, 2016) events such as marches and rallies.

Digital activists also make use of social media and other online avenues for increased participation (Denisova, 2016; Hong & Huang, 2017) , such as online petitions, boycotts, letter-writing and so on. Nonetheless, digital resistance encompasses the organization of entire campaigns and movements online, sometimes referred to as e-movements or "slacktivism" (Lee &Man Chan, 2016; Neumayer &Svensson, 2016). Social media also enables protesters to lead and pursue ideas to connect during or after the protest (Poell et al., 2016).

In social media movements, an individual's belief that the political actions taken on social media have an impact, which is known as "social media political efficacy" (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015) , plays a crucial role in digital and physical localities. There are some unique characteristics of social media movements, one of which suggested by Arda (2015) as "politics of the non-partisan," such as in the case of the Gezi Park movement where protesters were not only challenging the existing political practices such as linear hierarchical leadership, partisanship but also used non-commoditized labour such as art, song, dance, and acts as protest activities.

In this research, the aforementioned theories and concepts have been necessarily incorporated into the analytical framework because the study deals with three different entities, which are space, sociality and resistance. The phenomenon of social media movement presents a situation which is transcending spaces, fluid in sociality, with form of

resistance being transformed through multimodal polymorphic connectivity. Thus, "resistance-sociality" as an analytical tool has been developed and is elaborated on next.

Based on the ethnographic data of this research, it has been found that in order to determine the dynamic, polymorphic relationship among social media, resistance and sociality, none of the above-mentioned conceptual framework, standing alone, would be useful in explaining this phenomenon. The Habermasian public sphere, the concept of sociality of Amit, Long and Moore, digital sociality of Arda (2015), Castles (2012) idea of networked public, and conceptualization of social media by the scholars such as Pappacharisi (2002), Dijck (2013) , are not adequate to analyse the polymorphic dynamics of spaces, resistance, forces and socialities of Shahbag movement. However, a combination of these concepts is needed to generate what could be referred to as the "resistance-sociality."

As Amit (2015) suggested, the strength of the term *"sociality"*, for Long and Moore (2013), lies in its open-ended invocation of process, in contrast to the emphasis on bounded and static social entities which is associated with terms such as "society" or in a view of the social as a product of social interaction or relations. Accordingly, they suggest that sociality should be conceptualised "as a dynamic relational matrix within which subjects are constantly interacting in ways that are co-productive, and continually plastic and malleable" (Amit, 2015: 3). In this sense, some important characteristics of social media and its relation to social movement can be readily accommodated under this study and, at the same time, the "new space" which social media and society are co-producing can be explored. Thus, the dynamic relation between social media and social movement, such as the Shahbag movement, can be better understood.

As Castells (2015) has suggested concerning the social media movement, resistance is often initiated in the private autonomous space of the protesters. In the case of the Shahbag movement, the first spark of resistance was generated in the online space (back in 2006,

which was relatively private autonomous space) developed into digital resistance in the digital locality, and then was translated into offline protests in the physical locality as digital activism (in different protests from 2006 to 2013). This later developed as a social movement transcending both digital and physical localities. People from all walks of life joined the movement, occupying the physical space such as the Shahbag square and also dispersed after a certain time. Nevertheless, protest entities in the physical locality such as Gonojagoron Moncho and in the digital locality of BOAN Facebook page, Cyberwar@Shahbag[14] continues.

Social movements through social media are often plastic and malleable at the same time. Though people were gathered and united for a common goal (bringing war criminals to justice), their opinion, participation, and actions were varied. They acted differently in different stages of the movement. They can be categorised into different groups (age, gender, social, cultural, ethnic, economic, spatial, political ideology, religious beliefs and so on). However, they were both fluid and concrete. The participation and support were different in different stages of the movement. In the historical period, the 5th-21st February 2013 at the Shahbag intersection, tens and thousands of people gathered, people with varying political opinion and coming from diverse backgrounds. They protested, showed solidarity with what they felt was "justified," found a "common cause," and then also eventually dispersed. This phenomenon cannot be understood under the dominant paradigm of community and network, in which Internet scholars (Hapmton and Wellman, 2003; Papacharissi, 2002) visualized communities bound "by bits and bytes" (Postill, 2008: 415) in social media. As Wellman (2003) has suggested, social media communities do not disappear but survive in a new form in geographically dispersed personal communities. This indicate the characteristics of socio and spatio-temporality of social media movements.

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[14] Cyberwar@Shahbag is the collection of social media pages, accounts, websites carrying online anti-liberation war propaganda during the Shahbag movement.

The network analysis suggested by Castells (2008) and Dhalgren (2005) is also problematic, as Postill (2008) has argued, explaining that whole populations are extremely difficult to research. Drawing an arbitrary boundary around the network to be investigated in order to overcome this problem (e.g. by limiting the study to category like *"Shahbagi"*, *"Hefazati," "Bloggers"* or other groups in this research) contradicts the fundamental idea of networks being unbounded and cutting across enduring groupings and organizations.

As Amit and Rapport (2002) have suggested, "relying on emotionally-charged, bounded notions such as community (or diaspora, nation, ethnic group, and much more) is "unwise" (Amit and Rapport, 2002: 23). They add that there are numerous sets of social relations that cannot be brought under these banners. Such sets include neighbours, co-workers and leisure partners – people who nevertheless may share "a sense of contextual fellowship" that can be "partial, ephemeral, specific to and dependent on particular contexts and activities" (Postill, 2008: 415) such as social movement.

Social movement, in general, provides us with this exciting challenge of analysing "a sense of contextual fellowship" (Postill, 2008: 415) which refers to a sense of connectedness among diverse groups of during social media movement. It also provides an opportunity to explore "intensities" (Postill, 2008: 416), an increased interaction and participation, a vigour of social media activities on certain topic or event generated by the online activists to create impact in social media. In the case of social media movements, it guides us to analyse this resistance-socialities which is operating both in online and offline spaces.

Online activists adhere to social media political efficacy (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015), where the activist's belief that the political actions she/he takes will have an impact on his environment. The phenomenon of "connective leadership" (Poell et al., 2016), through a collective lead, enable people and ideas to connect during a protest not only online but also

offline. This efficacy of the online activists leads to "connective leadership" which spark the online "connective action" (Denisova, 2017; Hong & Huang, 2017; Poell et al., 2016).

The "connective action," which is an online shared collective action, creates the "call to action" online, which may then result into a street protest known as "frontline activism" (Lee & Man Chan, 2016), on-site physical actions generated at the forefront of a protest in social media movement. Although in many cases, the result may be "slacktivism," the online political action that involves a small degree of participation but a certain degree of reward for the user (Denisova, 2017; Hong & Huang, 2017; Lee & Man Chan, 2016; Neumayer & Svensson, 2016; Ravanoğlu Yilmaz, 2017). In other cases, the repercussion of the social movement in online spaces may expand beyond "slacktivism." The polymorphism of resistance-sociality transcends spaces; that is, it goes from online to offline, and then return to the online space to reinforce the protest or movement.

Resistance-sociality functioning in the offline space creates practices of resistance where dominant discourses of established political parties are challenged and partisanship remain tamed. In many cases, the protest in the street creates a political entity which is conceived as politics of the "non-partisan" (Arda, 2016). In the online spaces, different tools of digital activism may arise such as "tagging" (Chowdhury, 2016).

Resistance sociality through social media creates socio and spatio-temporality, which can transcend spaces such as local-global, public-private, or online-offline. Through polymorphic and multimodal communication in social media and between online and offline spaces, the resistance process can be re-enforced through connectivity.

All of these concepts are useful in understanding the resistance-sociality of the Shahbag movement, which is analysed extensively by referencing the ethnographic data in Chapters 3 to 6.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Unlike recent social media movements like the Arab Spring, the Shahbag movement did not demand for any regime change nor fight for democracy. Neither was it a protest of the "abject poor," a new form of class struggle suggested by Bayat (2015). Like the #metoo or #blacklivesmatter movement, Shahbag was not demanding justice for gender or racial inequality which may indicate a common identity, a background for collective action as discussed by Bonilla and Rosa (2015). The uniqueness of the Shahbag movement is that it was focused on past injustice and attempt in cleansing the past by bringing war criminals to justice. The Shahbag spirit was also relevant to the pro-liberation war populace, Bengali living in Bangladesh and abroad, the diaspora communities. Though the movement was against ICT and the government, both showed solidarity to the movement later. Although the Shahbag movement started impromptu, spontaneous participation was unprecedented in contemporary Bangladeshi History.

The relationship of social media with Shahbag was not only operated during the movement; it was a continuation of ongoing online activism developed in the Bangla blogosphere which continued after the Shahbag movement. From the very beginning, Shahbag was heterogeneous, rather than homogeneity in identity; it attracted people from diverse background and political ideology. The Shahbag movement was driven by the spirit of bringing war criminals to justice with a range of interpretations from different groups and individuals. Shahbag demands were also focused on the past; "reclaiming" the nation, going back to the founding principles of the state, and promoting the culture of "justice" by resolving the "injustice" of the past, politically, socially, economically and ideologically. The movement remained "non-violent" during the one-month long sit-in but faced violent challenges through the killing of one of the Shahbag activists in the middle of the movement. Later, the Shahbag movement was also violently challenged by Islamist extremist and HI,

although there was not a face to face confrontation. The pattern of the Shahbag movement was replicated in different parts of the country during the movement and later as well. It can readily be seen how the case of the Shahbag movement and HI presents a unique opportunity to explore socialities of resistance, which is unprecedented in Bangladesh but not rare in social media movements.

1.7 Methodology

This study is focused on the relationship between social media and society, specifically dealing with social movements (e.g. Shahbag movement and HI) in Bangladesh. The main methodology used in this study is the ethnographic enquiry of the relationship between social media and society. Participant observation and social media ethnography were conducted during fieldwork. In the following section, the development of methodology in relation to field experience will be explained step by step.

1.7.1 Social Media as an Ethnographic Place

The debate and discussion about ethnographic places revolve around two schools of thoughts. First is the traditional ethnographic holism where ethnographic research has often taken a holistic approach, which is linked to functionalism. This perspective views societies as discrete and coherent entities, or as organisms. Holism also acknowledges the interconnectedness of elements of a society. On the other hand, the recent ethnographic research conducted in modern complex societies focus on the (dis)continuities between the experienced realities of face-to-face and social media environment especially in the space of social movements and digital socialities (Postill & Pink, 2012). This second school of thought redefined the ethnographic place according to research interest. This ethnographic place is constituted through emergent relations between things and processes. They have no bounded territories or groups/communities; rather, they are clusters or intensities of things of which

both localities (Shahbag square in Dhaka as physical locality and the debate, discussion and digital activities regarding Shahbag in digital locality) and socialities (such as the Shahbag protest in the street and online spaces) are elements (Postill & Pink, 2012; Postill, 2008). Thus social media ethnography challenged the idea of holistic ethnographic tradition and pushed forward its adaptive nature according to the field and research interest. Especially in the case of social media movements when the online and offline spaces intensify in a specific historical moment, the physical space is occupied by the movement protesters and the online space is intensified by elements of protest discourses and activities such as "hashtags" (e.g. #Shahbag and #hangtherazakars), comments and status, debate and discussions, sharing and publishing of audio-visual contents and so on.

1.7.2 Social Media Ethnography, Connecting the Online and Offline Spaces

Hine (2000) has suggested that the undertaking of internet ethnography need not involve the ethnographer travelling physically to a field site when internet ethnography is focused around a certain social media event – something he called an "Internet Event." However, this line of arguement falls under the separate notions of "virtual" and "actual" spaces to the extent that it often forgets how both are shaping each other, especially when the technology becomes more embedded. As Postill and Pink (2012) have suggested, with reference to Kozinets (2010), the "uses of social media can also be interwoven with the qualities, political structures and histories of localities or regions." In the Shahbag movement or any other social movement, related to social media, it can be argued that a critical understanding of the relationship of "physical setting" and "virtual setting" is crucial because the distinction between "virtual" or "actual" space is becoming more complex. As Hine (2017) later suggested, the Internet is exponentially embedded in diverse frames of meaning made both online and offline. Rather than focusing on the separation, it would be more

effective to explore the complexities of the relationship between two spaces, which is what this study intends to do.

1.7.3 Defining the Field: Offline

This is a study of social movements, specifically the Shahbag movement. At the time the movement was taking place from 5th February to 5th March 2013, the researcher was physically present at the social movement, actively participated in protest activities, and observed and archived different aspects of the movement. Thus, the physical setting of this study is the Shahbag intersection and adjacent areas, in Dhaka metropolis, Bangladesh.
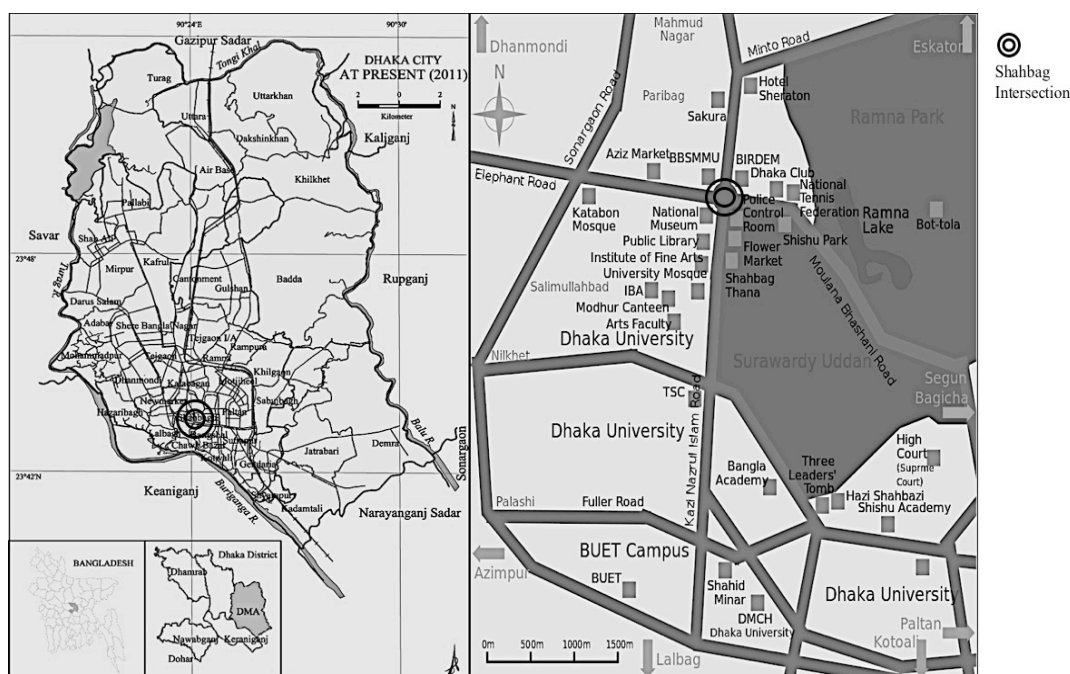
Figure 2. Locating the physical map of Shahbag intersection. Adapted from The Banglapedia: The National Encyclopaedia of Bangladesh (pp.125) by Islam, S., & Jamal, A. A. (Eds.). (2014). Bangladepedia Trust, Asiatic Society, Dhaka.

1.7.4 Shahbag: The Site's Historical Meaning

Shahbag is not only a major intersection but also a cultural hub for activists composed of institutions like Dhaka University, medical and engineering universities, student dormitories, three medical collage hospitals, High Court, a five-star hotel, Suhrawardi Uddan (a place closely linked with the liberation war), and Chobir Hut (a place for artists and young

intellectuals). Within three kilometres radius from Shahbag is Shaheed Minar, which is a national monument in Dhaka, established to commemorate those killed during the Bengali Language Movement, and Dhaka Club. Over the years, the Shahbag area had become a venue for celebrating significant festivals, such as the Bengali New Year and Basanta Utsab (another cultural festival) and the Biggest Book Fair in Bangladesh. Because of its setting and historical legacy, Shahbag has always been known as a secular, liberal and progressive space.

⊚ Shahbag Intersection: The epicenter of Shahbag movement.

National Museum (NM): A place of public protest. Protesters gather in front of NM in many occasions. Shahbag movement started from here.

Public Library: A place for public reading, showing the movie and other cultural activities.

Institute of Fine Arts: A place for progressive literary and art movement.

Chobir Hat: A place for young intellectuals and artists. After the Shahbag movement, this place was destroyed by the government.

Modhur Canteen: A historical place for political debate and activities.

Surawardy Uddan: A historical place connected with the war of liberation 1971.

Shahbag Thana: Shahbag police station, deals with the cases around this area.

TSC: Teacher-Student Center in Dhaka University. A central place for student's cultural and political activities.

Shahid Minar: The monument to remember 1952 language movement against Pakistan. A central place for Bengali nationalism.

Dhaka University: The largest public university in Bangladesh, the birthplace of all the nationalist movement in Bangladesh.

BUET: The engineering university of Bangladesh.

DMCH: The medical university of Bangladesh.

Figure 3. The historical meaning of Shahbag. Adapted from The Banglapedia: The National Encyclopaedia of Bangladesh (pp.125) by Islam, S., & Jamal, A. A. (Eds.). (2014). Bangladepedia Trust, Asiatic society, Dhaka.

Moreover, owing to ever-growing sit-ins and protests by political and student organisations and forums held at Shahbag, the place was already regarded as an established site for protesters including bloggers and online activists, way before the Shahbag movement commenced. However, before the Shahbag movement, there were relatively small protest rallies, human chains, and protest from bloggers. In any case, Shahbag is regarded as secular, open, progressive and historically important in Bangladesh

The Shahbag intersection was the epicentre of the movement. After the movement

unfolded, the name of site had also been changed from being commonly known as Shahbag, Shahbag Intersection into the "Shahbag Square" in comparison with Tahrir square. Later, Shahbag square was renamed as Projonmo Chottor (Generation Square), in remembrance of the contribution of second generation Bangladeshi (Shahbag protesters). Nowadays, the Shahbag is interchangeably known as Shahbag Square, Projonmo Chottor, or simply Shahbag.

1.7.5 Definining the Field: Online

The online space of this study is mainly focused on the Bangla social media, which operate in SNS websites such as blogsites (Somwhereinblog, Amarblog and many more), Facebook, and Twitter. Part of this online field are posts, comments, audio-visual contents and the online space, such as Facebook page and groups and so on; including activities such as posting, commenting, sharing, re-commenting and so on in these sites. Restrictively, only posts, comments, audio-visual contents and online space and activities related to the Shahbag movement are made part of this research. This study tried to locate the "intensities" (Postill & Pink, 2012) in social media and analyse the online narratives, conversations and discussion, and online activities in those SNS platforms during the Shahbag movement.
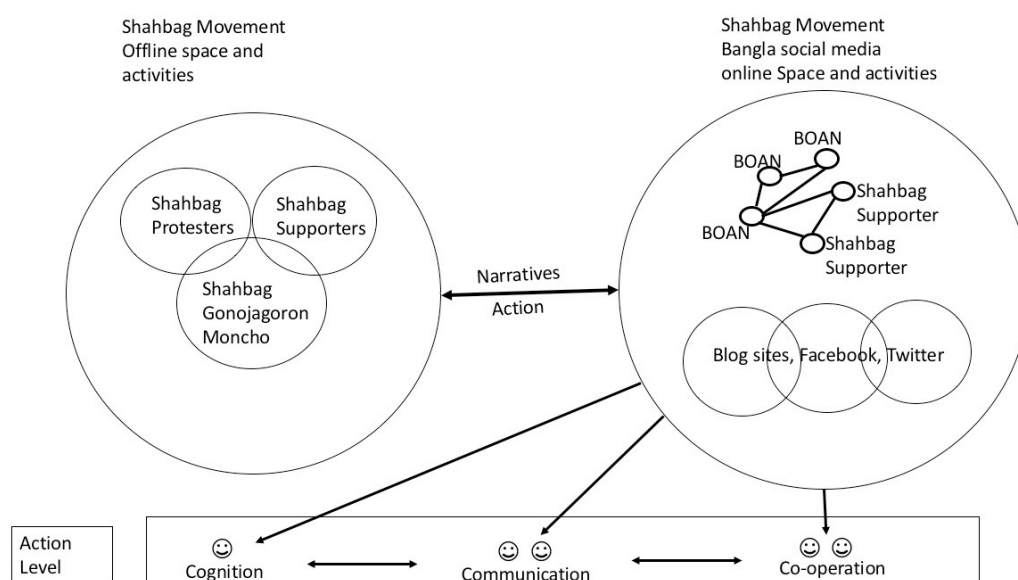
Figure 4. Locating the online and offline field sites of the Shahbag Movement.

As explained in the theoretical framework section, the information process is a dynamic threefold process (cognition, communication and co-operation) which social media has reconfigured in a formidable way. In the online space, the information process operated in the social media activities of the Shahbag movement among different Shahbag movement actors (e.g. BOAN members, Shahbag supporters). This space is also connected with the offline space of Shahbag. The narrative and action generated in the online space is in dynamic relationship between the two spaces.

1.7.6 Social Media Ethnography in Studying Social Movements

In the case of studying social movements, using multi-modal and multi-sited designs in social media ethnography are fruitful (Hine, 2017). Referring to the work of Postill and Pink (2012), Hine's argument that the study of social media movements is a "messy" web of interconnectedness involving social media acquire distinctive significance. Thus, social media ethnography may be "blended" where two (or more) approaches are combined, often connecting online and offline observations to explore a given phenomenon.
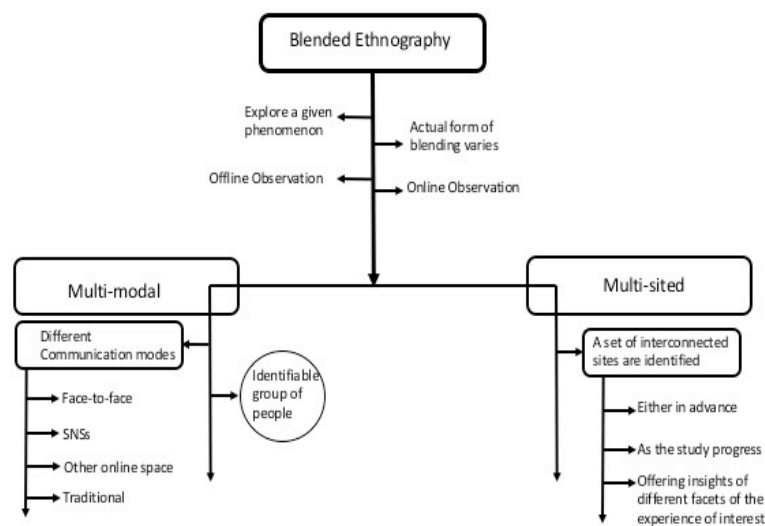
Figure 5. Blended model of social media ethnography.

Social media movements are dynamic and actors of the movement are operating in both online and offline spaces. As the main focus of this research is to understand the dynamic relationship between social media and social movement, a blended model of social media ethnography is essential. It is multimodal because actions of the actors of the movement are influenced not only by face-to-face interaction in the offline space but also in the different social network sites. One online space is connected with other online spaces. As the research is exploring the online-offline relationship within a polymedia environment, the traditional media has also been included. According to the theme of the research, the social media movements of Shahbag consisting of different interconnected sites have also been identified. In the online space, the research located the digital resistance before Shahbag, as well as the digital activism sites during Shahbag. As the movement progressed, it also located physical activism and protest sites in the street and other physical locality. The blended mode of social media ethnography helps in identifying various sites (both online and offline) of resistance and sociality through exploring multimodal communication process as they function in the social media movement. The rigorous and meticulous analysis of the connectivity helped in examining the dynamics of the social media movement.

1.7.7 Social Media Ethnography of Shahbag Movement

In this study, the researcher actively participated in the Shahbag movement and did participant observation. From 5th February to 6th March 2013, the researcher engaged in many different roles such as a Shahbag activist (includes online and offline activism), participant- observer, social media editor, protest organiser, and researcher. During this time, good rapport and relationship with the main actors of the movement was achieved. Using snowball sampling method, other important informants were discovered and made part of this research.

The timeline of the research expanded from 2013 to present. From 5th February 2013

to present, online ethnography was conducted through observation of social media and participation in social media activities mainly focused on the online activities of the Shahbag protesters and supporters, as well as anti-Shahbag supporters and protesters. At the same time, online and offline interviews were conducted, involving casual conversations with key informants from the Shahbag movement and HI. Throughout, different moments and events were archived through photography and social media. Along with participant observation, 30 semi-structured and open-ended interviews were conducted among blogger and online activists, Shahbag protesters, and Hefazat protesters. The location of offline research expanded in different institutions in Dhaka, such as at the Blogsite office, Madrasahs, NGOs, and in other parts of Bangladesh.

The researcher had participated in several other movements conducted in Shahbag such as, the "Release the Bloggers Movement" in 2013, "Abolish the ICT Act 57" in 2016 and 2018 and so on. Whenever possible, the researcher tried to ensure gender balance in the number of key informants. This was possible in the case of the Shahbag movement, but not in the case of HI which is knowingly male-oriented. In the case of online fieldwork, more than 200 blog profiles, Facebook profiles, Facebook Pages, Facebook groups, Twitter accounts, webpages have been observed and followed. Through the snowball sampling method, connected SNS pages, groups and activities were discovered and also followed and archived. The daily ritual and sub-practices of the online researcher were also applied in this research. They are the five sub-practices or routine of: 1. catching up, 2. sharing, 3. exploring, 4. interacting, 5. and archiving. Through archival research and from the oral history of the informants and personal memory, a genealogy of specific important phenomenon was developed in this study, which proved essential to analysing the roles and motive of the actors of the Shahbag movement and HI. These genealogies of connected phenomenon include queries such as how the Internet and social media were localised in Bangladesh; how

digital activism emerged in the Bangla blogosphere; how the issue of bringing war criminals to justice developed in social media and so on. Among these, one essential point is the development of the Bangla blogosphere in Bangladesh in regard to social media activism.

1.7.8 Ethical Challenges in Ethnography, Social Media and Social Movement

The roots of ethical governance in conducting ethnography is historically suited in the "human subjects research model." Three ethical concepts are core to institutional and professional research governance (Eynon, Fry, & Schroeder, 2017); namely, confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent. In the case of online research, the ethical issue had been a matter of major debate. As Miller (2018) had argued, this new space of research needs a new framework of ethics. This research follows the framework developed by Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) and has tried to be self-reflexive in its process.

The sensitivity of context was strictly followed as this research is focused on blogger and online activists and social movement. The personal information of the online activists has not been disclosed. In the Facebook groups, which is a private space within a public space where membership is restricted and based on trust, precautions were taken so as not to abuse the confidentiality and trust provided by the online groups. The later development of the Shahbag movement resulted in the unfortunate killing of bloggers and their forced abduction. Thus, the confidentiality and safety of the informants were maintained and given highest priority. In cases of online and offline interviews, informed consent was regularly maintained. In some cases, the anonymity of the informants remained a challenge in achieving informed consent but upon verification through a network of other experienced bloggers and using the researcher's experience as a social media editor, this challenge was overcome. It bears stressing that protecting the informants from harm was a major concern due to the sensitivity of the issue. All in all, this researcher tried his best to overcome these issues. Nonetheless, social media is changing the research environment in such a way that the

distinction between researcher and researched is becoming more blurred. In this context, the researcher is also co-creating the ethnographic place (Postill & Pink, 2012).

While the identity online and offline as a Shahbag activist helped this research, it also put the researcher at risk. The identity and action online and offline had a formidable influence on this research endeavour; thus, efforts were made to carefully reorganize the identity and action online and offline in favour of the research quest.

1.8 Organisation of the Text

CHAPTER 2 aims to explore the historical background of the social media instigated Shahbag movement. While introducing the Shahbag movement and its relationship with social media, this chapter tried to contextualise the issue of bringing war criminals to justice in a historical and socio-political context. It aims to explore the historical reasoning of the issue and its relationship with different regimes and political parties. It also focuses on the different initiatives, social movements and the development of the legal framework (International War Crime Tribunal) of bringing the war criminals to justice. A brief history of counter movement of Shahbag is also presented. Through exploring the interlocking themes, this chapter shows the complicated and evolving historical relationship between political power, legal framework and social movement in the context of the issue of "bringing war criminals to justice."

CHAPTER 3 aims to analyse the relationship between neoliberal economy, technological invention and expansion of social media world-wide and the localisation of social media in Bangladesh. Against the backdrop of a broader context of social media, technology and society, the localisation process of social media in Bangladesh will shed light on the emergence of digital resistance and activism in the digital locality of Bangladesh. It

will also contribute to an understanding of the digital resistance regarding the issue of "bringing war criminals to justice" and its translation into the physical locality, which eventually contributed to the social media movement such as the Shahbag movement.

CHAPTER 4 focuses on the resistance socialities in the Shahbag movement. Analysing the technology of digital sociality and its relation to different actions of the actors, this section will shed light on the process of creating "intensity" in social media which would eventually result into a street protest. It will show the relationship among important factors in the digital and physical localities which may have contributed to generating the intensities in digital locality and then translating into the physical locality of Shahbag. It will also show how digital and physical socialites were co-creating each other in the social media instigated movement. Through analysing the resistance socialities in physical and digital localities, this chapter will scrutinise different modes of resistance socialites found in the digital and physical socialities. How resistance socialities are generating socio and spatial temporality through fluid collective identity, connective action, frontline activism will also be analysed. Finally, this investigation will try to show how the re-enforcement of connectivity among and between digital and physical localities through social media is contributing in generating resistance socialities.

CHAPTER 5 analyses the anti-Shahbag movement and activities and how those are operated in the digital and physical spaces. This chapter will also explore the connection between digital resistance against Shahbag and its connectivity to physical resistance. How this resistance against Shahbag transforms the physical and digital spaces and create socio and spatio-temporality will also be explored.

CHAPTER 6 focuses on the online contestation and negotiation between pro and anti-liberation war bloggers and online activists. This chapter will also shed light on how the

digital locality of Bangladesh became the protest sites for activists and how it created digital resistance, which, owing to the Shahbag movement, translated again into social media political efficacy, connective action, and connective leadership. Analysing this online contestation and negotiation, this chapter will show digital resistance tools and techniques affecting the political scenario of the physical spaces.

CHAPTER 7 will summarise and rationalise the resistance socialities through the polymorphic connectivity generated within social media in a multimodal transformative relationship between spaces, sociality and resistance in the Shahbag movement.

CHAPTER 2

Background of the Shahbag Movement

"The memory of the atrocity committed by the Pakistani army and their collaborators is still vivid in public memory. I hear the story from my parents, they (parents) fled to India to save their lives. They (collaborators) have killed our parents, our intellectuals, raped our women and they are moving freely, becoming the minister in sovereign Bangladesh! Showing V sign. How dare they! They must be punished, they deserve capital punishment, nothing less."

- Shahbag Activist, 5th February 2013

In a "spirit of bringing war criminals of 1971" to justice, the Shahbag movement began through digital activism and then eventually translated into offline activism in the same day, 5th February 2013. What started as a human chain of around 150 people composed of mainly urban youth, in three days (5-8 February 2013), turned into a living, breathing, shouting mass of 100,000 Shahbag protesters, a phenomenon which continued for a month. This was unprecedented in Bangladesh's history and is the largest social movement after the 1990s (identified with the mass movement for democracy).

The Shahbag movement commenced on 5th February 2013 as a protest against what was considered a lenient verdict of life imprisonment imposed by the International War Crime Tribunal (ICT) to one of the war criminals on trial, Abdul Quader Molla, who was also the assistant secretary general of JIB. The verdict shocked not only the "networked digital youth" but also the whole nation. Molla was accused of raping an under aged girl, slaughtering intellectuals, and killing 344 people during the liberation war (Sabur, 2013). The atrocities of Razakar (collaborators of Pakistani Army) during the liberation war of 1971 persisted in the public memory. Haq (2015) argued that the people's assumption that the Al government had an entente with JIB, the party in which many of the leaders are war

criminals, manipulated the ICT to provide a relatively soft verdict of life imprisonment to Molla.

2.1 The Shahbag Movement 2013 and Social Media

Following the announcement by the ICT of the verdict on war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah, on 5th February 2013, the Blogger and Online Activist Network (BOAN) initiated a human chain followed by the concerted act of occupying the Shahbag intersection in Dhaka metropolis, Bangladesh through a sit-in protest at Shahbag. Until 5th February 2013, BOAN was a mere three-month old Facebook group (founded in November 2012) with 1000+ members. They are bloggers and online activists consisting of members of the Bangla blogosphere (e.g. Arif Jebtik, Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Mahmudul Haq Munshi, Imran H. Sarker). Imran H. Sarker is one of the main organisers of BOAN. During the Shahbag movement, about 25 bloggers and online activists of BOAN actively participated.

2.1.1 Emergence of Pro-Liberation War Digital Activism

BOAN was the result of online-based activism that has developed over eight years in Bangladesh. They were part of the emerging Bangla social media. The localized blogosphere[15] has developed from 2005 to 2013 (8 years) where Bengali speaking bloggers interact, debate and discuss. Bangla blog encouraged community interaction which is different from the global trend of individual blogging. Therefore, this interacting community blogosphere was influential enough to generate pro and anti-liberation war emotions and antagonism against each other even in the public discourse. Within this online group, a sharp discrepancy emerged involving the ideological debate between the Bengali Nationalist/pro-Liberation vs. JIB/Islamists/anti-Liberation, which became the most prominent discourse of this blogosphere (M. Z. Chowdhury, 2012a).

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[15] The blogosphere is made up of all blogs and their interconnections. The term implies that blogs exist together as a connected community (or as a collection of connected communities) or as a social networking service in which authors can publish their opinions.

The digital activism against anti-liberation war forces emerged beginning 2006 and led to the protests in Shahbag, which later became the Shahbag movement (Chowdhury, 2012; Haq, 2011). From 2006-2013, the digital activism generated through Bangla blogosphere involved manifold movements such as protests against increments of tuition fees in universities (2009, 2010), unfavourable contracts with foreign companies (2011), violence against women (2010), border killings at the India-Bangladesh border (2012), and religious and communal violence (2012, 2013). However, none of these protests or movements was able to gather the mass support or participation as the Shahbag movement could.

During the Shahbag movement, 50+ pertinent blogsites were operating, among them the Somewhereinblog, Muktomonablog, Schalayatanblog and Amarblog were most prominent. At the time, the number of registered users in Bangla blogosphere was 200,000 while the number of viewers reached as high 500,000 (Chowdhury, 2012).

The members of BOAN were bloggers from these blogsites. During the Shahbag movement, bloggers and online activists used social media (such as blog sites, Facebook, Twitter) to disseminate the protest information, gather mass support and grab the attention of local and global media. Social media was also used as a tool for bridging online and offline protest. About 400,000 tweets were registered #Shahbag during this movement (Zamir, 2015). Clearly, social media was used as an important tool of communication among protesters and became an online protest site.

During the field work of this research, many blog pages, blog accounts, Facebook pages, Facebook groups, Facebook accounts, Twitter accounts were found relating to Shahbag movement. Bloggers and online activists used online-based network to initiate, spread and sustain this movement. The resulting spontaneous mass support was unprecedented in Bangladeshi history. To backtrack, it was the resistance against war crimes of 1971 which generated a buzz in social media in 2006 in the developing stage of the Bangla

blogosphere. At the time, Bangla blogosphere was in its infancy, emerging as a public sphere, an alternative media (Chowdhury, 2012), where users could afford a more autonomous and anonymous role in the online space. A few bloggers started to meet and discuss different matters online. In the very early stage, using the openness and lack of restrictions on blogsites, an anti-liberation JIB blogger posted derogative comments against freedom fighters of the liberation war. He was later revealed to be the son of a war criminal. This incident triggered digital resistance against war criminals. Initially, the motivation was to resist any anti-liberation war forces from the Bangla blogosphere.

This development of digital protest and activism later led to the instigation of a social movement, the Shahbag movement. Shahbag was promoting the secular Bengali identity instead of a religion-based Islamic identity. Shahbag was rekindling the Bengali identity with the slogan, *"Ami ke? tumi ke? Bangalee, Bangalee."* [Who are you? Who am I? Bengali Bengali.]
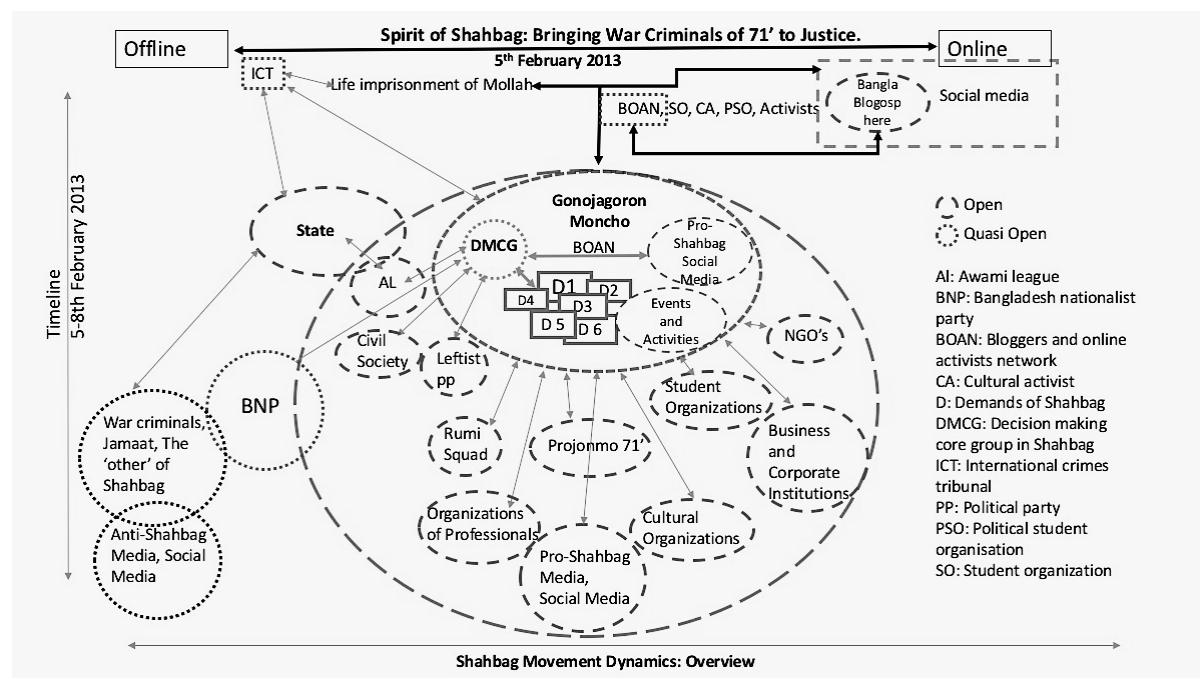
Figure 6. Overview of Shahbag movement dynamics, Offline and Online spaces.

The narrative of Shahbag was reclaiming the "spirit of liberation war" in which the vision was a secular and fair society for all. The demands of Shahbag have indicated

reclaiming the nation by getting rid of anti-liberation war forces such as JIB. The main actors in this study are the bloggers and online activists of Bangla Blogosphere who initiated the Shahbag movement.

Gonojagoron Moncho was the central platform of protests in the Shahbag movement. It was created on 8th February 2013 by bloggers and online activists, and representatives of student and cultural organizations who supported the Shahbag movement.

BOAN organiser and online activist Imran H. Sarker was selected as the spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho. While inclusive in nature, Gonojagoron Moncho consisted of 20-25 core group members including bloggers and online activists and representatives of political and cultural organisations. The Shahbag movement also became known as Gonojagoron Moncho. Around 170 political, cultural and professional organizations showed solidarity to Gonojagoron Moncho. The Moncho put forward a six-point charter of demands and announced the protest programmes during the movement. The Shahbag movement also became known as Prajanma Chattar (Prajanma Chattar), and at the time of the movement, the name of Shahbag square changed to Prajanma Chattar. The mass sit-in protest which started on 5th February 2013 ended on 21st February 2013.

2.2 History of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world, with a population of more than 160 million. It has more inhabitants than Russia or Japan. Bengali (Bangla) is its national language, which ranks sixth in the world regarding native speakers. Dhaka is the capital city, one of the world's largest cities and the fourth most densely populated city in the world. Dhaka ranked 2nd in the number of active Facebook users in 2017 (Mahmud, 2017).

Regarding ethnicity, about 98% of the population belongs to Bangalee (describing both an ethnic and a linguistic group) ethnicity. The rest of the ethnic groups are divided into indigenous groups such as Chakma, Marma, Kuki, Mizo, Garo. Nearly 89% of the population

is Muslim (mainly Sunni) making it the fourth largest Muslim country of the world. The second largest religious group in Bangladesh are the Hindus, covering 10% of the population, the remaining 1% consists of Christian, Buddhist and others. Bangladesh is geographically surrounded by India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar. Before Independence in 1971, Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan (1947-71) and before that, the eastern half of Bengal. Historically it has been a region with a strong identity because of its distinct ecology. Bangladesh is the world's largest delta, formed by multiple rivers from the Himalayas.

Figure 7. Map of Bangladesh by Bill Nelson. Adapted from The Bangladesh Reader: History, Culture, Politics (pp.11) by Guhathakurta, M., & Schendel, W. v. (Eds.). (2013). The Bangladesh Reader: History, Culture, Politics. Durham, London: Duke University Press

Before 1947, the state of Bangladesh was part of the Indian sub-continent which was ruled by the British empire. The British colonial period, also known as British Raj (British

crown), reigned for almost two hundred years from 1757 to 1947. After the prolonged social and political movement for independence, the Indian sub-continent was freed from British Raj in 1947. The Indian sub-continent was divided by the British colonisers based on religious majority into two sovereign states: Hindustan or India for the Hindu majority; and Pakistan (East and West Pakistan) for the Muslim majority.
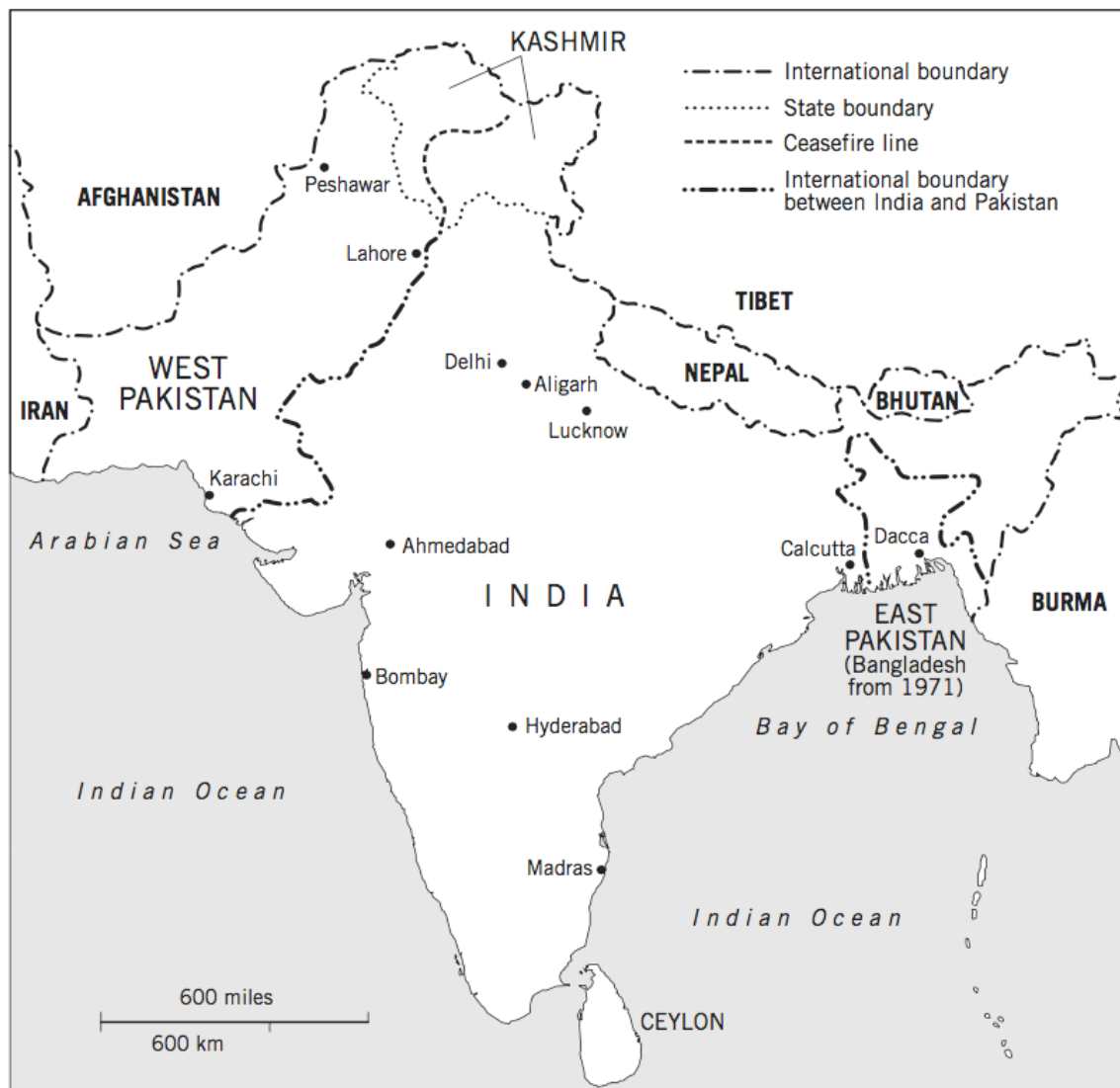
Figure 8. The map of India and Pakistan after Partition. Adapted from, The Great Partition: The Making of Indian and Pakistan by Khan, Yasmin (2017, pp. xxxii). Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

Though geographically dispersed and culturally different, Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) was part of Pakistan from 1947 to 1971. Before becoming a sovereign state, Bangladesh

(East Pakistan) went through double colonisation: first by the British empire, and later by West-Pakistan.

2.2.1 Double Colonisation and Socio-Political Movements of Bangladesh

The geographic distance between West and East Pakistan was reflected in their economic and political separation. During partition and massive migration in 1947 came the birth of two countries, India and Pakistan, while the ruling elite had immigrated westward from India (Rahman & van Schendel, 2003). While Pakistan (then West and East Pakistan) was formed based on a Muslim majority, West Pakistan was chosen as the nation's political centre. Bangladesh then was known as East Pakistan (1947-71) and before that, the eastern half of Bengal. Historically it has been a region with a strong identity because of its distinct ecology. Bangladesh is the world's largest delta, formed by multiple rivers from the Himalayas (Guhathakurta & Schendel, 2013). It is also distinct for its particular religious' tradition derived from the Sufi tradition of Islam and cultural and language practice of Bengali culture and Bangla language.

In combined Pakistan (east and west), the economic disparity towards East Pakistan became visible in the form of industrial investments and imports, even when East Pakistan was producing significant amount of the country's exports (Weber, 1999). As Maron (1955) argued, the dispute regarding state language (West Pakistan tried to make Urdu the state language) also showcased that West Pakistani elites consider their eastern counterpart as inferior. Due to different disparities with the West Pakistani such as economic, educational, social, political (Asadullah, 2010), social and political movements started to emerge. What started as a language movement in 1952, against the dominance of Urdu as a state language, continued as mass nationalist movements during the 1960s against political and economic discrimination which continued until 1970 (Maron, 1955).

2.2.2 General Election of 1970, the First Step Towards Democracy

The first general election after the independence of Pakistan would be held in 1970. Following the footsteps of previous Pakistani leaders, West Pakistan's chief martial law administrator and president, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, put limits on the freedom of voters. This indicated that the integrity of the country of Pakistan was more important than the election outcomes (Boissoneault, 2016). This practice had been identified by H. Naqvi (2013) as "Basic Democracy" which he indicated was used in the past by military regimes to provide the appearance of democracy while military rule is in real control. In the 1970 election, East Pakistan representatives won 162 seats while West Pakistan had 138 seats. An overwhelming majority of votes in East Pakistan went to the Awami league led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who campaigned on a platform of Bengali autonomy (Boissoneault, 2016). The military regime of Pakistan did not accept the results and delayed the first meeting of the assembly and instituted martial law.

2.2.3 Revolt against West-Pakistani Regime

In response to the deliberate delay by West-Pakistani military regime, riots and strikes erupted across East Pakistan. Moreover, on 7th March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of Al announced the start of a civil disobedience movement in front of a massive crowd in Ramna Race Course (later renamed as Suhrawardy Udyan) which is very close to Shahbag square or Projonmo Chottor, where the Shahbag movement started. From 16th to 24th March 1971 in Dhaka, the capital of East Pakistan, as a last effort to avoid war, Mujibur and Khan met and discussed the issues, and seemingly reached an agreement. However, on the night of the 25th of March, Mujibur was arrested. West Pakistani soldiers, who had been infiltrating East Pakistan for several months, began what would be known as "Operation Searchlight" (Banglapedia, 2018b), the massacre of Bengali civilians by Pakistani soldiers.

2.2.4 The Liberation War of Bangladesh Against Pakistan in 1971

After Operation Searchlight, Bangladesh was declared independent from Pakistan (then West Pakistan) on 26th March 1971 through a declaration made by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The liberation war began on this date and ended with the liberation of Bangladesh on 16th December 1971. The armed struggle was the culmination of a series of events, situations and issues contributing to the progressively deteriorating relations between East and West Pakistan. The questions of land reforms, state language, intertwined with economic and administrative disparities, provincial autonomy, the defence of East Pakistan and many other consequential questions had been straining the relations between the two wings of Pakistan ever since the independence of the country from Britain in 1947 (Banglapedia, 2018a).

2.2.5 Pakistani Genocide and Crime Against Humanity

During the liberation war of 1971, the Pakistani Army committed one of the most horrific genocides in the 20th century against the people of Bangladesh; killing approximately three million people including children, women and the elderly, and evicting approximately ten million people from their homestead land of Bangladesh. The victims were forced to seek refuge in neighbouring India. The 8th volume of the 15 volumes of *History of Bangladesh War of Independence Documents* (Rahman, 2009: 1-592) focused on the issue of genocides, refugee camps and relevant events during the 1971 war of liberation. Based on eyewitness accounts, governmental documents, newspaper articles (local and international), and the Indian government's official documents regarding the refugees and other sources, a glimpse of the atrocities committed by the Pakistani Army can be seen. In reference to the news report filed by Alfonso Rumazo Gonzales of EL COMMERCIO on 2nd September 1971 titled, "SLAUGHTER OF 200,000 BENGALIS," Rahman (2009) cites,

The slaughter of 200,000 Bengalis in East Pakistan can only be described by its true

name: Genocide. The crime has been perpetrated by the West Pakistan army under the orders of the tyrant who governs there: General Yahya Khan. This figure of 200,000 given by Leon F. Hesser, Director of (U.S. Aid Agency) A.I.D. rises to 300,000 in British calculations. (p.534)

The number of refugees who died in the refugee camps is still unknown. Along with the indiscriminate mass killing, it is said that the Pakistani Army also raped a quarter of a million Bangladeshi women during the war. In her article, D'Costa, B. (2013) of Australian National University argued how politics of memory interplay with crimes and violence against women regarding the 1971 war of liberation. She interviewed Dr Geoffrey Davis in 2002. In 1972, Dr. Davis helped rape victims through abortions. According to him, the number of rape victims is difficult to count, "It is difficult to put a figure in it. About 100 a day in Dhaka and variable numbers in a lot of other towns. Moreover, some would go to Calcutta (a city in India, where many refugees took shelter for abortions)." He believed the estimated figure for the number of Bengali women who were raped is between 200,000 to 400,000 (D'Costa, 2010).

According to the History of Bangladesh War of Independence Documents, during the liberation war in May 1971, 1.5 million refugees sought asylum in India; and by November 1971 that number had risen to nearly 10 million (Rahman, 2009).

2.2.6 Role of Jamaat-e-Islami During Liberation War of Bangladesh

As Abu Nasar Saied (2008) has shown, in depicting the political scenario before the liberation war, the West Pakistani counterpart of JIB in East Pakistan did not gain formidable popularity. Nonetheless, its emphasis on the unity of two Pakistan continued, which was reflected in the liberation war. During the liberation war, JIB swore full loyalty to the Pakistani army and operated as its local accomplice against the Bengali people (M. H.

Chowdhury, 2002). As Kumar (2017) showed, JIB played a damaging role in the liberation war, which includes killing unarmed people including the elderly, women and children. Mookherjee (2006) showed that women became the centre of violence during the time and members of JIB were capturing Bengali women and committing heinous crime including rape, mutilation and so on. Explaining the role of different groups against the Bengali people, Barakat (2013) showed that the student wing of Jamaat, the Islami Chhatra Sibir became one of the key local accomplices which was named "Al-Badar."   "Al-Badar" and "Al Shams" were part of a larger the group known as "Razakar," led by JIB leaders such as Golam Azam, Nijami. Regarding the selective killing of the Bengali intellectuals by the final period of the war, Khandoker (2014) argued this could not have been possibly done by the Pakistani army acting alone without the local support of "Razakar," "Al-Badar" and "Al Shams."   She argued that, inferring the nearing defeat in the war, it was a systemically executed plan to kill the intellectual backbone of the country. JIB leaders used their local knowledge to help in selecting and murdering the Bengali Intellectuals (Khandoker, 2014).

As can be seen, JIB not only opposed the birth of Bangladesh by collaborating with the Pakistani occupation force but also committed heinous premeditated crimes on a horrific scale during the nine-month war of independence of Bangladesh. After nine months of bloodshed and armed struggle, Bangladesh became independent from Pakistan on 16th December 1971.

2.2.7 The Birth of Bangladesh as a Secular, Democratic Country

Though Pakistan was created under the presupposition of the religious majority, Bangladesh, on the other hand, despite being a Muslim majority country, introduced secularism as one of its four state principles in the 1972 Constitution under its first president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Hasan, 2011). S. M. S. Alam (1993) argued that secularism was conceptually based on a strong critique of the colonial and post-colonial exploitations to

which Bangladesh had been subjugated. After the emergence of Bangladesh as a separate nation, the JIB was banned from taking part in political activities of the country due to its heinous role in the liberation war of 1971 and its vision to establish an "Islamic State." The 1972 Constitution was based on four fundamental principles; namely, secularism, nationalism, democracy and socialism. The communal character of JIB did not comply with the aspiration of the secular ethno-Bengali nationalism and the secular nature of the state (Kumar, 2017).

2.3 Bringing War Criminals of 1971 to Justice

As there was no room for JIB in the newly independent nation, the top leaders of JIB who supported the Pakistani army fled to Pakistan but many others continued to live in Bangladesh. The first prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, took initiatives to eradicate extremist religious parties. Under Article 38 of the Constitution, political parties based on religious affiliation or motives are banned in Bangladesh. Thus, JIB had been banned being a religion-based party as well as the party of war criminals.

In fact, not only was JIB banned, the process of bringing war criminals to justice also started. On 31st December 1971, the government enacted a commission for the inquiry on the extent of the genocide and other atrocities. However, the commission's report was never published (Haque, 2018). In 1972, the new government of Bangladesh disseminated the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunal) Order of 1972, under Presidential Order No. 8 of 1972 (PO8), in order to try those who collaborated with the Pakistan Army and engaged in atrocities. In 1973, tribunals were established under this order. The Constitution of Bangladesh was also amended by inserting Article 47(3), intended to expedite the trials of "any armed or defence or auxiliary (Tribunal, 2018) forces" for genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. Additionally, the government passed the Bangladesh International Crimes (Tribunals) Act of 1973 (Act No. XIX of 1973).

Under this Collaborators Order, 50,000 collaborators were arrested. Until October 1973, 37,471 cases were filed under this law, and 2,884 were tried. However, only 752 were found guilty and given prison terms, and only one was sentenced with capital punishment. As many as 2,000 were acquitted. On 29 November 1973, the government declared an amnesty for all prisoners held under the Collaborators Order (PO8). This excluded those charged with murder, rape or arson. Nearly 33,000 "detained collaborators" were freed. Those accused of murder, rape or arson were to be tried under PO8 (Haque, 2018).

Shortly after these initiatives were taken, the three neighbouring South-Asian countries, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, realized the necessity of mutual peace agreements for the future progress of all three nations. With regard to the peace of the subcontinent, Bangladesh signed tripartite agreement with India and Pakistan in 1974. This agreement included Bangladesh's consent to the repatriation of 195 Pakistani prisoners of the 1971 war (EFSAS, 2017).

The original constitution of 1972, drawn up under the new government of the Awami league (Al), invoked nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism as key principles of statecraft. In less than three years, the country's first Prime Minister, the Al leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1972–5) enacted the Fourth Amendment to the constitution, which instituted the authoritarian one-party rule in place of parliamentary democracy (Siddiqi, 2011) . While Bangladesh was born out of secular ideology, in the Muslim majority country, the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman often used Islamic rhetoric in his speeches. The influence of cold war politics and famine in 1970 devastated the war-torn new country of Bangladesh (Hasan, 2011; Riaz & Fair, 2011).

On 15th August 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, along with most of his immediate family members, was assassinated in a military coup by some army personnel. Between

August and November 1975, a number of coups were attempted. In the same year, four other prominent national leaders who had the potential to replace Sheikh Mujib were assassinated. Bangladesh experienced a series of coups following the one in 1975. Through coups and counter-coups, General Ziaur Rahman consolidated power, and from 7 November 1975 assumed control of the government and placed the country under martial law.

2.3.1 Military Regime, Silencing the International Crime Tribunal

The International Crime Tribunal was enacted under the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunal) Order of 1972, by virtue of the aforesaid Presidential Order No. 8 of 1972 (PO8). One of the first acts of General Ziaur Rahman, as head of state, was to repeal PO8 on 31st December 1975, by promulgating a martial law ordinance, the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) (Repeal) Ordinance of 1975. This martial law ordinance released all who were awaiting trial, as well as those who had been convicted under the tribunal. Thus, the tribunals ended.

The military government, by enacting the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, gave retrospective legality to the martial law ordinances and made it illegal to challenge or question any action of the military government.

2.3.2 Military Regime and Rehabilitation of Jamaat-e-Islami/Political Islam

General Ziaur Rahman paved the way for the political participation of JIB through the Fifth Amendment to Bangladesh's Constitution. It abolished the provisions of secularism and socialism and provided the provision for forming political parties based on religion. Ziaur Rahman resurrected JIB to perform as a functional political party which had opposed the emergence of an independent Bangladesh. His military government (1975–81) dispensed with both socialist ideology and secular principles. He established the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in 1978 in order to polish his civilian credentials, embraced an explicitly Muslim

Bangladeshi identity as opposed to Bengali Secular Identity, which is known as Bangladeshi Nationalism. Ziaur Rahman's wife Khaleda Zia continued this legacy after his death (Siddiqi, 2011).

2.3.3 Rise of Islamic Conscience

During the two subsequent army regimes of General Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad from 1975 to 1990, several measures were taken to promote Islamic values in the State of Bangladesh. As Ali Riaz and Fair (2011) showed, it was the beginning of promoting Bangladeshi Nationalism where Islamic practices and values were reinforced not only in the constitution but also in several changes in practices. In the constitution, "absolute faith and trust in the Allah Almighty" and *Bismillahirahmanir rahim* ("In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate") was introduced. In other areas, posters of Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's advice were hung in government offices and in public places; a new division of Religious Affairs was established; memoranda were made on various religious occasions by the head of state or government; an Islamic foundation was established; massive funds for mosque and madrassah construction were disbursed; and a Madrassah education board was established (Hasan, 2011). These acts of promoting Islamic values by way of constitutional changes, including the deletion of secularism as a state principle and the declaration of Islam as a state religion, marked a decisive move away from a secular nationhood and established the role of religion in politics (Zaman, 2016).

Ziaur Rahman's successor in the army, General Ershad consolidated the non-secular face of the nation by declaring Islam as the state religion. Moreover, both Generals Ziaur Rahman and Ershad reversed the socialist policies and rhetoric of the first Al government. To contest the Al, the Islamic nationalist conscience surfaced with BNP and Jamaat. BNP highlighted the difference of identity from India and

Hindu, Bengalis of West Bengal, and the inclusion of the non-Bengali communities in Bangladesh by claiming the "Bangladeshi" identity as the national identity (Khandoker, 2014). However, this effort was directed towards an anti-Bengali nationalist identity by the new Muslim cultural elites backed by Saudi Arabia which is different from folk-Muslim tradition of local Bengal (Karim 2004) .

2.4 Democratizing Bangladesh and Rise of Jamaat-e-Islam as Kingmakers

Scholars (Barakat, 2013; Haq, 2015) have argued, during the military regime, that the base for Islamization in politics was seeded. In December 1990, the military regime of General Ershad was collapsed by a popular urban uprising. In rivalry, the political parties started promoting two forms of nationalism, Islamic Nationalism by BNP and secular Bengali Nationalism by Al. Both parties were working closely with the Islamics (JIB). As Jahan (2015) showed, the electoral bi-polar politics which emerged after the demise of the military regime legitimised JIB in the mainstream politics of Bangladesh. As Siddiqi (2011) argued, though Al was promoting secular Bengali nationalism, the demised leader of Al, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been using Islamic rhetoric in his speeches as early as in the 1970s. Later, with the rise of Bangladeshi nationalism by General Ziaur Rahman, his party BNP also began promoting Islamic values and practices. Gradually the expressions and icons of religion became important to the political discourse of Bangladesh.

F. Ahmed (2013) analysed the new era of electoral politics in Bangladeshi history (1991–present), and argued that the two main political parties, Al and BNP, have both sought the support of Islamics, particularly the JIB, either to achieve power or to topple a democratically elected regime. He further argued that both the main political parties Al and BNP used this "Islamic Vote Bank" (Ahmed, 2013: 7), BNP more overtly and Al comparatively covertly.

Ali Riaz and Fair (2011) argued, over the past years, that the Islamist forces in general and the JIB, in particular, have not only gained recognition as legitimate political actors but have also emerged as kingmakers both in the electoral equation and on the ideological terrain.

Electoral Bi-polar Politics 1990-Present
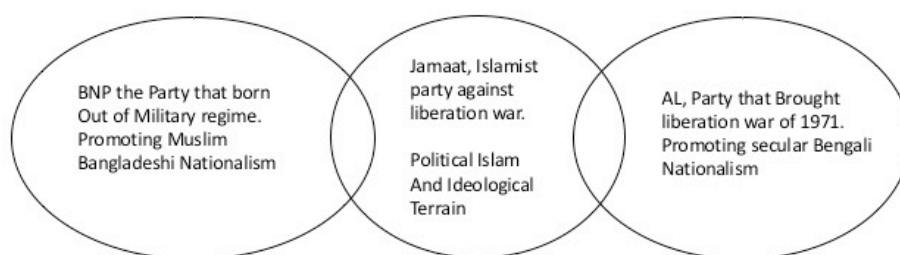
Figure 9. The Bi-polar Electoral Politics since 1990s.

As can be seen, the inclusion of JIB in mainstream politics, by the military regime and later by democratic parties, paved the way for JIB to gain legitimacy as political actors and kingmakers in the electoral contests. As many scholars have argued, the lack of moral leadership to earn spontaneous consent from the masses due to the bitter relationship between the two main political parties, Al and BNP, provided an excellent political opportunity for Islamic parties such as JIB and HI to emerge and gain popularity (Haq, 2015; Riaz & Fair, 2011).

The JIB leaders, proclaimed war criminals, slowly made their way into the political scene by partnerships with other political parties and coalitions with electoral groups, and by religious hegemony of the Muslim majority. At the same time, the international financial support of Jamaat created a new religious elite parallel with the Bengali intellectual and cultural elite groups (Karim 2004).

2.5 Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee (Committee to Exterminate the Killers and Collaborators), Movement for Bringing War Criminals to Justice

The mass movement led by political parties of 1990 toppled the military regime and reinstated democracy in the country. During the period of 1975 to 1990, the issue of the trial of war criminals of 1971 remained underground. By the 1990s, the issue surfaced owing to the movement of civil-intellectuals under the leadership of Jahanara Imam, the mother of Rumi, a martyr of the liberation war. This movement emerged during the time when war crimes and criminals (focusing on JIB leaders and members) were less discussed. Islamization was underway in politics.

Jahanara Imam and civil-intellectuals of Bangladesh formed the Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee (Committee to Exterminate the Killers and Collaborators). This committee called for the trial of war criminals who committed crimes against humanity in the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war. The Committee set up mock trials in Dhaka in March 1992 known as Gonoadalot (Court of the People) and "sentenced" persons they accused of being war criminals.

The activities of the "Ekattorer Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee" (Committee to Exterminate the Killers and Collaborators of 1971) led by Jahanara Imam were deemed unlawful by the Government of Bangladesh. Jahanara Imam and others were charged with treason. In 1996, after her death, this charge was dropped by the Chief Advisor Mohammed Habibur Rahman of the caretaker government of that time. In place of the deceased Jahanara Imam, the acting president of the Committee became Shahriar Kabir, a public intellectual and proponent of the Shahbag movement.

While successful in generating mass support, this movement was silenced by the

democratically elected government. Thus, the objective of bringing war criminals to justice remained unfulfilled. By this time, the democratic politics of Bangladesh had become highly bi-polarised, dwelling between secular Bengali identity and Muslim majority Bangladeshi identity. The anti-liberation war forces such as JIB and religion-based politics had already been internalised in mainstream politics, including in social, economic and educational institutions. The two main political parties Al and BNP were collaborating with JIB to remain in power. As a result, JIB leaders went on to become ministers. The issue of bringing war criminals to justice remained discounted by the mainstream political parties, although small groups of intellectuals, activists and members of civil society continued their effort to uphold justice.

2.5.1 Bringing War Criminals to Justice: ICT and the Initiative by Awami League 2008-2013

The demand for bringing war criminals to justice remained discounted in mainstream politics for some time until 2008, when Al was re-elected with a two-thirds majority in a general election. Al had promoted the issue of bringing war criminals to justice in their electoral manifesto (which was a popular demand), and with the two-thirds majority in parliament, they were able to make changes in the constitution and enabled the possibility to start trial for war criminals of 1971. In 2009, by a reactivation of the war crime Act through the "International Crimes 1973 (Tribunals) (Amendment) Act, 2009" ("ICT Amendment Act"), the International War Crime Tribunal Bangladesh (ICT) started to operate. The first indictments were issued in 2010. This time, Al formed the "War Crimes Fact Finding Committee" to investigate international crimes against humanity committed in 1971. On 3rd April 2010, this Committee completed its report and published a list of 1,597 war criminals involved in various crimes.

2.5.2 The Disputes Surrounding ICT

The enactment of the ICT went through several disputes, with the main opposition party BNP, then in coalition with JIB, accusing the ICT as being politically motivated. They accused Al of annihilating political opposition from politics. From 2009, ICT continued its prosecution of war criminals of 1971. These tribunals are a domestic judicial mechanism established through national legislation, intended to try internationally-recognized crimes, hence their description as "international crimes tribunals." The tribunal constituted under the Act had the power to try and punish any individual or group or organization, or any member of armed, defence or auxiliary forces, irrespective of nationality, who had committed any crimes in Bangladesh mentioned in Section 3(2) of the Act. Jalil (2010) argued that a war crimes tribunal is akin to a political vendetta. While defending JIB, he also argued that the leaders of JIB opposed the ICT because the former were afraid of "bias and *mala fide* political motive of the Al Government to hang certain high profile Islamic political figures as a means of political revenge without proving adequate evidence against them" (Jalil, 2010: 23).

2.6 Bringing War Criminals to Justice: The 2013 Shahbag Movement

As described above, the ICT took a protracted 3 years, from 2010-2013, for a hearing handing down a verdict. Its first verdict was announced in January 2013 where ICT sentenced Abdul Kalam Azad (in absentia) to death for his involvement in the genocide of 1971. He was an Islamic cleric who had been expelled from JIB. The delay of the verdict, as well as the disputes surrounding ICT, may be one of the impelling reasons for the Shahbag movement. As one Shahbag activist said, *"It was an easy verdict for ICT and Al because he has already fled."*

The Shahbag movement commenced on 5th February 2013 in protest against the verdict of

life imprisonment of Abdul Quader Mollah handed down by the International War Crime Tribunal (ICT).

2.7 Emergence of Hefazat-e-Islam to Oppose the Shahbag movement

Another Islamic force emerged later in May 2013 known as HI Bangladesh (Protectors of Islam), then a lesser known Qawmi Madrasa-based group, demanding the death sentence for the alleged "atheist" bloggers. HI was formed in 2010 by the teachers of Chittagong-based madrasas. The formation of HI was triggered by the 2009 "Women Development Policy." Scholars have argued that HI is part of a globalization process of radical Islam and took a carefully planned strategy of promoting ordinary religiosity. This is also the reason for their acceptance and support among grassroots Muslims (Barakat, 2013; Shahed, 2013).

Shahbag was demanding for the imposition of the maximum penalty for all war criminals, banning JIB and all anti-liberation politics, banning all the business, social and cultural organizations of JIB including bank, hospital, TV station, dailies and social media sites and so on. On the other hand, HI's 13 demands included reinstatement of "absolute trust and faith in Allah" in the constitution, enactment of (anti-defamation) law at the parliament keeping death penalty as the highest form of punishment to prevent defamation of Allah, Muhammad, and Islam, cancelling women development policy, removing sculptures and statues and so on. While many political parties had started to express their support for the Shahbag movement, BNP was hesitant and, inferring this movement was becoming beneficial for Al, instead showed visible support to their political ally JI and HI. This outspoken support from the party leader of BNP and the successful propaganda against Shahbag fomented a violent, aggressive atmosphere. On the contrary, the initial stage of the Shahbag movement emphasized a non-violent mode of demonstration.

The response to Shahbag by HI was massive. HI organized a long march towards the Motijhil area, the business and commercial centre of Dhaka, on 6th April 2013. HI activists were coming from different divisions like Rajshahi, Chittagong, and Sylhet, to push for their 13-point demands. On 5th May 2013, nearly half a million people once again gathered in *Shahpla Chattar* of Motijhil area, from all six entrances of Dhaka (Dhrubo, 2017). The gathering of the Islamic forces created a *"Dhaka Siege."* Many of the observers claimed that this event was a political showdown in disguise among the BNP, JI and HI combined to go against not only the Shahbag movement but also the Al government. The government deployed joint forces and the operation of clearing the city from HI went underway at midnight. It was called *"operation flash out."* In the process, many HI activists were killed although the actual number of casualties remains a mystery. They are often called by the Islamic forces as the *"Martyrs of Islam"* (Gazi, Shahid), and the reminiscence of the event still hovers around social media and in the memory of the people. The same morning, on 6th May 2013, the government demolished the *Gonojagoron Moncho* (the central platform of protest in Shahbag). As M. Haque (2013a) argued, in a very short time, the Shahbag movement was able to generate such a huge mass support that the Al government did not dare challenge it. Even the prime minister and Al members of parliament showed solidarity with the movement. Wasif (2013) identified the role of Al government, and for him, what Al did was to take a softer approach to contain the movement and tame it internally.

It is worth noting that after the rise of HI and its mass protest in the street of Dhaka on 5th May 2013, Al took strong measures and deployed armed police forces to contain the protest. As abovementioned, more than hundreds of HI activists were killed as reported by human rights organisation Odhikar (2013). To avoid any further clash between Shahbag and HI, the Al government demolished the Gonojagoron Moncho. In response, the spokesperson of the movement Imran H. Sarker stated, "this Gonojagoron Moncho is not merely a physical

platform, it is a platform of consciousness. It cannot be destroyed by displacement or demolishment. This Moncho will reincarnate by the youth" (BanglaNews24.com, 2013). Many have argued that the successful "containment" of the Shahbag movement and HI empowered the Al government immensely (M. M. Islam, 2014).

CHAPTER 3

Localisation of Social Media and Digital Resistances in Bangladesh Before Shahbag

This chapter provides a historical account of the development of the Internet and social media worldwide and its localization in Bangladesh. As has been argued in the theoretical framework, social media is inherently *glocal* (globally local) and its expansion varies differently in different culture, regions and countries (Miller et al., 2016: 14). In the case of Bangladesh, social media was localised though Bangla blogging which introduced the platform for Internet users to express their opinions and views independently, which opened the scope of vibrant debate, discussion of topics (e.g. liberation war, 1971, war criminals, feminism, critique of religious discourses, different forms of sexuality, poetry, personality) which otherwise would have been regarded as too sensitive to discuss in mainstream media and public spaces. This localisation process instigated digital resistances and activisms parallel to traditional protest and movements, such as the protest against fire in Tazreen Fashion factory, killing at least 117 people, protest against VAT increment in private universities, #Trafficsafety movement, protest against sexual harassment in Viqarunnisa Noon School & College. Among these digital resistances, the most persistent was the digital activism regarding the issue of bringing war criminals to justice. This chapter will also show the socio-political condition, major issues in the blogosphere, and digital activism prior to the Shahbag movement.

3.1 Neoliberalism and Social Media: User-Prosumer-Localisation-Digital Activism

While analysing the political economy of social media, scholars (Castro, 2016; Fuchs,

2012) have argued that the historical connection between the development of the Internet and neoliberal economy is not coincidental. The development of the Internet and neoliberalism shared many common substances (Castro, 2016; Dijck, 2013; Fuchs, 2014). Progress of the Internet required strong elements of innovation and entrepreneurship much in line with the inherent logic of entrepreneurship in neoliberalism. As Castro (2016) showed, the escalation of international capital flows started in the 1970s, undermining national economic policies which contributed in the success of neoliberalism in the USA. This project was not only supported by deregulation but also by information and communication technologies. The establishment of Silicon Valley in the USA served as the global centre for high technology and innovation, venture capital in dotcom companies, and later the introduction of social media (Heyman & Pierson, 2015). The dotcom companies created a bubble in economy which qwas heightened in the late 1990s, followed by a sharp decline in 2000-2001. This pattern of economic hike and later downfall was identified by Castro (2016) as typical of neoliberal financial speculation.

3.1.1 Interactive Modality: Web 2.0

The Internet originated in 1969 and in, terms of physical structure, it developed as a horizontal network. Due to its decentralized nature, it relied on services such as e-mail (1971), mailing lists (1975), Usenet (1980) and Internet Relay Chat (1988). Unlike traditional mass media, such as broadcast and print media, computer-mediated communication tends to be interactive and enables the user to be both a sender and a receiver (Castells, 2008). Compared to the traditional mode of mass communication, this is a key change in communication mechanism, which enabled users to be more participatory in communication.

In 1991, the World Wide Web became operational and consequently became the main service of the Internet. Though it had some interactive features in its earlier stages, the

World Wide Web mainly consisted of hypertext pages with static content. This static form of the Internet changed after the emergence of blogs[16] (shortened form of web logs) in 1994. Web logs or blogs popularized an interactive communication among users, where the users started to log their thoughts and views as a web diary on the Internet. These evolved into public avenues for political news and commentary (Harvey, 2014, p. 475), and even later on, websites like Blogger (1999) WordPress (2003), Wikipedia (2001) and YouTube (2005) and social network sites like Friendster (2002), LinkedIn (2003), My Space (2003), Orkut (2004), Facebook (2005), Twitter (2006) and Instagram (2010) all shaped the dynamic nature of the Internet.

3.1.2 From User to Prosumer

As mentioned earlier, the dotcom bubble economy faced a severe downfall in early 2000-2001. As Heyman and Pierson (2015) reported, the concept of Web 2.0 (2005) was created to showcase new technologies to the spectators and to convince them that the Internet, after the dotcom bubble, still had a future (emphasized as an economic future). The current social media platforms are based on Web 2.0 technology. The Web 2.0 was a new technology and also a business model, which promoted the notion of more user participation and empowerment in content creation. The introduction of this technology enabled users to become "prosumers." In political economy literature, prosumer refers to how more users are becoming a part of production of online content and activities. Here, production refers to active content creation and sharing by the users in social media using Web 2.0 technology (Fuchs, 2014). Through user generated content and sharing capacities with each other, users became prosumers and social media became successful both as a communication and a business model.

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[16] The collective domain of blogs is called the blogosphere. Blogs offer an opportunity for people, who are not professional journalists, to act as political reporters and commenters. This open, unedited blogosphere is just a link away from the public sphere of political news.

3.1.3 Customisation: Social Media Culture

Compared to other disciplines such as journalism, popular psychology, and sociology, the anthropological perspective of social media focuses on how particular social media platforms became established as significant within particular societies (e.g. China, Korea, Brazil, India). Due to its globally local nature, it is important to understand the global and local nature of social media. (Miller et al., 2016: 12-13).

The dominance of Facebook as a social media site has been very eminent in recent times; it has become synonymous to social media. According to social media analysis site Zephoria Search (2018), the number of monthly active Facebook users has reached over 2.13 billion (as of 31st January 2018) which is more than a quarter of the world population. There are 1.15 billion daily active (mobile) users with an increment of 23 percent year-over-year of Facebook users. Owing to the consistent increase in users, Facebook has become a highly successful social media company. According to Statista (2018), Facebook's revenue grew from 7.87 billion in 2013 to 40.7 billion US dollars in 2017, making the founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs in the planet.

Facebook is currently the dominant social networking site in the world. However, from an anthropological point of view, it is important to understand the heterogeneity of the development of social media in different culture and countries. In Korea, social media begins with Cyworld. The platform was launched in 1999 and became popular among young people. By 2005, almost all young Koreans used Cyworld. One of the key characteristics of Cyworld was its categories of concentric circles, which Hjorth (2009) found analogous to kinship system operating in the country. Those who decide to be *Cy-ilchon* – a very close relation –

become socially obliged to the value of reciprocity, such as commenting upon each other in a fashion that conjured these kin relationship.

Scholars (Miller et al., 2016) have argued that, in many cases, it is difficult to present evidence of specific cultural arrangement between a specific platform and particular society. Cyworld was very successful in Korea but not particularly successful in other parts of the world. Later, Cyworld would largely be replaced by Facebook. In the case of Bangladesh, the community blogging platform "somewhere...in.net" (2005) expanded social media as a Bangla blogosphere (Bengali blogosphere). Somewhere...in.net along with other blog sites (which originated in Bangladesh) developed an online culture, later marginalized by Facebook in popularity and user base. It is vital to be cautious about the cultural deterministic perspective of the expansion of social media. At the same time, it is important to explore the localization process of the Internet and social media in a particular region and society to be able to grasp the diverse and localized nature of social media.

Unlike popular western social media (Facebook, Twitter), China has its own distinctive social media platforms. Due to political prohibition, popular social media platforms in the world like Facebook, Twitter and Internet services such as Google are not present in China. Instead, social media platform QQ started in 1999 (as a messenger service) in the country, way before Facebook (2005) was born, and have had greater integration into people's lives than those found in Western social media. Renren (1999), formerly known as the Xiaonei Network (on-campus network), have strong similarities to Facebook but is a much smaller section of Chinese social media (Lim & Soriano, 2016). Hence, it is also important to be critical about the techno-deterministic presumptions about social media.

As mentioned earlier, a group of scholars have developed a critical understanding of social media's association with the political economy and considered social media as an expansion of neoliberalism (Castells, 2008; Fuchs, 2014). Contemporary social media

scholars such as Castro (2016), Heyman and Pierson (2015) and many more, emphasized one key character of social media. They associate social media with individualism and is primarily used for self-expression or ego-cantered networking. Miller et al. (2016) argued that most of these studies are based on the societal arrangement of North America, which has an individualistic climate. One crucial point that they have raised is the critical analysis of the presumptions based on the connection between individualism and social media. A set of new media (social media platforms) with the main purpose of developing social connections may not be best characterized by individualism. This point has some merit, as in the case of Friendster (2002), which started in the US in a more individualistic climate but achieved popularity in Southeast Asia, in societies which were more group-oriented. It is the same for Orkut, developed by Google, but gained popularity and massive user base in Brazil and India.

Even with the current world domination of Facebook as a social media platform, it will be quite premature to speculate that Facebook would be the end of social media history (Miller et al., 2016). While Facebook's (2005) user base has shifted to older people, Instagram (2010) and Snapchat (2011) are attracting comparatively younger people. As an older social media platform, Facebook (2005) has over two billion users worldwide. Comparatively, newer platform such as WeChat (2011) has one billion and WhatsApp (2009) has one and half billion users worldwide. Being a comparatively new platform than Facebook, they are attracting users with a rapid growth. Thus, it would be wise to keep in mind that social media platforms are subject to constant change.

Facebook (2005) is an interesting case because this platform has gone through many changes, constantly adding and removing many features and services. As Boyd and Ellison (2007) have pointed out, compared to their current services and structures, many of these platforms started out with quite different functions and intentions, even as early as 2007. In observing the current growth of Apps, Miller et al. (2016) argued that the future of social

media may be shifting towards the Apps. They concluded that, rather than focusing on the platform, it is important to focus on the localization process of the platform and contents. Once it becomes occupied by the local content, then the cultural placement follows as an outcome in social media. Thus, focusing on the current research, it is important to uncover the localization process of the Internet and social media in Bangladesh.

3.2 Neoliberal Market, Technology and Digital Culture: Localisation of Internet in Bangladesh

Compared to other countries, the Internet came late to Bangladesh, with UUCP[17] email beginning in 1993. However, the email service was not open for use by common people but rather confined to governmental use. The previous military regime led by Ershad was keen on the privatization of government-owned companies but restricted the introduction of the Internet. After the end of military regime in the 1990s, the democratic government continued the tradition of being restrictive about global communication, the Internet. The first democratically elected Government of Bangladesh BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) was reluctant to open up Internet connectivity. In fact, Bangladesh had an opportunity to obtain an undersea cable landing station in 1991 at a nominal cost yet the country did not get connected. The reason shown by the BNP led government was that the Internet will enable smuggling of sensitive information or data trafficking (Tathaya Pachar in Bengali) of the country.

During the first term of the Awami league (AL) government lead by Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh got IP[18] connectivity on June 4/6, 1996 through VSAT[19] which is a satellite technology that serves as a communication system. At that time, the cost of one megabyte of Internet was 120,000 BDT (154,895 YEN). There was neither a telecom policy nor a mechanism for government to sell any bandwidth to private companies. Upon VSAT

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[17] Refers to computer programs and protocols, allowing transfer of files and email between computers.
[18] Refers to Internet protocol, the connectivity guidelines and regulations that govern computer networks.
[19] VSAT is a technology that represents an alternative option for Internet connectivity in extremely remote areas and distant field locations. VSAT is specifically designed for remote locations and is a more cost-effective alternative to conventional satellite communications services (Aeyne, 2012).

commissioning, the Internet connectivity was established, and its services were made available to the public for a very high cost. After the launching of the Internet, national poll results were made available to the netizens[20] of the world, using World Wide Web (Hamidur, 2009). This endeavour was admired in many corners of the world, particularly among the Bangladeshi diaspora living abroad. At the time, the number of local Internet users was merely one thousand, mostly based in Dhaka, the capital city and Chittagong the second largest city. They were using Hotmail or other advertiser-supported email services. The popularity of email services increased among the Internet users residing in Bangladesh and abroad. The Internet users in Bangladesh primarily use free email services to communicate with people living abroad.

3.2.1 Market Economy of Internet in Bangladesh

The introduction of the Internet did not result in creating a service market in Bangladesh. There were only two ISPs (Internet service providers) in 1996 and the cost of using the Internet was steep, mostly beyond the reach of common people. In this initial period, market penetration for Internet services was very low. Owing to the lack of infrastructure for Internet service and service providers, the market for Internet usage was limited.

By 1997, a remarkable growth in Internet usage occurred. Anticipating the potentiality of growth and business, more than a dozen ISPs sprouted in the market (Hamidur, 2009). The growth in users became ten times higher than that of the previous year, and a few new ISPs started their venture recording a proportionate growth in the number of users. Even then, compared to the total population of Bangladesh, the growth in the number of Internet

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[20] Netizen: This word invented by Michael Hauben in 1995 by combining two words "Netwrok" and "Citizens". Netizens mean citizen of the digital network or network citizens, who are using the digital network such as the Internet (Suzuki, 2013). The concept of Netizen is also commonly referred to other expressions like: "Internet Citizen", "Network Citizen", "Digital Citizen" or "Cyber Citizen" which are used interchangeably and synonymously. Netizen also means different things such as a citizen (of physical space) utilizing information technology as a tool in order to engage in society, politics, and government participation, citizen of a globally connected to the Internet, electronic citizens those who use the Internet regularly and effectively, who take responsibility and care for the Net (Morteza, 2015).

users was limited to the big cities. It was no wonder that the first cyber cafe launched in 1999 in Banani, the affluent neighbourhood in the capital city Dhaka.

The first telecom policy was introduced in 1998 two years after the introduction of the Internet. The Al Government withdrew all import duties and VAT (value added tax) from all computer hardware and software. Prices of computers and accessories dropped drastically, and the number of computers sold rose from 40,000 to 120,000 in 1998. Between1998 to 2000, computers started becoming accessible to the general public. The first career management site for job seekers, Bdjob.com Ltd., was introduced in 2000. This was also the beginning of e-business in Bangladesh.

The year 2001 was very important because the first Telecommunication Act was enacted to establish the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). As a government organization, BTRC is responsible for regulating all matters related to telecommunication, including the Internet service. BTRC was established during the second term of power of Khaleda Zia led BNP.

There was a significant increase in the Internet usage beginning 2005-2006 onwards. Liberal government policies, as mentioned earlier, followed in the succeeding years which led to a quick expansion of the industry. However, it was not as much as expected. The cost of the Internet was still very high and out of reach of the common users. This scenario changed significantly after Bangladesh became connected to an undersea fibreoptic cable, the super highway of global Internet service.

After the missed opportunity of getting connected to submarine cable in 1991, Bangladesh became connected to SEA-ME-WE 4[21] (South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe 4) submarine cable in 2006. This provided the primary Internet backbone for

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[21] SEA-ME-WE 4 is an optical fiber submarine communications cable system that carries telecommunications between Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt, Italy, Tunisia, Algeria and France. This cable is around 18,800 kilometers long and provides the primary Internet backbone for Bangladesh (Alexander, 2013).

Bangladesh. Connection by submarine cable enhanced the opportunity for many ISPs to connect through BTCL[22] (*Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd.*). In the decade 1996 to 2006, the number of registered ISPs increased from a dozen to more than one hundred eighty. During 2006, the number of Internet users also increased by a big margin as the bandwidth quality and price became affordable to common people due to the connection to submarine cable. As of now, there are 554 registered ISPs (BTRC, 2018) operating in Bangladesh. Along with broadband ISPs, there are ten major WiMAX (wireless broadband system) service providers, and dial-up (BTCL) Internet service providers operating in Bangladesh. However, majority of the population use Internet through mobile Internet, a service provided by the telecom companies in Bangladesh.

3.2.2 Internet and Telecommunication Industry

The main reason for the expansion of the Internet through mobile devices in Bangladesh was due to the rapid growth of cellular mobile services. In 1996, simultaneous to the introduction of the Internet in Bangladesh, many international telecom companies such as Norway-based Telenor (introduced in Bangladesh as Grameenphone 1996) and Malaysia-based Axiata (introduced in Bangladesh as AKTEL in 1996 and later rebranded as Robi Axiata in 2010) started their venture in Bangladesh. While heavily investing in infrastructure development, they were also trying to expand the mobile telecom market. Later, other companies such as Egypt-based Orascom (2005) and India-based company Bharti Airtel (2009) also got licensed to operate in Bangladesh. The major mobile operators in Bangladesh are Grameen Phone (1996), Robi (1996), Citycell (1996), Banglalink (1996), and Airtel (2010). As of now, private companies have a dominant market share in the Bangladesh telecom and Internet industry. The state-owned company Teletalk (2004) share a nominal portion of the telecom market (dhakatribune, 2018).

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[22] Founded as the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) in 1971. In 2008 BTTB became a public limited company and renamed BTCL. It is the largest telecommunications company in Bangladesh. It provides dial-up Internet access in all 64 districts in Bangladesh (Btcl, 2018).

Mobile internet service in Bangladesh was initiated in 2004 by the largest telecom company Grameenphone. Later, all telecom operators started to provide internet services through mobile devices. However, compared to other countries, the cost of mobile internet services is still high. Nonetheless, mobile internet is still the most available means to provide internet services to remote parts of Bangladesh. Currently, in a country of more than 160 million people, the number of mobile phone users is more than 145 million. The number of Internet users in Bangladesh in January (BTRC, 2019) is more than 90 million. Among them, 85 million subscribers use mobile internet. The number of ISP and PSTN subscriber is 5.73 million and WiMAX subscribers are 89,000.

3.2.3 Internet Regulations: ICT Law, Application and Amendment

In Bangladesh, the first Information and Communication Technology Act (ICT Act) was enacted, almost unnoticed by the public, on 8th October 2006 under the BNP and JIB government.

Section 46 of the ICT Act 2006, grants powers to the government to direct any law-enforcing agency to restrict information through any computer resource if in their opinion such prevention is necessary or expedient so to do in the interest of the sovereignty, integrity, or security of Bangladesh, friendly relations of Bangladesh with other States, public order or for preventing incitement to commission of any cognizable offence.

Further, in criminalizing publishing or transmitting or causing to publish or transmit, Section 57 of the ICT Act provides that

> ...any material which is fake and obscene or its effect is such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it, or causes to deteriorate or creates possibility to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the State or person or

causes to hurt or may hurt religious belief or instigate against any person or organization, then this activity of his will be regarded as an offence. (ICJ, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, there was little awareness about the passing of this act. Since 2006 to 2010, no major implication of the ICT act was observed. Compared to the present condition of internet users in Bangladesh, which is now more than 90 million (BTRC, 2019), the number of internet users was small. During that time (2010), the approximate number of Internet users was around 1,000,000 (one million) and Facebook was among the most popular social networking sites (Dailystarnews, 2010).

3.2.4 Applications of the ICT Act 2006

In 2010, Bangladesh observed the first implication of the ICT law. The AI government used Sections 46 and 57 to ban the social networking site Facebook in May 2010. The government directed the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and local internet service providers to block objectionable content on Facebook (Telegraph, 2010). The decision came after the arrest of a youth for uploading satirical images of some politicians, including the prime minister and the leader of the opposition (Dailystarnews, 2010). That was not the only cause. A further "objectionable" content was the cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed by Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard (Staff, 2015). Thousands of Muslims protested in Dhaka against Facebook's "blasphemous content" specifically a page called "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" that encouraged users to post images of the prophet (Ndtv, 2010). Three Islamic political parties, Islami Oikya Jote, Islami Andolan and Khelafat Andolan also demanded an immediate ban on Facebook for a recent campaign of drawing images of the prophet. A group of Dhaka University students took to the streets to protest the government's decision of banning Facebook (Dailystarnews, 2010).

IT experts criticised the government for the move. BTRC said part of the reason is the posting of some anti-religious and porn links by users across the globe. "We have blocked all access to Facebook temporarily," said a high official of BTRC (Ndtv, 2010). In March 2009, the government blocked the video sharing website YouTube for hosting a recorded conversation between the prime minister and army officers after the BDR carnage (Dailystarnews, 2010).

On 6 October 2013, under the Al government, the Bangladeshi Parliament amended the Information and Communication Technology Act of 2006. The amendments made many offences under the law non-bailable and cognizable. The amendments also imposed a minimum prison sentence of seven years for offences and increased the maximum penalty under the law from ten to 14 years' imprisonment. Section 57 (1), in defining what constitutes an offence, states,

> If any person deliberately publishes or transmits or causes to be published or transmitted in the website or in any other electronic form any material which is false and obscene and if anyone sees, hears or reads it having regard to all relevant circumstances, its effect is such as to influence the reader to become dishonest or corrupt, or causes to deteriorate or creates possibility to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the state or person or causes to hurt or may hurt religious belief or instigate against any person or organisation, then this activity will be regarded as an offence. (ICJ, 2013).

3.2.5 Problematisation of the ICT Act 2013, Section 57 (1)

The amended law has made offences under its Sections 54, 56, 57 and 61 cognizable; thereby allowing the police to make arrests without a judicial warrant. In addition, by virtue of the amendments, the offences described under Sections 54, 56, 57 and 61 have been made

non-bailable, which means that bail cannot be sought as a matter of right but is at the discretion of the court. The amended Act has also increased the maximum sentence for offences under its Sections 54, 56 and 57 from 10 to 14 years and prescribed a minimum sentence of seven years. The amended law has also retained the optional fine of ten million BDT ($130,000).

The vagueness in the provisions of the original law became more repressive as the ICT Act was amended in 2013. Specifically, the original law contained a number of vague, imprecise and overbroad provisions that serve to criminalize the use of computers for a wide range of activities in contravention of the right to freedom of expression, including the right to receive and impart information, protected under international law.

It should be noted that the stated objective of the ICT Act is "the legal recognition and security of information and communication technology." However, the amendments to the Act appear designed to stifle the legitimate exercise of public criticism and to subject various persons including journalists, bloggers, and human rights defenders to arbitrary detention. As Hussain and Mostafa (2016) argued, *"In an apparent response to this growth in new-media-based activism [Shahbag movement], 2013 also saw Bangladeshi authorities implement and strengthen draconian elements of the ICT Act of 2006, with the authorities' actions aimed mainly at suppressing the multiplicity of opinions in the digital space"* (Hussain and Mostafa, 2016: 7). In 2013, authorities arrested four bloggers and took a forceful approach to controlling online content. After the Act was amended, a prominent human rights organization, Odhikar was subjected to harassment for allegedly distorting information, presenting false evidence and manipulating photographs of a government crackdown on a rally by HI (ICJ, 2013). The target of this law is social media users, social media activist, journalist, army officer, human rights activists, university teachers, villagers from the minority community, politicians from opposing party, member of the ruling party. Those who

accuse were using Facebook screenshots as evidence, like status, comments, and so on. Some were claiming that other users were defaming the prime minister, allegedly attacking religious sentiment, spreading false news, defaming of Allah and Muhammad and so on. There are many instances of filing cases but also initiate a communal riot against the religious, ethnic minority. In 2013, when the law was first amended, the number of cases were 3, and then the number of cases increased immensely over the years: 33 in 2014; 152 in 2015; 233 in 2016; and 323 up until November 2017 (U. Islam, 2017).

In 2016, The Government issued a social media guideline for its employees (dhakatribune, 2016). The guideline has also encouraged the public servants to use social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for highlighting their success and achievements at work. Through the directives, the government has asked its employees to maintain the service conduct rules while sharing their information on social networking platforms. More than 800 government organisations have already introduced technology. In the case of opening an account or a page of a specific organisation, no personal name or position can be used. Instead, the offices can appoint an individual or form a 3 to 5-member admin panel to operate their official pages on social media. Although the guideline did not give any specific instruction over maintaining public servants' accounts, it said every individual would be responsible for posts on personal accounts. In one hand the Govt. wanted public servants to highlight their achievement, on the other hand, it put extra caution for the Govt. officials in social media interaction and behaviour (Staff, 2016).

Since 2013, law enforcement agencies became very active in social media, such as Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit[23], Bangladesh Polices[24], and so on. They introduced social media pages; they became fellow face bookers. Anybody can easily access,

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[23] https://www.facebook.com/Counter-Terrorism-CT-DMP-129504767450405/?eid=ARCfwbRMSGEtRdQsgxof1L3P4azxUS_D6wCLAh92NOTpcNngushJq80XPz5TCBU2AIAGq2qjpxCAPB9z
[24] https://www.facebook.com/BangladeshPoliceOfficialPage/?__tn__=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCJM63GV7wYV1q7EZK0HqKHX8fz3CEaH7IxRqTNZtpvk3P9zfmPre6aJIP_S-W0ba6Vu9E92nV-erj4

inform and act against anybody and can submit complain. As observed in long term ethnography, social media surveillance increased, intelligence agencies gathering sensitive information both formally or informally (dhakatribune, 2017).

In 2018 the Digital Security Bill was passed in parliament with stricter provisions allowing police official to sear or arrest anyone without any warrant (R. Hasan, 2018). Human rights organisation (Amnesty, 2018) or organisation working for free speech (Accessnow, 2018) are claiming that like its predecessor, digital security law will limit the freedom of expression drastically. In 2019 the pioneer blog site of Bangla blogosphere somewhereinblog.net was shut down by Govt. with the allegation of pornographic material (Welle, 2019), however many argued, this was a Govt. crackdown on freedom of expression in Bangladesh (Outlook, 2019).

3.3 Bangla Blogosphere in Bangladesh: Online Discussion Circle to Blog Community

In May 2001, a Bangladeshi-American, Avijit Roy living in the USA started the Yahoo Group called Mukto-Mona (free mind), an online discussion circle which later turned into the internet community for free thinkers. In 2002, Mukto-Mona turned into a blog/online forum. This group was the first Bengali group to celebrate Darwin Day and International Women's day on the Internet. Writers in this group are of Bengali and South Asian descent who are dispersed around the globe. The objective of Mukto-Mona is to foster a secular society based on science, reason and rationality.

In 24th February 2004, Bratya Raisu, a poet and intellectual, started a Yahoo Group kabishava (group of poets). This online circle started as a discussion group via a chain email list where young writers, poets and intellectuals started to discuss about poetry, literature and contemporary issues. Initially, the writers were mainly based in Dhaka but eventually, as the

group became popular, writers from other parts of the country and the Bengali diaspora joined the group. Nevertheless, the number of participants was very limited.

In both the cases, the online sphere was very limited and can be best described as online discussion circles.

3.3.1 Introduction to Bengali Writing in the Internet

During this early period, the users were using English or Romanized Bengali to communicate in the online discussion circles. In this period, writing Bengali using roman letters became very popular because writing in Bengali on the Internet was near impossible. The Internet was in the English language. Bengali writing on the Web was very difficult, so the amount of Bengali content was very little. It should be noted that typing Bengali on the computer was relatively easy by using Bijoy Bengali Keyboard, a local Bengali writing software, developed in 1988 by Mustafa Jabbar, who was a software developer, technology entrepreneur and businessman; currently acting as a Minister of Post and Telecommunication in Government of Bangladesh lead by Al. Most of the Bengali content on computers was written in Bijoy Bengali software. While this would later become the most used Bengali writing tool in programs such as Microsoft Word or Adobe Photoshop, it was not compatible for use on the Internet. The breakthrough in Bengali writing on the Internet came in 2003 brought by Dr. Mehdi Hasan Khan (aged, 33). Then a medical student, Khan and his team of amateur ICT enthusiast friends developed a Unicode-based Bengali writing software which enabled the Internet users to write in Bengali. With the motto of language should be open, they published this software on the Web for free use. This was on 26th March 2003 under a Creative Commons license. Around the same time, during 2000 to 2005, the Bengali online discussion forums were starting to emerge although the online community was limited to very few, even with the development in Bengali writing for the Internet.

3.3.2 The Birth of Online Community by blog sites: Somewherein Blog

The year 2005 was very important for social media because of the introduction to Web 2.0 technology, as mentioned earlier. Facebook was launched in the same year as a small network among Harvard students. This year was very important to Bangladeshi social media because the first social media company, Bangla blogsite Somewherein...blog.net was launched in December 16, 2005. Somewherein...blog.net was the Bengali social media platform, which was a social media wing of Somewherein...net. Ltd., the data mining and outsourcing company. Somewherein...net. Ltd. was a Norwegian-Bangladeshi joint venture, an entrepreneurship company leaded by Arild Klokkerhaugh and Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana. Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana (age 48), belongs to an urban middle-class family, has a degree in music and is working in the telecom industry. Arild Klokkerhaugh (age 55), is a Norwegian, an engineer, and had been working in Bangladesh for 20 years. Arild Klokkerhaugh had a long history of intimate relationship with Bangladesh. About fifty years ago, his parents were visiting Bangladesh as tourists while witnessing the condition of the orphan children in Bangladesh; they have decided to adopt an orphan and raised him. So they did. Arild is the biological child of his parents, and his sibling is adopted.

Arild and Jana both of them had work experience in the telecom industry of Bangladesh, specifically in Grameenphone (a Norway-based telecom company Telenor, introduced in Bangladesh as Grameenphone 1996). They grew a friendship while working in Grameenphone and later got married.

In 2005, looking at the prospect of a Bangla social media, open space for user interaction, promoting Bengali on the Internet and a probable online based market, they have decided to launch a social media company. They assembled a team of IT professionals, web designers, data miners to launch Somewherein...blog.net. Initially there was a significant

foreign investment in Somewherein...net. Ltd. Later, local investors became interested. The social media wing of Somewherein...blog.net, was supported by the earnings of Somewherein...net. Ltd. in data mining and outsourcing. Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana became the head of the alliance, blog editor and moderator in somewhereinblog. Arild Klokkerhaugh became the head of business in Somewherein...blog.net Ltd.

Somewherein...blog.net ignited the emergence of Bangla Blogosphere and later became the largest Bangla blogsite (social media) in the world. Many other blogsites started to emerge during 2006 to 2010. The Bangla Blogosphere in Bangladesh expanded exponentially during 2006 to 2012. Social media was developing as a Bangla blogosphere in Bangladesh.

3.3.3 Blogging: Personal to Community, Technology Driven Sociality of Somewhereinblog

There were traces of Bengali personal blogs before the introduction of community blogging in Bangladesh. For instance, blogger Debashish and Sukonna's blogs in BlogSpot were blogs from Bengali speaking Kolkata, (the province of West Bengal, India,) as early as April 2004. Compared to Bangladesh, however, even personal blogging was not so popular among Bengali speaking users from West Bengal. Blogging was popularized in Bangladesh and has some unique features, which are also the indicators of social media localization in Bangladesh.

3.3.3.1 Introduction of Key Features, Writing in Bengali, Common Front Page

Compared to the global tradition of blogging, Bangladesh's Somewherein...blog.net introduced two key features in blogging. The first one is writing more comfortably in Bengali on the Internet, especially blogging. Even with the introduction of Unicode based Avro keyboard (which Khan and his team had developed in 2003), the problem of writing in Bengali was persistent. Till then, Internet usage in Bangladesh was in its infancy. As access

to the Internet was limited, due to high cost and lack of infrastructure, the idea of using the Internet for communication and other purposes was not very popular. Even the idea of blogging was very new among the new Internet users of Bangladesh.

IT professionals of Somewherein...net. Ltd., Hasin and Imran (programmer), broke the barrier of Bengali writing in blogs by having introduced an embedded text editor in Somewherein...blog. This provided a roundedness in Bengali writing, thus blogging in Bengali. Bloggers could then freely write on blogsites in Bengali without depending too much on other supporting software or tools. The second feature Somewherein...blog.net introduced was community blogging. This proved to be foundational in creating the Bangla blogosphere in the successive years. Unlike the global tradition of individual blogging, Somewherein...blog.net introduced a common front page where every individual blog post showcased chronologically.

Figure 10. The front page of somewhereinblog.

This feature (Figure 10) provided the opportunity for bloggers to publish their post and

immediately allow other bloggers to notice the same without having to search for the individual blogger or blog. Anyone can easily find the newest blog on the front page for as long as it stays there or they can easily search for it (i.e. using the search option of front page). On the front page, several other features (i.e. all post, selected post, showing who is online, special attention post of front page) were also included to encourage interactivity among the bloggers. The process of encouraging interactivity not only remained in one platform but also extended to other platforms through a sharing option (Figure 11).
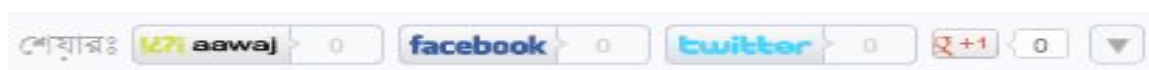
Figure 11. Sharing option of somewhereinblog with other social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Van Dijck (2012) conceptualizes the notion of "connective media" in depicting social media as a communication technology. She argued that these Web 2.0 based social media sites rely on user-generated contents. This means that the social media site, such as somewhereinblog, depends on the bloggers for content generation and interactivity. The opportunity of somewhereinblog as a revenue generating company and attracting advertisers depends on how much content has been created by the bloggers and how intense the digital activity is, which refers to the level of attention the bloggers are paying to a certain topic or issue given a certain time.

Blogsites such as somewhereinblog or any Web 2.0 based website is designed in such a way so that user engagement (in the website) remains intact and the affinity (the amount of interactions between bloggers and creator of the post) increases. This dynamic process is also encouraged by introducing digital tools such as notification, common front page, scroll of showing who are online, panels showing what is the most commented post, what is the most liked post, what is the most read post, what is the selected post by the bloggers, like option,

comment option, following option and sharing option to other social media such as Facebook, Twitter and so on. Topic blog is also crucial for reducing distraction so that bloggers can easily get all the relevant content in one digital space. The process of adding and removing features in blogsites to encourage engagement in the online spaces continues through the whole period of the development of the Bangla blogosphere.

3.3.3.2 Blog Moderators, Blog Rules, Surveillance and Control

In the technology driven sociality of Somewherein blog, surveillance and control by the blogsite and the blog authority is also present. Like every social media site, somewhereinblog has a registration process, which means a blogger has to provide the blog authority his/her email address. When the blogger gets more engaged in the blogsite, email becomes the primary tool of communication between him and the blog authority. If the blogger forgets her password, wants to change nicknames (online identity) or ask a question for trouble shooting, she needs to maintain that email address. The registration process (Figure 12) of the bloggers also enables the blog authority to do surveillance and restrict bloggers access to the platform. A blog authority can see the IP (internet protocol) address of the blogger and locate the place from where she/he is blogging.

Figure 12. Registration process in somewhereinblog.

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The surveillance and control system within the blogsite is further enforced by introducing a moderation panel, blog rules and pointing system (Figure 13). On one hand, the moderator of somewhereinblog had the power not only to locate the blogger in a geographical setting but also had the power to control bloggers interaction and digital activity within the digital sociality of the platform.
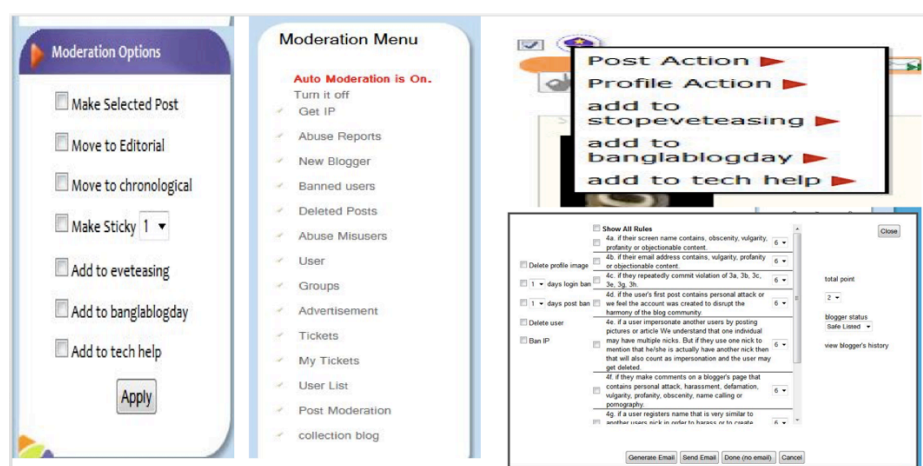
Figure 13. Moderation and administrator's page of somewhereinblog.
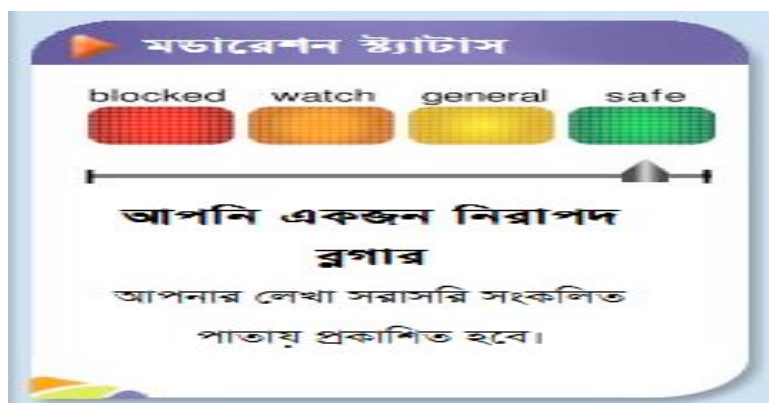
Figure 14. The pointing system and bloggers status (blocked, watch, general, safe) in somewhereinblog.

As can be gleaned (Figure 13), moderators have the power to control bloggers activity using digital tools following the rules of the blogsite (i.e. make selected post, move to editorial, ban user, delete post). The process of pointing system (Figure 14) happens in four stages; that is, 1. Blocked (blogger cannot write or post in the blog site) 2. Watch (blogger is

under close observation of the blog moderator and cannot post in front page), 3. General (new blogger with minor violation of the blog rule cannot post in front page), 4. Safe (blogger is safe and can post in the front page). This is also a process of encouragement as well as a surveillance system. Not only can the moderator control activities of particular bloggers, he can also influence other blogger activities in the digital locality of somewhereinblog. Because bloggers can see what the moderation status of any other blogger is, they can evaluate the status of a particular blogger, either positively or negatively, in the digital locality.

Kowshik Ahmed, aged 46, university educated, and working in an international NGO, is one of the earliest bloggers in the Bangla blogosphere. He started blogging since 2006. Through the development of the Bangla blogosphere, he became the moderator of the blog platform, BD news 24. He has been an online activist since the emergence of digital resistance in the blogosphere. In regard to role of moderators and surveillance in the blogosphere, he explained,

> The moderation status in the blogger's profile is an indication of his recent activities in the blogsite. If the status is "watch" or "general," it means that he has violated the rules of the platform or wanted to disrupt the community. For the blog authority, this is a way of showing other bloggers what they should not do in the blogsite. This is a surveillance system using digital tools, such as the point system in somewhereinblog. At the same time, it created a competition among bloggers so that they become more engaged. (Personal communication, February 17, 2016, Dhaka)

Through the localisation process of social media in Bangladesh, blog sites provided the features which will encourage more users to participate, and at the same time adopted the technology of automated connectivity. It also introduced local moderators for local social media platforms, where on one hand user interactivity and connectivity was promoted but on the other hand the opportunity for user surveillance was also created. Moderators become the

gatekeepers of the digital sociality and a crucial actor in influencing user behaviour not only in the online space but also in the physical space.

3.3.4 Popularisation of Digital Spaces: "Free space" and "Autonomous" Users

As a pioneer social media company in Bangladesh, Somewherein...blog.net tried hard to popularize blogging, especially among young users. Initially, they invited one thousand Bengali (living in Bangladesh and abroad) Internet users through email to join the blogsite. They also used mass media to promote the idea of writing freely and without cost on the Internet. The early bloggers who joined Somewherein...blog.net had learnt about this platform and also about the new concept of blogging through networks of friends and by the blog authority. Most of the early bloggers were writers, journalists, writing enthusiasts and had some sort of experience in writing in other media like wall magazines in school or university, newspaper, literature periodicals, or writing for personal interest. They had some sort of writing experience before writing a blog. Community blogging provided the desired place for writers with a growing audience, who provided instant reaction to the writing. For the bloggers, blogsites became a relatively open place for interaction among Bengali speakers living abroad and in Bangladesh. Due to its locally global network, bloggers started to find long lost childhood friends in the blog site, and made new friends through this platform.

Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana, head of Alliances, editor, moderator of somewhereinblog, wrote about her efforts to popularise Bangla blogging.

The initial stage of popularizing blogging in Bangladesh was very tough. I had invited 1000 people through email to check our website, where they can write like an online digital diary. The response was not so good, around 100 people responded and registered in the blog site. I also encouraged our office employees to write in the blog site. I also called many internet users through phone that time and explained about

blogging, invited them to join our website. I also contacted the local news media and broadcast media to publish articles about blogging, cover our story on television. Those 1000 people I have had invited were mainly university students, professionals from the IT sector, aspiring writers, journalists and so on. Our initial target was to engage the youth living in Dhaka and abroad to use our website. I also invited new bloggers to our office at Gulshan and explained what blogging is, how to write a blog, what can be done with blogging. Gradually the interest grew and by the end of 2007 we had reached an important milestone; we got 20,000 registered users. (Personal communication, March 10, 2016, Dhaka)

Publishing in the front page created a trend among bloggers to write interesting and engaging posts about interesting topics such as local politics. Even if the post is moved away from the front page, interesting posts and discussions always helped to maintain engagement with the readers. Bloggers started to realize the best time and subject of blog post to maximize engagement. A sense of exchange started to emerge among the bloggers. Bloggers commented on certain blog posts, then the writer of the blog felt obliged not only to reply to their comment but to also comment on their blog posts. This online practice helped build the blogging culture in Bangla blogosphere. The blogosphere was expanding rapidly, especially during 2006 and 2010. Somewherein blog is regarded as the pioneer of Bangla blogging. They started the blogging revolution in 2005, and by 2010 the number of Bangla blogsites increased to 48+. Various kinds of blogsites started to emerge; some were focused on literature and literary discussions such as shobdoneerblog, nagorikblog and so on. The pioneer in literature and literary discussions was shachlayatanblog, with its main focus on promoting literary discussions and providing young writers the online space to debate and discuss. Blogsites to some extent are also mixed purpose in nature; such that while many tried to focus on a certain topic such as literature and politics, bloggers were also allowed to

post on various topics. Blogsites needed this lively interaction, debate and discussion to make them popular. The more hits (meaning, more users visiting and interacting in one web page) a blogsite can generate, the better its chances to becoming an established blogsite. As M. Z. Chowdhury (2012a) showed the potential of citizen journalism was always present in Bangla Blogosphere. The website www.blogbdnews24.com emerged, focusing on citizen journalism. They also have introduced a blog site to promote citizen journalism. In the pattern, it was a pre-moderated blog site. During 2011 it had 5000 registered bloggers. In the mainstream media, all news and views cannot be accommodated. Citizen journalism focused blog sites provided the space and audience for those. It was also observed that during that time bloggers were turning into news source and also news provider in Bangla Blogosphere.

Before the Shahbag movement in 2013, the total number of registered bloggers was 200,000, including all blog sites. Although the readership is beyond those numbers, it is estimated that around 500,000 users are regular visitor and reader of the blog sites. They are regarded as the online silent users of the blog sites. In 2013, the number of internet users also increased, and among them, Facebook user number is highest. In the context of the whole digital locality of Bangladesh, silent reader and observer of the Bangla blogosphere and social media, users are crucial. They may not participate or engage in different online based issues that as hard core online opinion leaders, but they are the target audience of any online based activities. In this regard Jana, who had been keenly observing the development of social media users and had the experience of working with them commented,

> "The non-registered bloggers are those who may find many interesting articles, debate and discussion and blogging activity just by roaming through the web space. They may find these blog activity interesting and slowly became more engaged. I found many non-registered bloggers in the country and also abroad who introduced

themselves as blog readers and asked questions about the different incidents in the blog and bloggers. I always encouraged them to register on the blog site so that they can interact more openly and become a part of the blogging community. They may not always be joining the blog site but keep an eye what is happening in the blog sites." (Personal communication, March 10, 2016, Dhaka)

The neoliberal impetus which initiated the blog revolution also depended on market expansion. When blogsites become popular and the number of page hits, viewership, discussion and posting started to increase, the market value of blogsites also increased. As in the case of somewhereinblog, newspapers and news agencies started to put their newsfeed into the blogsite. This later proved beneficial for both the newspaper agency and the blogsite. The dw or duetch a vale (German news agency) is a very old news agency, similar to BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and they had Bengali program for the radio. Since the introduction of social media in Bangladesh, they decided to go for a joint venture with somewhereinblog.net. By this time, their online section for news was not so developed/popular so worked and shared their newsfeed with somewhereinblog, taking advantage of its established vibrant community with a monthly viewership reaching to a million.

Corporate advertisers have also shown interest in advertising in somewhereinblog. Bloggers were also recruited to write interesting article about a company's product. During this time, the business of e-commerce has started to increase, and many new start-up companies focused on the youth/young consumers started to put advertisements in blogsites. To name a few, mobile phone companies, local job search sites, and local computer companies started to advertise on somewhereinblog.

The role of moderators also expanded because they now had strict directions to

moderate the blog in such a way that negative reviews will not be too strong against companies providing advertising and, at the same time, the discussion should remain optimal. In this way, the blogsite benefits continuously through advertising revenues while at the same time, future advertisers become attracted through the vibrant online community. Bloggers, in the meantime, started to be recognised by the youth as the true and authentic reviewers of any topic of discussion. Some bloggers were becoming opinion leaders by their interesting, critical and entertaining posting, writing and comments in the digital locality of Bangladesh. On the other hand, the non-registered bloggers and general social media users became the potential audience and target population of different online activities, such as content consumers, news and information receiver. Among them some became influencer in social.

3.3.5 "Anonymity" and "Nick": "Safety", "Freedom", "Digital Identity"

While a blog authority tried to educate users about what blogging is, and what users needed to do to be a blogger, blog platforms such as Somewherein...blog.net also provided the opportunity to write "anonymously." Bloggers can write about any topic in whatever manner they wish. Only the blog authority can know who is writing and from where the blogger is posting. The level of restriction for blog publishing was minimal, especially when compared to other mass media such as print or broadcast media. This opportunity was overwhelming, particularly in the context of Bangladesh, where mass media is almost the same with politics which is highly bi-polar and partisan journalism is often the norm. In many instances, journalistic freedom is restricted by political intervention and governmental surveillance (A. M. Ahmed, 2009).

Nicknames in the blog, popularly known only as "nick," became the digital identity of the bloggers in virtual space. Bloggers now can have multiple nicks and create different online personalities in the blogsite. They can manifest complete opposite personalities in the

virtual space. The online identity of a certain nick could be created by the online interaction and behaviour by a particular blogger. Interestingly, the creation of certain identity in the blog did not remain online, especially when bloggers first started to meet each other in person. The blogger herself or somebody else may disclose the offline social identity, such as actual incidents and disputes among bloggers online and offline which revealed the identity of the blogger in physical sociality.

The opportunity of having multiple nicks gave bloggers the chance to create multiple digital identities to discuss and debate any sensitive issue, which otherwise would be near impossible to discuss in offline gatherings. These are issues such as criticizing religious beliefs, criticizing the Government, criticizing law enforcement agencies, discussion about liberation war, trial of war criminals, criticizing anti-liberation war politics, gay-lesbian relationship and many more. However, many instances of abuse of multiple nicks became evident in the blogosphere. Personal attacks, harassment, propaganda, cybercrime were also noted in cases of misuse of multiple nicks[25] in the virtual sphere.

The capacity of hiding one's identity behind nicks provides a safeguard for bloggers from the government, law enforcement agency, other bloggers and so on. The only checkpoint for bloggers were the moderation panel. Thus, the ideas of "safety," "freedom," "digital identity" in digital locality are dependent on the people in the moderation panel (such as Kowshik Ahmed, Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana) and the technology of the social media itself. When digital "anonymity" is being intervened in using technology or any other forces, the aforementioned ideas could be quickly turned around to become "insecurity," "surveillance" or "fabricated digital identity." This indicates the fluidity of the digital sociality and its concept of privacy and security.

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[25] Fusion Five, 2011. Overview of 2011, 100 Most read blogs in somewherein...
http://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/Fusion5/29511136, Accessed 5 January 2016

3.3.6 From Online to Offline; Private to Public Spaces: Blog Adda, Bloggers Meet, Blog Day, Blogger Rally, Chobir Hut

In the urban setting of public space in Bengali culture, Adda is a form of socialization that can be characterised as a spontaneous discussion, thinking and debating, which can happen anytime and anywhere. Its real essence though is a "place for gathering." Historically, the notion of Adda has its roots from Bengali literature movement, and its practices ranged from the doorsteps to the external veranda of the house, offices or educational institutions, that offered democratic spaces to the middle class (Chakrabarty, 2000). The blog authority of the Bangla blogosphere started to invite bloggers to their offices to discuss about many aspects of blogging, how to improve it, how to add new features, and how to recreate online the idea of the Bengali gathering called Adda – when friends and fellows gather together to chitchat without any visible purpose or agenda. Bangla blogsites offered a space for online Adda for the urban youth without limitations or restrictions.

The digital version of this Adda often found its way into digital locality, as one of the senior bloggers from somewhereinblog, blog moderator and Shahbag activist, Kowshik Ahmed explained,

> In somewherein blog, we had regular posts every Thursday night (beginning of weekly holidays in Bangladesh) called blog Adda. The purpose of this post was to chat and gossip about different issues throughout the night with bloggers from all over the world. This was also the digital place where we meet new bloggers and make friends. Some virtual blog Adda had strict rules of not discussing sensitive matters; some had no rules. (Personal communication, February 17, 2016, Dhaka).

For many new bloggers who were not renowned in the blog community, blog Adda became the online space to meet other active bloggers and begin a friendship with them. In regard to

blog Adda, Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana, moderator somewhereinblog, said *"It is like coming out of their online personal space (own blog page) into a more vibrant open online community space and interact with each other. Blog Adda became the online event and place for new bloggers to socialise more"* (Personal communication, March 10, 2016, Dhaka).

The blog authority (such as Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana) themselves organise bloggers meets (Figure 15), an offline event allowing bloggers to meet offline in different occasions. In some cases, the blog authority organises it in their office or outside, using public spaces such as Shahbag public library, Dhaka university teacher and student centre and so on. In the offline spaces, bloggers Adda served many important purposes, even with those they knew only by name or nick (bloggers id) whom they could meet in person. In many cases, these meetings resulted into a love affair or marriage, and disputes as well.

Figure 15. Blogging and Bloggers, from online to offline spaces.

The blog authority also introduced a Bangla blog day. In 2008, the blog authority proposed to the bloggers the possibility of celebrating a Bangla blog day. After a long

discussion, online and offline, the date 19th December was chosen for Bangla blog day. Since then, Bangla blog day has been celebrated. It is a significant day giving the opportunity for bloggers online, living in different parts of Bangladesh and abroad, to meet and celebrate. In different national occasions in Bangladesh, such as International Mother Language day (21st February), Independence Day (26th March), Victory Day (16th December), bloggers also arrange a blog rally. In the streets, bloggers often did rallies to celebrate important days.
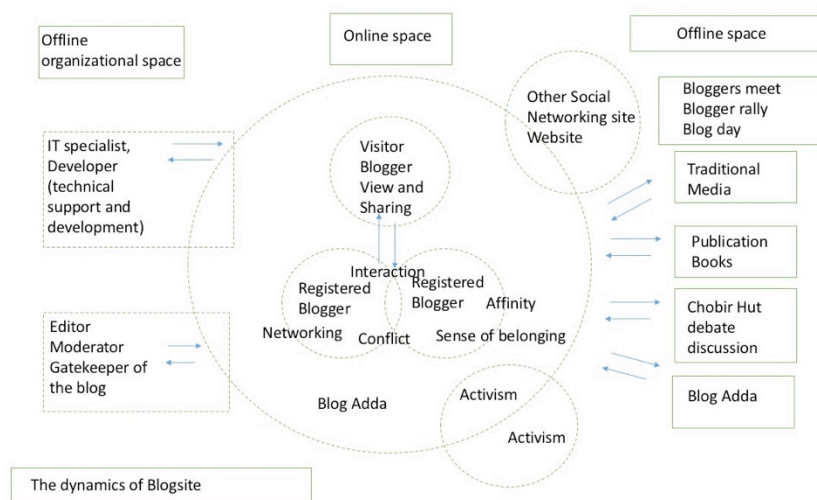
Figure 16. The online-offline dynamics of Bangla blogosphere.

Figure 17. Chobir Hut.

Through the development of social media, bloggers started to meet by themselves in the offline spaces (Figure 16) with or without the assistance of a blog authority; sometimes

for a humanitarian cause or sometimes for friendly gathering. In those gatherings, a place called "Chobir Hut" (Figure 17), a market of paintings by young artists, opposite the arts institute, within two hundred meter from Shahbag intersection, has become the prime spot for bloggers meets and offline debate and discussion. Chobir Hut had a reputation of being an "open," "progressive" and "autonomous" space. A physical place of Adda, where bloggers can debate and discuss about sensitive issues unafraid and freely, Chobir Hut grew as one of the significant offline spaces for bloggers meeting, blog Adda and pro-liberation war activism.

3.3.7 Making a Name in the Digital Locality: "Authenticity" and "Trust" in Bangla Blogosphere

In one hand Bengali blogsites opened the scope for "Blog Adda", open debate and discussions online, on the other hand, it also generated the challenge of "Authenticity" and "Trust" in the online space. Unlike the usual face to face interaction' in the online space, bloggers can hide behind the "nick" and use the opportunity to be relatively "anonymous" and behave irresponsibly which is otherwise seldom practised in the physical world. The question of digital identity and behaviour became crucial in this regard. Kowshik Ahmed has been a blogger and an organiser for many years, he was also moderating a blogsite and well aware of the different behaviours of the bloggers online and offline, he explained,

> In blogsite, everyone has to make a name for herself/himself. Anyone can criticize anyone. This [generating of authenticity and trust] depends on how she/he organize her/his profile, create quality content, interact with other bloggers, how much time they spend on the blog site, how many bloggers she/he knows online and offline, how he responds to other bloggers post, how is her/his relationship with the blog authority, prove herself/himself authentic and most importantly how innovatively she or he writes the text/content. Anyone can be a famous blogger for a short period but to

create a long lasting impression and becoming an opinion leader is tough, it takes time and serious effort. (Personal communication, March 2, 2015, Dhaka).

From the long term ethnographic observation of the Bangla Blogosphere, it was found that content type and the consistency of posting influence the process of "authenticity" and "trust" among other users and bloggers. As in the case of blogger Ireen Sultana's blog[26], she is writing about contemporary politics and women issue for long, due to her consistent posting about women issues and blog activities she became an authentic voice regarding women issues in Bangla blogosphere. Parallel to issue based blogging blogger, Hasan Mahbub[27] became eminent due to his long-lasting interest in writing short stories. He became a very well-known short story writer among bloggers and published several books. Blogger Ragib[28] became very dependable among bloggers due to his technology related updated posts and his academic background as a computer engineer. Blogger Darashiko[29] and Kauser Rusho[30] became renowned for their blogging about cinema, which resulted in the creation of an online move lovers group. Blogger Emon Jubaer[31] was famous for his diverse and quality posts, before his death in 2013 he created about 1200 blog posts. For satire and comedic post blogger, Mukhfore[32] became very popular and still perceived as a very influential among the old bloggers. Blogger Tinku Traveler[33] was very popular for his travel post in Bangladesh and blogger Ariana[34] was famous for her post about travelling abroad. Blogger Omi Rahman Pial[35] became very influential due to his post about liberation war.

Blogger Duurzodhon[36] became very popular and dependable among bloggers due to his strong satirical position against Al government. Even with the severe backlash by the pro-

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[26] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/laboniblog
[27] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/Paranoid
[28] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/ragibhasanblog
[29] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/Darashiko_47
[30] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/Kawser_Rhuso
[31] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/benqt60
[32] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/mukhforrblog
[33] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/tinkutravelar
[34] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/ariana_albatross
[35] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/omipialblog
[36] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/nvidia

government bloggers, he remains accessible and dependable among general bloggers because of his use of accurate, fact-based data in the blog article. Fusion Five[37] who was a celebrated blogger he gained a considerable amount of trust among bloggers for his visionary, research and fact-based posts and comments. In many instances of online disputes, this blogger not only provided valuable information but also stand for bloggers right.

Among the blogger mentioned above, blogger Duurzodhon and Fusion Five remained as a digital nick or digital identity. Their offline identity was not revealed to the bloggers. None the less they remain as an authentic voice of digital locality of Bangladesh due to their consistent blog activities. Face to face offline interaction among bloggers serves as a vital avenue for bloggers to build trust. Arranging an offline Adda thus play a seminal role. Blogger Kalpurush[38] (age 65) is a common name among the old bloggers in this regard. He was a government official and belonged to a Muslim family. In the early days of somewhereinblog, he used to arrange big offline parties for the bloggers to meet and greet with each other. His terrace became one of the hot spots for bloggers meet. He said,

> "For me, blogging was the opportunity to meet new people, making new friends socialise online and offline. This is why I had invited many bloggers into my house, I made many new friends, and my social circle expanded through blogging. I always wanted to share my photograph and poetry with others, but due to my job and daily chores, I never had the time and chance. Blog provided that opportunity". (Online personal communication, May 21, 2018, Japan).

However, offline meet up not always generate "authenticity" and "trust" among bloggers. In late 2011 a blog post created immense attention and later disputes among the bloggers. The tradition of humanitarian endeavour by the bloggers was not new. During that

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[37] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/Fusion5
[38] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/KaLPurushblog

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time a blogger name "Rosaline" posted a blog post[39] requesting monetary support for her husband who, she claimed was in critical condition. She was also posting copies of medical reports on the blog site. The blog authority considering the humanitarian ground prioritised the blog post for more bloggers to see and respond. While the blogging community was very engaged regarding this issue, one blogger identified some anomaly in the medical report. Thus a team of bloggers went to investigate the whereabouts of the matter. In the offline encounter, investigating bloggers have realised that the couple staged a scam. When bloggers tried to contact them once again, they hide from both online and offline spaces. The offline investigation resulted into decrease in "trust" in the online spaces. Blogger Kowshik Ahmed was part of the investigating team he explained about this matter,

> "'Rosaline' case was one of the critical events in the blogosphere which shook the 'trust' among bloggers. Generally, many bloggers used pseudo names and nicks; some are regarded as 'reverse nick' was the same blogger having multiple ID's (digital profile in the blog site), in one ID she/he doing one thing and in the other ID doing the opposite. This kind of bloggers never gained accountability in the blogosphere because of their contradictory behaviour. Other bloggers easily recognise them for their writing, commenting, and posting pattern, though, for the new bloggers, it is sometimes very difficult to locate. Blogger Rosaline was doing that in the real world; she was faking the disease of her husband. When we had contacted the hospital and the doctors, they said the claim of Rosaline was not valid; her husband was not suffering from blood disease the SGPT value (medical evaluation) was way below critical. After that incident, the blogger was no more allowed to blog, and her ID was banned. However, the negative impact was high among the bloggers; after that incident, all the activities regarding humanitarian cause came under severe scrutiny. It

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[39] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/mahamanob/29488144

became a mandatory practice to first check the appeal thoroughly only then blog authority would allow it to promote. Those bloggers who already gained acceptance and accountability among the bloggers, their appeal generates much credibility, not a new blogger or new nicks". (Online personal communication, August 12, 2017, Japan).

Developing strong online peer relationship is another way of creating "authenticity" and "trust". After blogging on the same platform (such as somewhereinblog), bloggers tend to grow a strong relationship among themselves. It may be based on common interest, face to face meeting, same religious, political, social belief, engagement with specific issues which is transcending online to offline, local to global, private to public spaces. The case of saving Prapti in Bangla blogosphere is a crucial example. From 12th May 2006, Blogger Saria Tasnim started to post[40] about her nice Prapti. For the next three years, she keeps on posting about her. Prapti was diagnosed with leukaemia. Saria Tasnim's post generated much attention of the bloggers. Bloggers went to visit them in person and start to create a fund to save Prapti. This was the first incident when activism solely from blog site managed to gather around 2,696,144 yen and been able to save Prapti. It also generated strong peer relationship among the bloggers who were involved in the process, later this long lasting initiative also created strong ties among many bloggers from various background who never meet Prapti in person. However, the trust and authenticity the initiative generated over the years created long lasting engagement of the bloggers.

Thus generating trust and authenticity in Bangla blogosphere is a long process of online activity, creating authentic, engaging content, interaction and communication with integrity, translate the same integrity offline. Other bloggers can judge the integrity of any

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[40] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/saria_tasnimblog/28791161

blogger through their liking, commenting, posting, action overall online behaviour. At the same time, if the online behaviour contradicts without justified reason it decreases the credibility drastically, the offline activity is equally important. If the activities of the bloggers in the offline space are not respectful or suppressive, they can be highly criticised for their behaviour, which also reduces their credibility and influence in both spaces. If some group of bloggers deliberately tried to defame any blogger, then peer relationship which grew over the years become very helpful. Other bloggers came into rescue to encounter the propaganda and re-establish the right image of the blogger both in online and offline spaces. The influential bloggers of the Bangla blogosphere all have gone through the test of time through the localisation process. They have created their authentic "Image" and acceptability over the years.

Although it is equally important to understand that the process of "authenticity" and "trust" in the online space is always a dynamic process and influential online users are constantly trying to uphold this integrity in order to keep their influence. It is also important to recognise certain types of content (e.g. ultra-religious, ultra-nationalistic), timing, bloggers image may generate biased influence among wider social media audience. The loss of authenticity and trust of the bloggers was particularly visible in the case of blogger Omi Rahman Pial. He gained his popularity and influence in the blogosphere through his blogging about the liberation war and involvement in different activism. He has lost his credibility among the bloggers because of his active participation and posting[41] in the pornographic website called Joubon Jala (urge of the youth). In 2008 he started to post sex stories, photos and videos in that site and later openly claimed in his blog site that all of his efforts was to mobilise the online youth support for pro-liberation war activism. Most of the bloggers did not take this initiative in good faith. The blog site became very chaotic fill with heated debate.

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[41] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/omipialblog/28883734

After that incident, he lost his credibility among wider blogging community. However, some ultra-nationalistic blogger continued their support towards him; some did not criticise him openly and some remain silent. Even this blogger was very influential in certain time, lost his acceptance because of his involvement with pornography but continued to get support from some blogger on certain issues (e.g. liberation war), online peer group and past activities.

3.3.8 Bringing War Criminals to Justice: Digital Resistance, Digital Activism

Through the localisation process of social media in Bangladesh, the country went through several changes. Among them, the rise of digital resistance and digital activism is the most crucial in order to understand the Shahbag Movement in 2013. Since blogging in Bangladesh gave the opportunity for debate and discussion about almost anything, otherwise difficult to achieve in traditional media, it became a relatively safe and secure zone for online gathering. Due to minimal restriction in publishing and the cloak of anonymity, controversial topics like, "liberation war, 1971", "Jamaat", "Islamic extremism", "political criticism" "religious belief", "atheism", "critique of war criminals", "secular vs religiosity", "science vs religion" started to emerge in Bangla blogosphere (Haq, 2011).

3.3.8.1 The First Spark of Digital Resistance Against Anti-Liberation Post

On the 14th February 2006, a blog post was posted in somewhereinblog titled, *"To the Spineless Freedom Fighters,"* writer Blogger Nick *moli.* February is the month of celebrating the language movement of 1952 and for the book fair re-emerging the martyrs of the language movement against Pakistan. This post ignited the rage of most of the bloggers. In its title, the
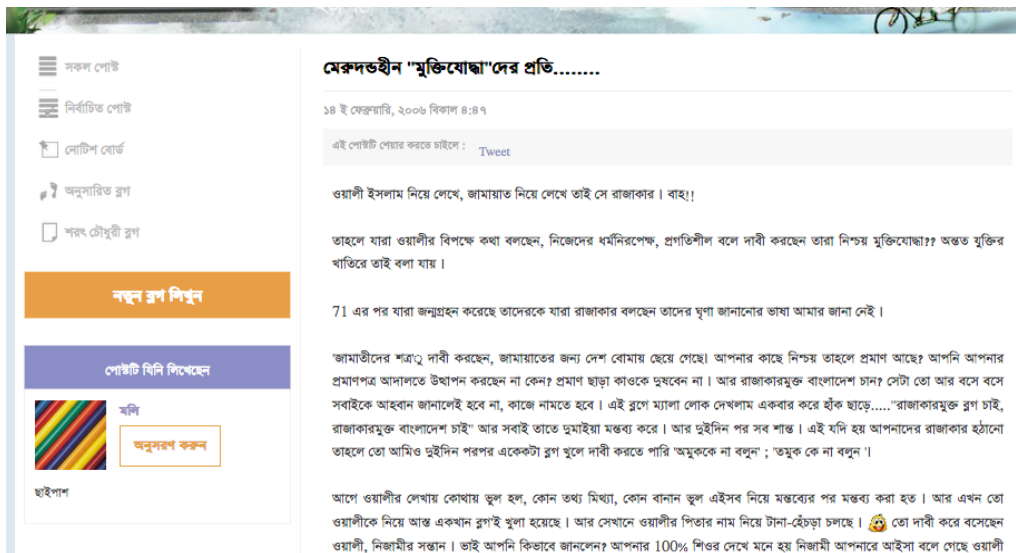
Figure 18. The anti-liberation war blog post in somewhereinblog, 14th February 2006.

blogger was demeaning the heroes of the 1971 liberation war, the freedom fighters who fought against Pakistan. The blogger was also defending another blogger named, Wali. Wali was the son of the Razakar (collaborator of 1971) and JIB leader Kamrujjaman. Wali was posting and promoting JIB and questioning the role of freedom fighters during 1971[42]. Along with Wali another blogger Wami (brother of Wali)[43] also published a blog post in somewhereinblog demeaning (using slang) freedom fighters calling them as "dog" (Pial, 2015). This post was related to Wami and his father Mr Kamrujjaman's earlier encounter with the freedom fighters in press club Dhaka. The freedom fighters resisted their presence in the press club for being the local collaborators and war criminal. Because freedom fighters were generally highly regarded in the society, most of the bloggers resisted this post.

When the real identity of Wali was exposed to the bloggers, most of them demanded that he be banned[44] by the blog authority. Thus, the digital resistance[45] and dispute began in Bangla blogosphere. While most of the JIB leaders were known as war criminals in society[46], the digital activism of "bringing war criminals to justice" and resisting "JIB" or "anti-

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[42] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/eskimoblog/28754653
[43] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/dipblog/29199093
[44] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/omipialblog/28783599
[45] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/TMSblog/28770103
[46] https://www.amrabondhu.com/masum/1567

liberation" forces online begins. Eventually, this became the dominant discourse of the Bangla blogosphere which finally evolved into the Shahbag Movement.

3.3.8.2 "Online Strike" by the Pro-Liberation War Bloggers

On 5th and 6th March 2006, pro-liberation war bloggers staged an "online strike" in somewhereinblog. They stopped writing for a few days in the blogsite and demanded that somewhereinblog authority should not allow any anti-liberation war post in their blogsite. Through digital resistance by the pro-liberation war bloggers, somewhereinblog authority also made changes to the blog rules. It added a new blog rule: a post or comment would be deleted if it is against *"4i. Sovereignty and freedom of Bangladesh"*.

In this situation, Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana, head of Alliances, editor, moderator somewhereinblog said,

> That time, the blog was in its very early stage, we wanted many people to start blogging. We cannot control who would be blogging and on what topic. However, later we could intervene when the blog is posted. Our policy is not to promote anti-liberation war posts or activities. That time, we were also new, when most of the bloggers stopped writing – that was a wakeup call, we had to introduce a new blog rule. Although, it is also true that we want to promote freedom of expression, so every blogger should have the opportunity to write. (Personal communication, February 12, 2016, Dhaka)

Rudro Asif, aged 48, is one of the senior Blogger and Online Activists in the Bangla blogosphere. His post in somewhereiblog about discrimination against the renowned volunteer, who was working in Bangladesh, created a huge digital resistance in the Bangla blogosphere. Rudro Asif was a journalist and later became an entrepreneur in the apparel industry. He belongs to a Muslim family and is university educated. He also became a

Shahbag activist. Regarding the engagement of bloggers about the issue of "anti-liberation" blogging, he stated, "It was such an issue most of the bloggers could not ignore. Anti-liberation bloggers were few and they tried to occupy the blog space like they did in politics, media, economic organisation" (Personal communication, February 14, 2016, Dhaka).

3.3.8.3 "A-Team" the Pro-Liberation War Online Group

While pro-JIB bloggers were spreading propaganda against liberation war and using Islamic logic, a group of bloggers named themselves the "A-Team" [47] and declared themselves as "pro-liberation war" bloggers. This team of bloggers were organised through online communication and many did not know each other in person. Rudro Asif is one of the team members and he said,

> Earlier than the anti-liberation war post, we had noticed how some bloggers were
> posting favourable messages about JIB. Most of the bloggers became irritated. It was
> a common understanding among bloggers that time that many of the JIB supporters
> were good at information and communication technology. So, we suspected their
> online activity and started to follow more what they post, what they do. Then, using
> messenger service, some of us planned to create an online group and inspire others to
> resist JIB online. (Personal communication, February 14, 2016, Dhaka)

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[47] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/omipialblog/28800119
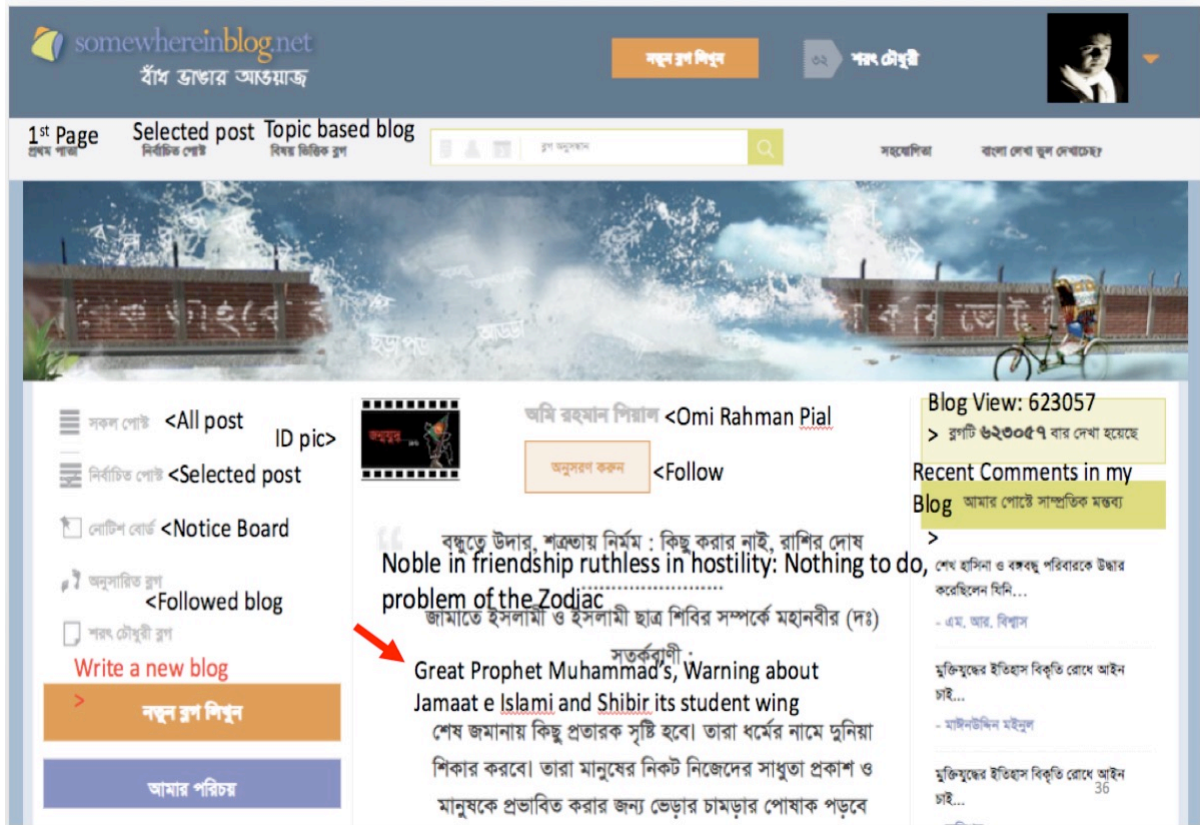
Figure 19. In somewherein blog, the personal page of a pro-liberation war digital activist, Omi Rahman Pial.

As can be seen in the personal profile page (Figure 19) of another pro-liberation war digital activist, Omi Rahman Pial, the red arrow points directly to a "warning" about the JIB and its student wing Shibir, and telling other bloggers that JIB and Shibir are like wolves in sheep's clothing. Blogger Omi Rahman Pial, who is a senior blogger from somewhereinblog and Shahbag activist, was one of the significant activists in the anti-liberation war digital resistance. He was using quotes from prophet Muhammad to warn about JIB and its student wing, depicting them as traitors.

Regarding this use of "warning" in Omi Rahman Pial's page, Baki Billah, explained, "the anti-liberation war force always uses Islamic logic to validate their crime during liberation war. But, we are not against Islam or prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad condemned treachery, what JIB did" (Online, Personal communication, June 17, 2017, Dhaka).

3.3.8.3 The Anti-Liberation War Online Activities

Although the digital resistance against the anti-liberation war bloggers was very dominant, the digital space pro-Jamaati blog sites also emerged such as SonarBangladesh blog, SonarBanglablog, BDtodayblog (all three blogs were banned during the Shahbag movement) with a reasonable user base.

The anti-liberation war online activities did not remain in one platform but spread across other platforms; new blog sites emerged (i.e. SonarBangladesh blog) but those failed to gain mass support and popularity because of a lack of user base and lack of interactivity. There was no visible activism in the physical locality by anti-liberation war bloggers. Before Shahbag, the anti-liberation war online activities were minimal compared to pro-liberation war online activities.

3.3.8.4 The Pro and Anti-Liberation War Online Discourse

In the online debate of both the "pro-liberation" and "anti-liberation" war, bloggers started to attack each other with vulgar words and tagging emerged as a resistance tool. Pro-liberation war bloggers were resisting "JIB" or "anti-liberation" forces online during the time when JIB was expanding ventures not only in politics but also in media, education, health, banking sector and so on. For the pro-liberation war bloggers, JIB presence in social media was regarded as the occupation of digital space by the anti-liberation war forces.

Table 1

Pro and Anti-Liberation War Blog Titles in somewhereinblog

Anti-liberation war blog titles	Pro- liberation war blog titles
Who are the real war criminals?	What did rajakars do in the liberation war?
"Human" and inhuman dishonesty of so-called freedom fighters	Whose blood liberated the country?
Bangladesh and us new generation	The Justice for war criminals of 1971.
Myths of Liberation War	Who is Nijami?
With bearded or not	The Football Team of Liberation: A different kind of Freedom Fighters
How many were actually killed in the liberation war?	Mollah and his crimes
Muhammad and Shariah, do we need democracy?	
Jamaat and Liberation War	

The digital pro-liberation war resistance and activism did not remain in the digital locality, but rather translated into the physical locality. From 2006 to 2013, bloggers were into several forms of digital activism such as protest and signature campaign against war criminals of 1971, and human chain and rally in offline spaces against war criminals. The bloggers who gained a certain amount of credibility and popularity over the years also became influential in digital resistance and activism. In the online space, the "pro-liberation war" discourse became the dominant discourse and became the norm, though "anti-liberation war" discourses continued to exist even before the Shahbag movement.

The debate and discussions in the online space also generated many other discourses such as "Believer vs. Non believer," "Religion vs. Atheism" which were also transmitted to other blogsites. Over the years, despite various digital activism in the physical locality, the

dominant digital resistance was on the issue of "Liberation War vs. Jamaat" (Chowdhury, 2012). The digital resistance and activism also produced online-based protest platforms such as BOANI, Blogger and Online Activist for National Interest (2011). BOAN (Blogger and Online Activist Network), which initiated the resistance of Shahbag movement in both digital and physical localities, was the culmination of digital activism regarding the issue of "bringing war criminals to justice."

3.3.9 Digital Activism, BOANI, Online Based Resistance Platform, Exclusion of JIB

During the development of digital activism in Bangla blogosphere, a forum of online based activists emerged which was not a registered as a "traditional organisation".

Parvez Alam (36) is a senior blogger from the Bangla blogosphere. He became very popular among the bloggers due to his serious and thought-provoking writing about religion, and politics. He was also famous for his alternative view of secularism and free thinking. Before starting to write in the blog[48], he organised a study circle in his local community. He also organised and participated in several street protests. He is university educated and started a printing business before the Shahbag movement. Belonging to a Muslim middle-class family, he lived in the outskirts of Dhaka. After the Shahbag movement, during the time of blogger killing, he took asylum in a foreign country. He was a Shahbag activist and one of the founders of BOANI, and he has explained,

> Blogger and Online Activist for National Interest cannot be defined as a regular organization, it is rather an online based forum. During the time of Conocophillips (oil and gas) contract with the government (2011), the protest escalated in the online space then culminated into the offline space. During that time, we (online activist) had realized that all the protesters, Blogger and Online Activist need to be united. So, we

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[48] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/stparvez

have created a huge campaign in the blogsites and Facebook; from there, BOANI started their journey. (Online, Personal communication, January 15, 2019, Japan).

Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, (39), another senior blogger from the Bangla blogosphere, like Parvez Alam, was also a founding member of BOANI. He belongs to a middle-class Muslim family living in a small town distant from Dhaka. With a college education, he became a graphics designer and worked in an IT company. Later, he became a Shahbag activist, member of BOAN, and a core member of Gonojagoron Moncho. During the Shahbag movement, he became very influential and powerful not only as an activist but also as a political influencer. Although he had faced several death threats by the Islamic extremist and lived under constant fear and later he had to leave the country due to the increasing threats he had to face. We knew each other for long, but after the Shahbag movement, we seldom contacted each other. As he is living in a different country for we had to talk over social media messenger service.

He explained the characteristics of BOANI.

BOANI, the forum of online based activists, is the first resistance platform which introduced many new features of organising digital activism, which are translating from online to offline.

1. No particular membership requirement, no organizational structure, not even a constitution.

2. Those who are involved in any form of activism in national interest and active online, this is a platform for them.

3. We are not left or right, we are the representative of the people – those who are above partisan political beliefs.

4. There is no president, there is no vice president, not a particular number of members.

5. Beside this banner (BOANI, as symbolic and physical), any atheist, believer, old and new blogger, left, right – all can join.

6. Anybody can get in; anybody can get out. We do not expect that all members can give effort and full dedication all the time.

7. For smoothing the necessary process, there are only coordinators, now we are four, tomorrow may be six.

8. Rather than the violent, looting and corrupting politics, we are for the participatory politics. We are not looking for political benefit or financial benefit.

9. We do not allow any JIB and Anti-liberation war forces.

   (Personal communication, online, January 15, 2019, Japan)

It can be understood that digital activism, through BOANI, had created a protest platform which transcends online and offline spaces; characterised with the values of inclusiveness, non-partisanship and fluidity, but at the same time exclusionary because JIB and anti-liberation war forces have been prohibited either in online or offline spaces of BOANI activities or digital activism.

Inspired by BOANI, BOAN also followed the same principles as an online-based protest platform. Many active members of BOANI also later became members of BOAN. Although BOANI was the first protest platform generated from digital resistance, digital activism over the years took many shapes and the blog sites of the Bangla blogosphere shared diverse characteristics.

3.4 Online Space and Digital Resistance Before Shahbag Movement

Over the years, the blogging revolution also resulted in different kinds of blogsites specialized in different focus, topics or political orientation (i.e. amarblog.com, pro-government, pro-liberation war, sonarbangla.com pioneer in pro-Jamaat, anti-liberation war blogging).

Table 2

Different Characteristics of Bangla Blogsites in 2013, before Shahbag Movement

Number	Blog/Forum/Page Online news portal	Type	Pattern
1	Adibasee Blog	Online discussion and interaction, specialized in indigenous rights issues	Critical about government policy and military
2	Al-Ihsan Forum	Islamic discussion forum, mixed topic	Jamaat Sympathizers
3	Amar Blog	Online discussion, interaction mixed topic and digital activism	Pro-liberation war
4	Amra Bondhu	Online discussion and interaction, digital activism, among group of friends who meet online	Pro-liberation war
5	Bangladesh Islami Chatro Shibir	Facebook group/page of student wing of Jamaat	Jamaat Sympathizers, Anti-liberation war
6	Basher Kella	Facebook group/page of student wing of Jamaat	Jamaat Sympathizers, Anti-liberation war
7	Blog bdnews24	Blog section of online news portal benews24, citizen journalism focused	Pro-liberation war
8	MuktoMona Blog	Online discussion and interaction about critical analysis of religion Pioneer in secular, scientific, atheist discourse	Pro-liberation war
9	Sachalayatan Blog	Pioneers in creating online writers forum, online discussion and interaction focused on literature and contemporary issue	Pro-liberation war
10	Somewherein Blog	Pioneer in Bangla blogging, citizen journalism, digital activism, largest blogging community in the world, all the other blogsites replicated the essence and design of community blogging, online discussion and interaction in diverse contemporary issue, pioneer in introducing Bangla blog day, expanding blog culture	Pro-liberation war
11	Sonar Bangla blog	Online discussion and interaction focused on Jamaat, Islam and contemporary issue	Anti-liberation war, Pro-Jamaat
12	Projonmo blog	Online discussion and interaction focused on contemporary issue, digital activism	Pro-liberation war

From an online ethnographic observation of the Bangla Blogosphere, it was found that before Shahbag movement in 2013, there were 83 blogsites and forums in the Bangla Blogosphere. Although different blogsites and forums specialized in different topics and

patterns, one common purpose among these platforms are online discussion and interaction about contemporary issues.

Most of the blogger and online activists of the Shahbag movement were historically related to digital activism generated from somewhereinblog. The number of registered users in somewhereinblog during the time of the Shahbag movement was 200,000+ with 500,000+ regular viewers and 1,000,000 unique visitors across the world per month (during 2013) visiting this site. In somewhereinblog, bloggers from different political ideology such as supporters of AI, JIB, BNP were blogging. Some bloggers were critical about the political culture of Bangladesh; all could post and be involved in digital activities in these blogsites. Regarding different issues and events, bloggers also took different political positions and opinions. Blogsites provided the space and opportunity for one to take multiple roles and multiple positions in different events not restricted in the partisan political role.

The issues of "bringing war criminals to justice" and "Liberation war vs. Jamaat" which resulted in the Shahbag movement were historically generated from the somewherein blogsite and dispersed to other blogsites. One of the key informants, Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, senior blogger, Shahbag activist, member of BOAN, and core member of Gonojagoron Moncho stated, "Shahbag movement is the child of digital activism that started in somewhereinblog, back in 2006*" (Personal communication, online, January 15, 2019, Japan).

The website somewhereinblog, which played a crucial role in the Shahbag movement, still remains the largest Bengali blogsite in the world. Through an understanding of how technology such as Web 2.0 helped in creating the digital sociality of "bringing war criminals to justice," it becomes easier to appreciate how online activists changed platforms in the run up to the Shahbag movement.

Hasan (2014) observed that during the years of 2010 to 2012, there was a shift among bloggers and online activists to adopt the Facebook platform more dynamically, though they

remained very active in Bangla blogsites as well. In 2013, the number of internet users increased to 30,000,000 and among them, Facebook users numbered 3,400,000. It is this increase in number of internet users in Bangladesh, Jabbar (2014) argued, which was one of the key contributing factors for the Shahbag movement to have occurred in 2013, not in 2011 nor 2008. This co-relation between the increased number of social media users to a social media movement rings true for the Shahbag movement, as noted by Hasan (2014).

Facebook was by far the dominant social media platform operating in Bangladesh before the Shahbag movement. The popularity of YouTube and Twitter was also on the rise but compared to Facebook was nominal. Observing the online space of Bangladesh during online ethnography, it was also found that by 2013, social media features such as Facebook Note (where user can write long text and add photos) became very popular among bloggers and online activists.

Mozaddid Al Fasani Jadid, belongs to an urban middle-class Muslim family. He is university educated and a senior blogger in somewhereinblog. He was also involved in different digital resistance including Shahbag. In 2014, he became the moderator of somewhereinblog and started working with blog editor and moderator Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana. Regarding the change of platforms, he explained,

> The opportunity and convenience Facebook introduced was very attractive among bloggers; bloggers were competing among each other to increase the number of Facebook friends as much as possible. I can remember, most of the popular bloggers already had 5000 friends (the highest number of friends Facebook allowed), and their fans and followers were also increasing. They also loved the feature of Facebook Note as it gave the feel of blogging (usually based on long text and comment, like an option) and feature of microblogging as Facebook Status where you can write short notes and give a quick reaction. It was the best of two worlds, blogsites and twitter

(which allowed use of only a limited number of characters). Facebook also provided the option of creating your own page, group and event. These features are very useful in expanding the bloggers digital activities. Facebook provided more control over content creation, digital activities and the opportunity to connect which was not so efficient in blogsites. (Personal communication, March 3, 2017, Dhaka).

Immediately before the Shahbag movement, the Bangla blogosphere, along with Facebook, was very vibrant. Hence, bloggers and online activists quickly adopted other social media platforms such as Facebook through the emergence of the group BOAN (Blogger and Online Activist Network), which used social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, blog sites) extensively.

Before Shahbag, the digital activism which emerged in 2006 through "pro-liberation war" digital resistance continued with various related topics and issues (Table 3). As mentioned earlier, in regard to digital activism, BOANI first emerged as an online-based protest platform (although online activists were not all from BOANI) but the fluidity and inclusivity in both online and offline spaces resulted in the open participation for anybody who is supporting the cause. Because of this inclusiveness, the exclusion of Anti-Liberation war forces was strictly enforced. Of course, due to the openness of the online space, "anybody" who joined could have actually hidden her/his online identity and political motivation. Nevertheless, pro-liberation war bloggers and online activists used background checks by personal communication and social media to identify the pattern of digital activists.

Table 3

Overview of Digital Activism in Bangla Blogosphere (2008-2013)

Issues and events when bloggers protested, responded in online and offline spaces	Year	Event/Activities, in Physical and Digital localities
Shahbag movement, protest against the verdict of ICT, demanded capital punishment for the war criminals.	2013	Online and offline protest in Shahbag, other parts of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi diaspora.
Protest against attack on secular blogger Asif Mohiuddin by Islamist extremist.	2013	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Protest against attack on Blogger Tanvir Ahmammed Argel by student wing of Al.	2012	Online protest
Protest against bringing the dead body of war criminal to Bangladesh.	2012	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Protest against Tukish President for his support to war criminal to Bangladesh.	2012	Online and offline protest
Protest against fire in Tazreen Fashion factory, killing at least 117 people.	2012	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Protest against Rakhine State riots, anti-Muslim riots; Rohingya persecution in Myanmar.	2012	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Protest against Ramu violence refers to a series of attacks on Buddhist monasteries, shrines, and temple at Ramu in Cox's Bazar.	2012	Online and offline protest in Shahbag and Press club
Protest against border killing in the India Bangladesh border.	2012	Online and offline protest in Press club
Protest against river killing, saving river Titas	2011	Online and Citizen journalism
Protest against establishment of airport in Arial Beel in Munshigang.	2011	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Protest against treaty between government and Conocophillips oil and gas company.	2011	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Protest against army housing skim in Rupgang.	2010	Online
Protest against eve-teasing.	2010	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Protest against VAT increment in private universities.	2010	Online and offline protest in Shahbag
Citizen journalism in BDR mutiny.	2009	Online and offline near the Dhanmondi area
Movement against 27/4 act in Jagannath University.	2009	Online and offline, near Shahbag and Jagannath University
Citizen journalism in National election.	2008	Online
Protest against removal of Baul statues from the airport.	2008	Online and offline protest in airport
Protest and signature campaign against war criminals of 1971.	2007	Online and offline in book fair
Protest against war criminals of 1971.	2006	Online and offline activism

Immediately before the Shahbag movement in 2013, two digital movements regarding the issue of attack on bloggers became very significant and incited rage among bloggers against the political culture of Bangladesh.

3.4.1 Socio-Political Condition and Major Issues Before Shahbag Movement

From ethnographic interviews among bloggers and online activists and participant observation of online spaces during 2013, it became clear that several factors in the online and offline spaces, before the verdict on Quader Mollah on 5th February, played a crucial role in inciting rage among bloggers and online activists that eventually led to the Shahbag Movement.

As Haq (2015) has argued, the turbulent political condition during 2013 played a significant role among bloggers and online activists which eventually resulted in the Shahbag movement. Haq (2011) observed that bloggers are politically informed citizen. In the blog sites, they are engaged in heated debate and discussion about contemporary social and political issues. They had taken different roles in relation to the socio-political condition in Bangladesh.

Chowdhury's (2016, 2012) finding about the Bangla blogosphere showed that parallel to contemporary socio-political events and matters, the topic of "Liberation war vs Jamaat" has been a long-lasting and eminent matter of debate and discussion. Hasan (2014) suspected that, during 2013, "bringing war criminals to justice" was a major issue for the general public and this propelled the Al government to a landslide victory against BNP and JIB in the 2008 election due to its promise to ensure war criminals of 1971 will be punished.

However, at the same time, corruption, extreme nepotism, extreme partisanship in the Al government also ignited anger and frustration among the general public. Incidents such as the share market corruption which started in 2010, corruption in the largest construction project Padma bridge in 2011, extreme nepotism in recruitment of government banks in 2012, poor safety management which resulted in the death of 112 people in the Tajreen garments fire in 2012, were cases in which many Al leaders were suspected to have been involved.

3.4.2 Violence Against Bloggers: "We Hate Jamaat, We Do Not Like Awami League Either"

While the key demand of Shahbag was "bringing war criminals to justice", another related demand was "banning the politics of Shibir (the student wing of Jamaat)." As Hasan (2014) has explained, in December 2012, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal the famous writer and public intellectual especially popular among the youth because of his support to the cause of "bringing war criminals to justice," wrote an editorial in Prothom Alo (the largest daily in Bangladesh) titled, *"Those who are involved in Shibir politics"*[49]. This article created a huge debate in the Bangla blogosphere.

In this article, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal criticised JIB for their role in the liberation war and also criticised supporters of Shibir (student wing of JIB), arguing that they are involved in "wrong politics" and appealed to the Shibir activists to leave the "party of war criminals, JIB" and come back to "free thinking." The online edition of the article has generated 237 comments (in Prothom Alo site only) and tens of thousands of shares in social media. In response to this article, blogger Tanvir Ahammed Argel wrote in a Facebook note, *"Those who are supporting the League (Al) politics"*[50] which was in turn shared thousands of times in Facebook and other social media such as Somewhereinblog, Todayblog.

While Muhammad Zafar Iqbal was criticising Shibir, the blogger Argel was focused on criticising Al. The latter was arguing about Al's savage violence, political culture and corruption. The two articles and the response by bloggers there to displayed the tension between the supporters of two political streams, Al and JIB in the digital localities. This indicates how social media could provide the space and opportunity to expand tensions through debate and discussion in the online space. The debate and discussion did not remain

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[49] http://archive.prothom-alo.com/detail/date/2012-12-07/news/311175
[50] http://www.newsatbd.net/blog/blogdetail/detail/3382/russelkhanaman/29968

online, and the blogger Tanvir Ahammed Argel, who is a student of the University of Dhaka, was beaten up by members of Chhatra League (student wing of Al). In response to this attack on Tanvir Ahammed Argel, heated debate and discussion spread across social media.

Mozaddid Al Fasani Jadid, moderator and senior blogger from somewhereinblog, and a Shahbag activist commented,

> Muhammad Zafar Iqbal's article had created intense debate and discussion not only in the blogsites but also on Facebook. Although most of the bloggers were supporting the argument of Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, they did not like what Chhatra League did to Tanvir Ahammed Argel. Beating up for writing cannot be the way. Over the years, Chhatra League has become more like Shibir and they think that the spirit of the liberation war is their party ownership. That is not correct; the spirit of liberation war belongs to everybody. We hate Jamaat because of their role in the liberation war of 1971 but that does not mean we (all bloggers) love Chhatra League. The bloggers who are die hard supporters of the Awami league, they also kept silent because they did not have anything to say. Many bloggers also criticized Muhammad Zafar Iqbal's position as biased towards Awami League. Over all, the whole blog community felt threatened. Members of the ruling political party are beating up bloggers, and the police, law enforcement agencies are doing nothing. It was not a good sign for freedom of expression and democracy. (Personal communication, February 12, 2017, Dhaka)

Following this explanation, it can be understood that by 2012, social media sites such as Facebook and blogsites had become very popular in Bangladesh, especially among the young users. At the same time, social media sites have also become the place of intense debate and discussion, for various topics, including debates regarding the liberation war of

1971 and contemporary politics such as the tension between Chhatra League and Shibir and so on.

While most of the bloggers were critical about the role of JIB in the war of liberation in 1971, they were also critical about the contemporary trend of violence in mainstream political practices including Al and JIB. Understandably, the attack on the blogger by members of the ruling party ignited both rage and fear in the blog community. The attack was also unprecedented because it was among the first few cases when online debate resulted into offline violence and a blogger was physically abused. It can be said that the Chhatra League's attack on the blogger in December 2012 also challenged the non-violent characteristics of digital activism that developed, and was supposedly the norm, through the expansion of the Bangla blogosphere.

Mozaddid Al Fasani Jadid further explained, "in response to this attack, we (bloggers) were condemning it online and planning to organize a peaceful protest in the streets, but that initiative was never realised; so the protest mainly operated in the online sphere" (Personal communication, February 12, 2017, Dhaka).

Furthering the issue of digital activism and the growing relationship of the online and offline spaces before the Shahbag movement, one of the senior bloggers and a Shahbag activist, Rudro Asif also shared his thoughts.

> Over the years, the trend of digital activism in the Bangla blogosphere has been non-violent and peaceful in nature, especially when translated into offline spaces. For protest activities, we did signature campaigns, human chain, peaceful rallies and so on but violent activities were never our cup of tea. Though, in the online spaces the scenario was quite different, not all debate and discussion remained logical and dignified. Satire, slang, use of abusive words, sometimes hate speech, fake identity, use of multiple nicks tagging, defaming, spreading propaganda, cyber-attacks, even

online threats were used as strategies to win in the online debate. Almost every one of those tactics were considered things of the online space. But gradually, the distance between online and offline spaces shortened. Things of the online were becoming more influential in the offline spaces. Especially after the Ramu incident[51] in October 2012. We have sadly realized that along with positive changes, events in social media can bring violent results in offline spaces too. I would say, the attack on the blogger was part of this process. (Personal communication, March 17, 2015, Dhaka)

Moreover, the infamous attack on a secular blogger created another wave of debate and discussion in the Bangla blogosphere.

3.4.3 Attack on Atheist Blogger: The Case of Blogger Asif Mohiuddin

Over the last few years (from 2007-12), along with the development of the Bangla blogosphere, blogger Asif Mohiuddin became famous for his blogging not in the Bangla blogosphere but also in the international arena. In 2013, Asif Mohiuddin (aged 29) who comes from an urban middle-class Muslim family, is an online activist, Shahbag activist, educated in computer science, and a private company employee. He was mainly blogging in somewhereinblog and for his blogging, he faced imprisonment after the crackdown on bloggers by the government after the Shahbag movement. His blog is entitled *"God, Almighty only in name but impotent in reality."*[52] His blogging was focused on secularism, criticizing religion, religious beliefs and practices, rules of Islam, Quran and prophet Muhammad and many more. He became known among the bloggers and general audience as an atheist, secular, feminist, anti-nationalist, humanitarian blogger.

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[51] In October 2012, in the village of Ramu, near the southern city of Cox's bazar, members of the Buddhist minority population and Buddhist temples were attacked by Muslim gangs. The Buddhists were falsely accused (via a fake Facebook account) of using a Facebook page to defame Prophet Muhammad. Hundreds of people were injured, and temples and houses were vandalized during these attacks (Gayen, 2012).

[52]https://goo.gl/CLRDwz

Figure 20. Blogger Asif Mohiuddin's page in somewhereinblog.

His rise in the Bangla blogosphere related to another ongoing debate which is "Atheist vs. Believer" (Chowdhury, 2016). As a forerunner of this online discourse, Asif Mohiuddin was a familiar face in Bangla blogosphere. He was also involved in digital activism especially in the movement against "increment of education fee in the Jagannath University" (See section 3.4). He was arrested[53] for 18 hours in 2011 by the detective branch of police. Due to his involvement with the successful movement against "increment of education fee in the Jagannath University," he won the 2012 BOBs (best of blogging) Best Social Activism Campaign award. The BOBs award is arranged by the German public international broadcast service Deutsche Welle (DW).

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[53] https://goo.gl/emnnzy

Figure 21. The post of Asif Mohiuddin against the increment of fees in Jagannath University in somewhereinblog on 30th September 2011. The post is titled, "Mass gathering against the black law of Jagannath University. Today's update of the protest [with picture]."

On 14th January 2013, blogger Asif Mohiuddin was brutally attacked[54] by three Islamic extremists just outside of his office. He was attacked for his writing against religion, Islam, and reporting on sensitive social issues and free thinking. At the time, his blog[55] was one of the most visited webpages in Bangladesh. This attack is regarded as the first in the line of a series of violence on and killing of secular, freethinking bloggers by Islam extremists that continued after the Shahbag movement.

Before the Shahbag movement, the attack on Asif spurred a huge momentum in Bangla blogosphere. Remembering this incident and the online-offline momentum, Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana, head of Alliances, editor and moderator somewhereinblog explained, "

Although he (Asif) was not so popular among the believer bloggers for his overly critical stance against religion, his post often created intense debate and discussion in the blog site. During that time (2013), he was very popular among the small group of

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[54] https://goo.gl/Y4Km9a
[55] http://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/realAsifM

atheists, freethinkers, non-believers in the blogosphere, and hated by many. We had to delete many of his posts due to his ultra-critical stance about religion. His language was also very derogative and sometimes demeaning.

For some bloggers, he was regarded as a frontier of secular free thinking. Overall, most of the bloggers condemned that attack. Because it was meant to take his life. And that was unacceptable. Writing against religion should be answered with writing, not with a machete. (Personal communication, February 5, 2017, Dhaka)

3.4.3.1 Role of the Blogger and Online Activist: Attack on Asif Mohiuddin

The news of the attack on Asif spread like fire on social media, especially in the blog site somewhereinblog and Facebook started to create intensity among other bloggers. Bloggers were reacting about this news in various ways.

Being a blogger and online activist myself, as explained in Chapter 1, I posted a blog post in somewhereinblog titled, *"For Asif, for a human, for a blogger, protest rally."* In this particular case, I as blogger Sharat Chowdhury immediately posted about the attack in a wider blog community, in the digital sociality of somewhereinblog to inform more bloggers about the matter. In response to this post, another blogger (Selim Anwar) who was near the site of attack, contacted me through Facebook messenger and asked how he could help. So, I instructed him to go to that place and help Asif.

একজন আসিফের জন্য, একজন ব্লগারের জন্য, একজন মানুষের জন্য প্রতিবাদ সমাবেশ

১৪ ই জানুয়ারি, ২০১৩ রাত ১০:২৭

এই পোস্টটি শেয়ার করতে চাইলে :   Tweet   Like 447   Share

আসিফ যেভাবে নিজেই নিজেকে কোপালেন

আসিফ আছেন উত্তরার ১১ নং সেক্টরের মনসুর আলী হসপাতালে, বুকে পিঠে দু জায়গাতেই আঘাত আছে। ডাক্তারের সাথে কথা বলেছেন বাকী। ব্লগার সেলিম আনোয়ার আমার অনুরোধে জানামাত্র সাহায্য করতে ইতোমধ্যে ছুটে গিয়েছেন। তিনি হসপাতালে আছেন। আসিফ এখন ইমার্জেন্সীতে। মাথায় রক্তপাত হচ্ছে।

আঘাত গুরুতর। তাকে ঢাকা মেডিকেলে নিতে হবে। আসিফের আত্মীয়, দুলাভাই সাথে আছেন।

Figure 22. From the post titled: "For Asif, for a human, for a blogger, protest rally."

In my online post (Figure 22), "For Asif, for a human, for a blogger, protest rally," I wrote:

> "Asif is now in Uttara, sector 11 (northern part of Dhaka) in Monsur Ali Hospital. He is wounded in the chest and in the back. Baki (another blogger and Shahbag activist) is talking with the doctor. Blogger Selim Anwar went to the hospital to help him on my request. He is in the hospital now. Asif is in emergency. Bleeding in his head. Injury is serious. He needs to shift to Dhaka Medical. Asif's relative, brother-in-law is with him".

As can be seen, in somewhereinblog, the bloggers were engaged in citizen journalism through updating immediate news about fellow bloggers. Their support for the fellow blogger

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did not remain in the digital space but also translated into the physical space.

3.4.3.2 Role of the Blog Authority, Online Activists

From the online ethnographic observation during this attack on Asif Mohiuddin before Shahbag movement, the attack on the blogger was taken very seriously and the above described post (Figure 22) about it was selected by the somewherein blog authority as a "sticky post" (a post that the blog authority deems worthy to be kept on the front page). This initiative by the blog authority worked to influence the bloggers to pay attention to the topic or event and discuss the matter. Bloggers were encouraged by the blog authority to interact with more bloggers and share their opinion and position about this matter. This is part of the strategy of the blog authority to show bloggers what the blogsite's position is about the issue of the attack on Asif.

Later, the statement given by Asif to the police was inserted into the said sticky post, which worked to provide more authenticity for the original post and generated more engagement among other bloggers. Asif's statement to the police says,

I am related to social mass media and an activist of freedom of speech movement. In this free social mass media, I resist against extremism, communalism and religious bigotry. I believe in freedom of speech. In the process of expressing my freedom of speech, I have faced many threats. Many times, I have received death threats in this free mass media. Especially for the demand of bringing war criminals to justice and criticizing government's anti-people decisions, many groups are not happy with me. I suspect that Jamaat (JIB), Shibir and banned extremist organization such as Hizbut Tahrir may be involved in this attack. And in recent time by observing the abduction and killing, I think a very enthusiastic syndicate in the party in power (Al) or other groups may be involved in this attack (regarding the attack on Asif

Mohiuddin in14th January 2013).

Blogger Asif Mohiuddin, after surviving the attack, published the statement to the police in the blogsite using social media to spread the news and his suspicion about who may have been interested in killing him. According to his post, both the JIB and Islamist extremist groups, and some members of Al are suspect.

Mozaddid Al Fasani Jadid, who was also an active participant in online-offline activism, spoke about the attack on blogger Asif Mohiuddin.

> The political turmoil between Al vs BNP-Jamaat (JIB) in late 2012 and early 2013 created much anger among the ordinary people. You can see that Shahbag protesters also called themselves Shadharon Jonogon (the ordinary people). The attack on bloggers in two incidents was also taken as an attack on the blog community, so bloggers in general got very angry about the violence which had become the norm in mainstream politics. Both Al and BNP-Jamaat alliance are active in all sorts of violence. Bloggers also felt threatened by the Islamist extremist groups. (Personal communication, February 9, 2017, Dhaka)

Figure 23. Bloggers and online activists protesting in the street against the attack on Asif Mohiuddin.

The digital resistance regarding the event of the attack on the blogger Asif Mohiuddin emerged online and translated into street protests (Figure 23).

3.4.4 Disappointment on the First Verdict of ICT in Online Space

On 21st January 2013, the first verdict of the ICT trial was announced. The verdict handed down the death sentence to Abul Kalam Azad, a convicted war criminal and JIB leader. He was known as Bachchu Razakar. During the BNP-JIB coalition government (2001-2005), he became a recognised Islamic orator on broadcast television.

Figure 24. The history of Bachchu Razakar; where is he?

The pro-liberation war bloggers, who were eagerly waiting for the verdict, felt utterly disappointed because, after a long wait and much controversy regarding the ICT trial (as discussed in Chapter 2), the verdict was finally out but the convicted had already fled from Bangladesh. The ICT did not set any time limit for the police to bring him back. In the public discourse, the ambiguity was heightened because different news sources were speculating on the whereabouts of Abul Kalam Azad. Thus, the pro-liberation war bloggers were asking where is Bachchu Razakar?

In discussing the disappointment among pro-liberation war bloggers, Tonmoy Ferdous, Shahbag activist and senior blogger, gave some illuminating comments.

Through blogging, a whole generation of bloggers became very aware about the liberation war, role of razakars, Jamaat, BNP, even Awami league. They were very concerned about the ICT trial and somehow skeptical about all the political parties. However, about one thing I was absolutely sure of – they know who the razakars are and all they wanted was a fair certain justice. So, when the first verdict came out, they wanted results, they wanted the war criminal to be at least behind bars. Because in many of the cases, you see recognised criminals in Bangladesh use money and political connection to get out of the country. Do you think, if the government was serious, a known figure like Bachhu Razakar could have escaped? (Personal communication, February 20, 2016, Dhaka)

On one hand, in terms of the overall socio-political scenario before Shahbag movement, the attack on bloggers made the blog community doubtful about the established political practices and anxious about the safety and security of the bloggers. On the other hand, the ICT verdict of the war criminal Abul Kalam Azad (Bachchu Razakar) and his escape fuelled the rage against the ICT trial, Al and JIB. As discussed in Chapter 2, the dispute regarding ICT, delay of verdict, the lack of trust in mainstream political culture with its electoral popular vote politics (the election in 2014) helped in generating the assumption that Al and JIB, despite showing rivalry, may have had a mutual understanding (i.e., Al may have had influenced ICT to provide a softer verdict) on matters not only involving bloggers but also in general.

Summary

After the downfall of the Internet industry in 2000, the dotcom market faced an insurmoiuntable challenge. Through the introduction of Web 2.0 technology, social media emerged as a communication platform which encouraged users to produce more contents,

interactions and connectivity. As a global form of communication, social media quickly spread through the globe while at the same time, it also localised to reach more audience and more interactivity. In this localisation process, social media in Bangladesh expanded as the Bangla blogosphere and introduced unique changes in digital expansion such as introducing community blogging, writing in own language, created an online space of virtual gathering following the Bengali tradition of Adda, a Bangla blog day, as well as encouraged bloggers meet in offline spaces such as Chobir Hut. This resulted in a localised digital culture in the digital locality in Bangladesh, which opened up an unprecedented opportunity of interaction, debate and discussion on various topics including "bringing war criminals to justice".

Over the years, the Bangla blogosphere went through several changes such as introducing community blog as opposed to the global trend of personal blogs (2005), promoting Bengali writing on the Internet (2006), beginning of digital resistance and digital activism (2006), expansion of Bangla blogosphere (2007 onwards), rise of pro-Jamaat, anti-liberation war blogs (2007), introduction of no moderation blog (2008), citizen journalism by the bloggers during national election and BDR killing (2008 onwards), bloggers emerging as opinion leaders (2010-2012), and increased corporate interest in bloggers for product promotions. During the period of 2005-2012, digital resistance and activism grew in the Bangla blogosphere and produced digital socialities. Among those, digital resistance and activism, specifically the issue of "bringing war criminals to justice," remained persistent and, in 2013, contributed to instigating the Shahbag movement. Global technology, when localized, helped in creating a digital sociality which transcended online and offline spaces and eventually translated into a social movement.

CHAPTER 4

Resistance-Sociality in Shahbag Movement

The Shahbag Movement started through the digital intensities (Postill & Pink, 2012) that have been generated by BOAN in the digital locality of Bangla social media space, including the Bangla blogosphere and other social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. However, the rage of the digital citizenry against the verdict of the convicted war criminal Quader Mollah did not remain in the digital locality. The Facebook post of BOAN members and call for a protest quickly translated into a street protest upon the initiative of the organisers and protest participants. The initial protest started as a human chain at the Shahbag intersection and eventually translated into a mass uprising which is unprecedented in the recent history of Bangladesh. This chapter will analyse the dynamics of the Shahbag movement, its different stages and events, which produced different forms of resistance socialities both in the digital and physical localities. On one hand, in the digital locality, BOAN's event page, bloggers and online activist's social media profiles, and pro-Shahbag social media accounts became the site of resistance. On the other hand, the anti-Shahbag social media profiles, pages and accounts became the site for counter resistance against Shahbag. Whilst in the street, the increased mass gathering was chanting "Fashi Chai, Fashi Chai" (Hang now, hang now) which created a "contextual fellowship" (Postill, 2012) that was diverse in nature and also fluid, as the movement progresses the dynamics of the "contextual fellowship". Another key factor related to this "contextual fellowship" also emerged, which was a malleable collective identity called "Shahbagi." This identity was also transcending online-offline and global-local boundaries. In the physical locality of Gonojagoron Moncho (mass awakening stage) was established a platform for pro-Shahbag protesters with plural participation; challenging the norms of traditional political organisation

and leadership. During different stages of the Shahbag movement, Moncho was also negotiating with the dominant power politics to remain autonomous and loyal to the people's demand of bringing war criminals to justice. Although Shahbag started and continued as a non-violent protest, it faced violent backlash through the killing of bloggers and Shahbag activists. The resistance to violent protest activities brought mass support to the movement as well as challenged the ongoing political culture of violence.

4.1 Resistance Sociality of BOAN: Pro-Liberation War Blogger and Online Activist Network

The Shahbag Movement started through the calling of a Facebook event by BOAN. In the digital locality of Bangladesh, pro-liberation war BOAN members and bloggers were closely observing the ICT trial. Along with many bloggers and online activists, many concerned citizens were also in disagreement with the verdict handed down to Quader Mollah. Members of the BOAN team contacted each other through social media and mobile phones and organized the protest at the Shahbag intersection.

One of the main organizers of the team was 37-year-old Imran H. Sarker. He is a doctor by profession, coming from a suburban district and a middle-class Muslim family, and was involved in youth activism. In his early life, he was also involved in student politics and involved in pro-liberation war digital activism. As observed during January 2013, he actively participated in the process of saving blogger Asif Mohiuddin (discussed in chapter 3). He went to the hospital in the middle of the night when Asif was attacked (14th January 2013) and offered his help as a doctor. That was also a key event when he introduced himself and his intent to the veteran activist's bloggers. He and other BOAN members organized the protest that turned into the Shahbag movement. He became the spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho. Later, he also participated in the general election of Bangladesh 2018.

On the day of the verdict (5th February 2013), Imran H. Sarker made a post on BOAN's Facebook page about the gathering and protest in Shahbag. Members of the team (e.g. Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Arif Jebtik, Maruf Rasul) also individually made posts, in their personal profile, expressing their disagreement. Many other bloggers and Facebook users were posting on social media against the verdict. Later, BOAN's event page became the epicentre of social media "intensities" regarding the verdict of Mollah, which eventually resulted in the Shahbag movement.

Figure 25. BOAN's event post of 5th February 2013 on Facebook.

BOAN's Facebook page started on 29th January 2013, few days before the verdict. However, the idea of creating a blogger and activist network is not new. As shown in Chapter 3, online based-protest platform BOANI had been engaged in digital activism. As Haq (2015) and Hasan (2014) also have suggested, bloggers and online activist network is an outcome of digital activism that emerged from the Bangla blogosphere.

Imran H. Sarker started an organization called Youth for Peace & Democracy (YPD), Bangladesh. YPD is a non-partisan, non-profit and voluntary organization established in October 2011. They were involved in humanitarian work and activism. This offline activism and first hand involvement in humanitarian work created a trust worthy, credible image of Imran among other YPD activists and later blogger and online activists (A. Hossain, 2014).

About the creation of YPD and BOAN, Imran H. Sarker explained, "This organization's work was a bit different – to make a secular youth force who will be politically conscious. We used to work with this vision and our youth group used to be everywhere in the country. Most of them were students from school, college and university. The oldest member was 35 years old*."*

However, behind this initiative, another key factor was his political position against JIB. He further explained,

So when I was just a student, we had activities against Jamaat, shibir in our university. There was an alliance of anti-shibir stand among general students. We used to work in different campuses. It was an anti-shibir alliance. From that place, our movement continued slowly. Specially during the time of the caretaker government and BNP-Jamaat union, between 2001-2006, when we experienced the vandalizing of shibir as they were in power in the campuses. The torture they did on the general students, bombing in different places, killing people with arms, there was a kind of stand of the general students against these. We used to do this in a particular way. Basically, the process (of anti-shibir movement) has been running for more than 10 years. When I was a student, that time also, the main focus was to go against Jamaat. They are a war criminal organization; I knew that they are a wicked organization. I have seen Shibir activities very closely. We always know shibir as a terrorist group. (Personal communication, March 18, 2015, Dhaka)

4.1.1 Coming to Digital Locality, Creating A Pro-Liberation War Blog, Prajanmablog

By 2011, a big network of volunteers had been formed while working on YPD. A network of around 50,000 people, who were engaged with YPD in many ways. Imran H. Sarker, observed that most of the workers were active on social media, they were writing

blogs or connected with the virtual world in various ways. *"Then we decided that, as we had limited resources for the members of YPD, so it was an easy way to create a blog to reach and train the members to spread the ideology of YPD easily. If anybody has a blog, they could provide resources."* (Personal communication, March 18, 2015, Dhaka)

As discussed in Chapter 3, following the pro-liberation war discourse in the Bangla blogosphere, in 2011, Imran H. Sarker created a secular pro-liberation war blog site called "prajanmablog," where the moderation policy, blogging style and contents were focused to be pro-liberation. The positive online image of Imran was contributed to his first attempt to create a "clean" blog site which gained acceptancy in the blogosphere.

There were many blogs that time. But the problem was there were many anti-liberation war, controversial writings in the blog sites. Also, there were linguistic problems owing to no moderation, many frivolous writings used to come there. So, we thought of making a blog which will be like a training module, where there will be no controversy allowed regarding solved matters like the liberation war. There will be nothing like communal group, religion-based politics or such mentality which supports militancy. There will be content which are needed to make a non-communal mentality. (Personal communication, March 18, 2015, Dhaka)

4.1.2 Expanding Platform, Expanding Network, From Blog to BOAN, Shared Consciousness and Online Skill

During 2012, Imran H. Sarker took the initiative to personally contact other bloggers and online activists who were already established in the Bangla blogosphere such as Arif Jebtik, Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Maruf Rasul, Baki Billah and so on, who are senior bloggers and also digital activists (as discussed in Chapter 3). This was a crucial move from Imran as an organiser because he tried to accumulate those bloggers to bring under one umbrella who were already established as credible and dependable among the wider blogging community.

As one of the core members of BOAN, the founding member of BOANI Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, likewise a senior blogger, Shahbag activist, and a core member of Gonojagoron Moncho explained,

In late 2012, Imran H. Sarker was trying to create an organization of bloggers. So, he started to contact other bloggers. First, he made contact with Mahmudul Haq Munshi (another online activist, online nickname Badhon Shopnokothok), another blogger who was involved in the first platform of Bloggers BOANI (2011). I asked Imran, 'Why will bloggers make an organization?' Making an organization is the thing for offline. Digital activism from online should be issue-based. No name, no organization. If there is an issue in Atlanta, we will gather and protest both online and offline. If there is an issue in Bangladesh, we will gather and protest both online and offline. But not as an organization. But Imran was determined, so he created BOAN. (Online, Personal communication, December 18, 2018, Japan)

In relation to the discussion of the creation of BOAN with Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, an appreciation of Imran H. Sarker's explanation is important. Earlier Imran H. Sarker said,

The Prajanma blog could create credibility very quickly due to its having a very clean image. We also connected with the other progressive blogs together. This blog was young people's blog. Again, there was a large portion of our bloggers who cherish the spirit of the Liberation War. While creating that blog, we noticed that there was a large portion of our bloggers and online activists whose age do not match work on YPD. We noticed many people blogging on various blogs. It was not possible to bring all of them into the prajanama blog. Then, we decided to make an organization with this group of bloggers and online activists. In this context, we built the Blogger and Online Activist Network (BOAN). We tried to fight against the propagandas averse to the Liberation War online. YPD and BOAN started to work

very closely. They were very close organizations as their goal was the same. (Personal communication, March 18, 2015, Dhaka)

From the ethnographic observation during the time of late 2012 and early 2013, it could be said that Imran was determined to create a platform which will not only function in the digital locality but also in the physical locality. BOAN was inspired by another online-based protest platform BOANI, and two founding members of BOANI (Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Mahmudul Haque Munshi) also became founding members of BOAN; although its focus is more on pro-liberation war activism. BOAN also adopted the organising principles of BOANI which developed through digital activism practices over the years; namely, inclusiveness, horizontal participation, non-violent, non-corrupt (as discussed in Chapter 3). At the same time, BOAN also adopted the practice of exclusion of JIB and anti-liberation war supporters in their activism.

What could be observed among the bloggers and online activists is that they (i.e. Imran H. Sarker, Arif Jebtik, Kowshik Ahmed, Maruf Rasul, Baki Billah, Ibrahim Khalil Sobak) shared a sense of responsibility to bring people's (primarily other bloggers) eyes on issues and facts they felt people are unaware of or needed be sensitized (e.g. bringing war criminals to justice, secular ideology, critical about religious sects and so on). They identify themselves as a larger collective of "socio-political change makers" (as bloggers and online activists) despite their different backgrounds (e.g. different occupation, belief). They have localized knowledge and practices according to the socio-political context. For example, compared to the mainstream political culture, BOAN did not have any committee, no hierarchy, no leadership. They are most of the time, resisting discrimination by not being biased towards a certain issue, except in the case of the anti-liberation war, which indicates their high level of social media political efficacy.

Bloggers and online activists were also equipped with the techniques and tools to operate digital resistance – they understand the potential of social media as a change maker and for mass mobilization, the changing nature of social media (which platform to use and when, such as blog site to Facebook page, twitter and so on), and the tools and hierarchy in social media platforms (banner, profile, content, timing, like, comment, re-comment, share, networking, role of admin and so on). They also apply localized knowledge and practices according to local social media context, considering matters like a senior blogger, activists, peoples demand, people's sentiment, knowing the common other and so on. They are able to create a bridge between online and offline localities using, for instance, a blog day, bloggers meet, physical activism, content sharing, networking through face to face conversation and so on. They also have the ability to create carefully crafted distinctive characteristics in social media; i.e. Omi Rahman Pial, as Liberation war expert; Ibrahim Khalil Sobak as skilled writer of political satire, Arif Jebtik as social media influencer, and Imran H. Sarker as skilled organisers so on. Bloggers and online activists are also capable of using other traditional media and creating engaging content towards targeted population so that they can create connective action and connective leadership which may lead to frontline activism.

4.1.3 BOAN's Pro-Liberation War Activism

Before starting the protest at Shahbag, BOAN was involved in pro-liberation digital activism. One example is digital activism against war criminal King Tridiv Roy (indigenous group Chakma Chief). In the 1971 war of liberation, King Tridiv Roy was against[56] the liberation of Bangladesh. He helped the Pakistani army against mukti bahini (freedom fighters of Bangladesh) and he continued his activities even after the liberation of Bangladesh. He was the head of the Pakistan Buddhist Society from 1996-2012. He died in Pakistan on

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[56] https://opinion.bdnews24.com/bangla/archives/6233

17th September 2012. It was then that a big dispute erupted with regard to bringing his corpse to Bangladesh. Bloggers protested online and started a protest in Shahbag.

In another case, during the trial of war criminals, the Turkish president Gul tried to interfere[57] in the trial of war criminals. Bloggers protested online as well as in Shahbag. Another example is the opposition to the plan to send the Bangladeshi cricket team to Pakistan; and the bloggers protested online[58].

As explained in Chapter 3, over the years, the bloggers and online activists have engaged in different forms of digital activism regarding crucial civil and student rights issues parallel to political issues in Bangladesh. A long-term observer of the development of Bangla blogosphere is the head of Alliances, editor and moderator of somewhereinblog, Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana. She commented,

> The range of issues where bloggers were involved was diverse, from humanitarian causes to anti-establishment protest, bloggers were everywhere. On one hand, this kind of involvement depended on the individual bloggers interest, time and opportunity. On the other hand, this also depended on the particular blog sites interest and focus. (Personal communication, January 30, Dhaka, 2017)

BOAN tried to build a network among bloggers and online activists using social media, with a focus on pro-liberation war activism. They also celebrated the Bangla blog day on 1st February 2013 (four days before the verdict) with the veteran blogger and online activists not only to strengthen the ties among activist bloggers but also promote the Facebook page of BOAN. So that these bloggers and online activists start to write on the page, thus contribute to increasing the credibility of the page and increased the flow of social media user base. This move also enabled them to reach a wider audience, authentically and credibly.

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[57] https://www.dawn.com/news/1257938
[58] https://blog.bdnews24.com/sayeedahamed/77972

4.1.4 BOAN's Digital Intensity: Digital Locality to Physical Locality, Shahbag Movement

In the physical locality, the verdict of Quader Mollah was given by the ICT on 5th February 2013 at around 12 pm. The reaction to this verdict by the bloggers and online activists created social media "intensities" which was unprecedented in Bangla blogosphere and also in Bangla social media. They created an increased interaction and participation in social media through a vigour of social media activities such as calling of protest events in Facebook, coordinated posts among the members of BOAN in Facebook, inviting a huge number of Facebook friends (98,722), posting in the earliest moment after the verdict, using the rage generated in the social media against the verdict. These social media activities became effective because of its core members who were credible and acceptable opinion leaders in the online space. The cause (demanding justice for the war criminal by a non-partisan entity) itself was contributed in the process of creating credibility among the much wider mass.

Parallel to BOAN's initiative, it could also be noted from the online and offline participant observation, that during the verdict of Quader Mollah, bloggers of the Bangla blogosphere were fully engaged regarding the issue of the verdict of Quader Mollah and the updates on the war crime tribunal in general. Thus, it may be inferred that along with BOAN members, other established bloggers and online activists could have called an event or post that day, but it was BOAN that did it first. Regarding this probability, BOAN activist Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, core member of Gonojagoron Moncho explained on different occasions that,

> Anybody could have called an event or posted that day: you, (referring to other
> veteran blogger and online activist, calling them as *vai*, means brother in Bengali),
> *kowshik vai* (blogger and online activist, Jebjik vai). BOANI did call an event, but
> they did it in the next day. When I am angry, when people are angry, getting crazy

about the verdict, we should respond then and there. So, we did and it worked."

(Online, Personal communication, December 18, 2018, Japan)

BOAN members not only called for an event but also arranged a protest demonstration at the street of Shahbag, which also helps to generate credibility among the mass who were not present in social media although later informed by traditional media.

BOAN Facebook event

- Facebook event created on **1:23pm**
- Event created by, Imran H. Sarker, Badhon Shopno Kahok two mobile numbers, Imran's one mobile number for Contact
- 97,822 was invited and going showed 13,959
- 1,881 showed maybe join

The text of the screenshot states: 'When a reputed murderer like Quader Molla gets life imprisonment, then what is the meaning of this verdict? We do not accept this verdict. Until Quader Molla's verdict of hanging is not confirmed we will not go away from the street. Come to shahbag today afternoon 3:30 pm. Only one demand, we want Molla to be hanged.

No escape for the tribunal. We want Molla to be hanged. Unite and fight, get the demand of Hanging fulfilled.

Figure 26. BOAN's call for the event against the verdict of Quader Mollah. in the digital locality of Facebook, in 5th February 2013.

Assembly and mass rally against the loathsome verdict by the Tribunal
Time: Afternoon 3:30 pm
Place: Shabag intersection
Date: 5th February 2013
Organized by: Blogger and Online Activist Network-BOAN
Everybody's participation is desired
Posting time 12:07 pm, 2013
Until Feb 5, 12:17
Within 10 minutes
This post liked by 143 people
Comment 32, shared 20 times

Figure 27. BOAN organiser Imran's post on Facebook, after the verdict of Quader Mollah in 5th February 2013.

BOAN organizer Imran H. Sarker explained about his post,

The verdict was declared by the tribunal at around 12pm. Right after that, at 12:07, I posted a status – there will be an assembly and public procession in Shahbag, at the Shahbag intersection. It was about to happen at 3:30pm. Discussing with the members of BOAN and the other bloggers, we fixed it and on 12:23pm, informed in BOAN's Facebook page officially. After that, I left from home. Badhon (Mahmudul Haq Munsi, BOAN member and Shahbag activist) was my neighbour so I picked him. Whomever we met on the road, we took them with us. I started calling people as soon as we stepped out of the house. Maruf Rasel, Arif Jebtik, Animesh Rahman, Bangal (BOAN member and Shahbag activist) and me, and the members of YPD, were the very first bloggers to reach there. We told everyone to come to Shahbag. Badhon and I took a CNG, there was Sobak (Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Shahbag activist) on the way so we took him, and reached Farmgate and stepped into a banner shop. The purpose of taking Sobak was that he can do a very good design. We made him design the banner which you have seen on 5th February. (Personal communication, March 18, 2015, Dhaka)

Figure 28. From Facebook to street, Blogger and Online activists in Shahbag intersection, 5th February 2013.
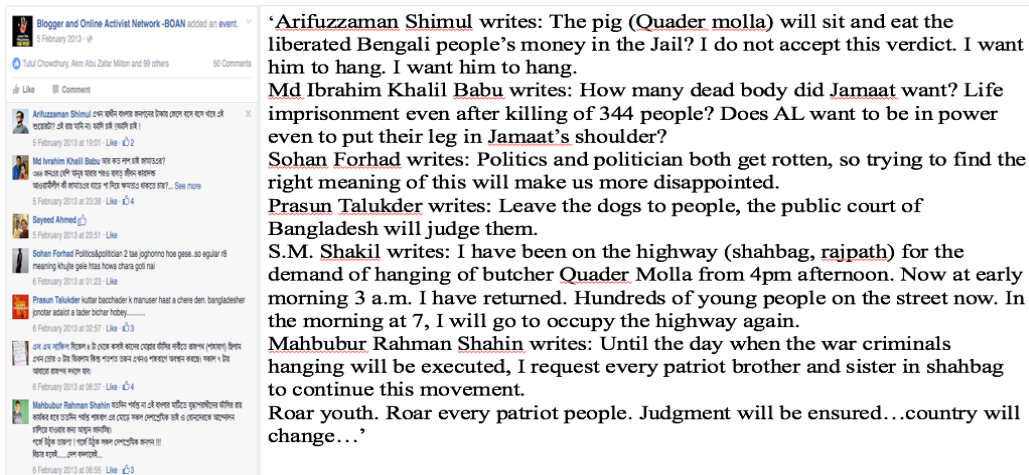
Figure 29. BOAN's event post on Facebook, which became the digital locality for expressing widespread rage against the verdict 5th February 2013.

4.1.5 Parallel to BOAN's Growing "Intensity": Verdict of Quader Mollah in Digital Locality of Somewhereinblog

The first post of Somewhereinblog regarding the verdict of Quader Mollah was made at 12:00 am of 5th February 2013, entitled, *"Why tomorrow is a Strike?" w*ritten by blogger nick:*1971-Bangladesh. (Bangladesh, 2013).* The blog post states,

Why is there a strike tomorrow?

Tomorrow, the verdict will be given.

The verdict may be in your (derogatory) favour or may not be in your favour.

Then you (derogatory) go for the strike,

means you (derogatory) know the story behind it,

so why are you (derogatory) making this chaos?

Figure 30. Blog post in somewhereinblog titled why is there a strike tomorrow? 5th February 2013, 12 am.

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As observed during the online ethnography (posts from 12 am. to 11:59 pm of 5th February 2013) of the blog activity in the platform of somewehreinblog, this post (Figure 30) was about the strike called by Shibir (student wing of JIB) in 5th February 2013, in protest of the upcoming verdict of Quader Mollah by ICT. Shibir had been vandalising properties all over the country in the past few days in protest of the verdict of their leaders by ICT (see Chapter 3). In the mentioned blog, the blogger was referring to "you" (in a derogatory way) indicating the Shibir supporters. As can be seen, this blogger named *"1971-Bangladesh"* was expressing his frustration and inferring the upcoming political (violent) action Shibir might take the next day.

The digital profile and activities of the nick of the blogger *"1971-Bangladesh"* showed that it was a new nick and have not much interaction with other bloggers. The blogger is neither popular nor influential. The total number of posts from this nick was 3, comments made was 19, and comments received 23. This nick was created during January 2013 and the last post was September 2013. One interesting observation about the post is, even it was posted in the middle of the night, the number of views was 156 and the comments and replies were 20.

Explaining this matter with Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana, editor of somewhereinblog, said,

> The frequency of posting during midnight is usually low, bloggers living in Bangladesh do not post late at night especially in the weekdays. Bloggers from abroad post during this time, due to the time difference bloggers from different countries post late in the night or early in the morning. The post from the blogger "1971-Bangladesh" got many views due to the content of the post and also owing to the comments by other bloggers. The relevancy of the post to the contemporary political

situation among bloggers in general created the interest." (Personal communication, March 16, 2018, Dhaka)

4.1.5. 1 Bloggers Engagement and "Intensity" in 5th February 2013: Somewhereinblog Digital Locality

Blogging about the development of the ICT trial, verdict, and current political condition was not new to the Bangla blogosphere. Analysing the online ethnographic data from somewherein blog online ethnography (posts from 12 am. to 11:59 pm., 5th February 2013), the engagement and intensity of the bloggers can be measured.

Table 4

Blogger Engagement and Intensity in the Digital Locality of Somewhereinblog

Time	Quader Mollah, ICT trial and Shibir related posts	Number of Posts	Remarks
12:00 am-1:00 am	6	25	Political condition, ICT trial
1:00 am-2:00 am	8	20	"
2:00 am-3:00 am	4	10	"
3:00 am-4:00 am	2	8	"
4:00 am-5:00 am	1	4	"
5:00 am-6:00 am	0	3	"
6:00 am-7:00 am	0	1	"
7:00 am-8:00 am	1	3	"
8:00 am-9:00 am	2	8	"
9:00 am-10:00 am	2	11	"
10:00 am-11:00 am	4	12	"
11:00 am-12:00 pm	5	19	"
12:00 pm-1:00 pm	32	35	Verdict of Quader Mollah, Rage against AL and ICT
1:00 pm-2:00 pm	47	59	Disappointment, Rage, Call of action, Solidarity
2:00 pm-3:00 pm	42	56	Rage against AL and ICT
3:00 pm-4:00 pm	29	43	Disappointment, Rage
4:00 pm-5:00 pm	19	32	Shahbag Updates, live blogging
5:00 pm-6:00 pm	19	36	Disappointment
6:00 pm-7:00 pm	12	23	Updates from Shahbag

7:00 pm-8:00 pm	18	30	Updates from DU, Shahbag
8:00 pm-9:00 pm	18	32	Shahbag Update
9:00 pm-10:00 pm	24	34	Shahbag Update
10:00 pm-11:00 pm	13	42	Demand for Shahbag post make sticky
11:00 pm-11:59 pm	25	41	Updates from Shahbag
	333	587	

As can be gleaned from Table 3, the number of posts in Somewhereinblog during the first day (12:00 am-11:49 pm) of Shahbag movement was 587 and among those posts, 333 posts were about the ICT verdict on Quader Mollah. The number of posts is relatively higher for one day in the case of the somewhereinblog site, where usually the daily number of posts are between 300 to 400. During 12 pm to 1 pm, at the time of giving the verdict to Quader Mollah, the number of related posts started to increase. The content and topic of the blog posts started to change since then.

Regarding this increased engagement of the bloggers and intensified blogging activities during the time of verdict on Quader Mollah, Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana, again explained,

The number and frequency of posts depends on the current event and engagement of the bloggers with that issue. Generally, the contemporary issues have the best chance to create bloggers engagement. At the same time, important days, months, events in our history and culture also get attention from other bloggers. Intelligent bloggers know the timing of posting very well. They will write a very interesting article in accordance with certain events and occasions. As in the month of language movement in February, many bloggers will write posts about the history of the language movement, share personal experience, the story she/he heard from elders, what it means to her/him or to her/his family. At the same time, issues raised from the blogsites are also able to raise engagement of the bloggers, such as the issue of

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'violence against women.' Before the Shahbag movement started, 'violence against women' was one of the key engaging issues in somewhereinblog. If any post is from a popular blogger, the chances for engagement also increases. Popular bloggers who have already created his/her reputation over the years through online and offline activities have better chances to make other bloggers engaged in a post. In the case of the Shahbag movement, the engagement and digital activities have changed, and many connecting issues and digital activities came together. Through this process, the verdict of Quader Mollah became the precursor for the Shahbag movement. These articles and blog posts are very unique because they (bloggers) can write about almost any issues they like and they can get feedback instantly. At the same time, they can lead the readers to act and can start digital activism. (Personal communication, March 16, 2018, Dhaka)

4.1.6 Beyond BOAN's Facebook Page: The Multimodal Digital Localities of Shahbag

From online ethnographic observation of the Shahbag digital locality during the Shabag movement in 2013, it is evident that Shahbag related contents and activities in social media dispersed in different online platforms, contents from blogsites such as somewherein.net, amarblog.com, sachalayaton.com, muktomona.com, shared and re-posted in Facebook pages and groups such as BOAN, twitter accounts such as #shahbag, shahbag movement and so on. As Raychoudhury, Saxena, Chaudhary, and Mangla (2015) have showed through analysing the tweets (February 05 to May 08, 2013) related to theme of Shahbag movement, nearly 1 million tweets exchanged during the period. The top hashtags used in the Shahbag protests are #shahbag, #jamaat, #savebangladesh, #bangladesh, #shibir, #bangjamaat and so on. The distribution of tweeter users related to the theme of Shahbag movement across the world was in 35 countries such as India, USA, Japan, Qatar, Norway,

and so on. Among them, twitter users from Bangladesh ranked first (2102) and users from

Israel, Austria, Hungary combined (11) were the lowest. Chowdhury (2016), in exploring the

online activities of Shahbag movement in somewhereinblog.net, showed that the number of

posts during 5th February to 6th March 2013 on the theme of Shahbag was very high at 4,911

and the engagement of the bloggers regarding Shahbag movement can be inferred by the total

number of page views of 1,050,008 and a total number of comments of 63,136 (including re-

comments).
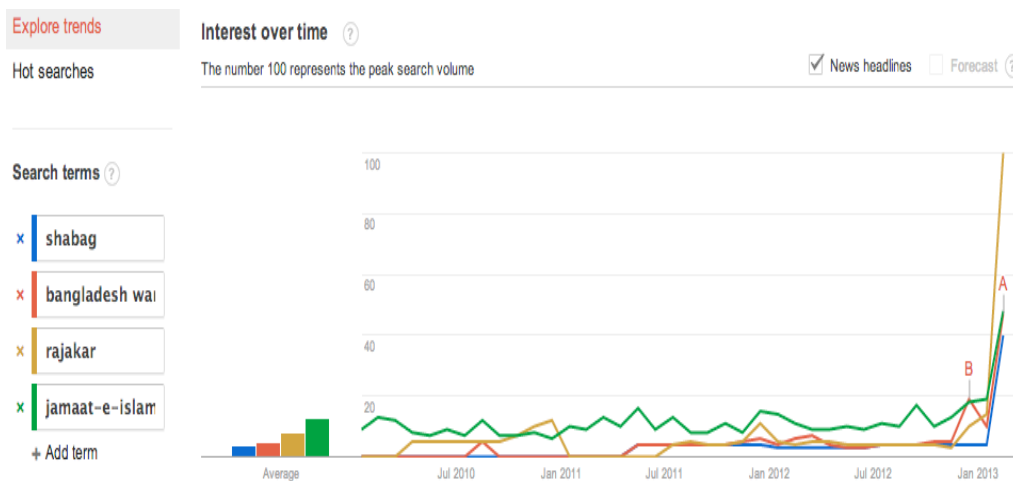
Figure 31. Google Trends about Shahbag, Bangladesh war crimes, Rajakar, Jamaat-e-islami from January 2010
to February 2013

Using the online trend activity software Google Trends[59], the online activity about

Shahbag movement (the keywords shahbag, Bangladesh war criminal, rajakar, jamaat-e-

islami) in Bangladesh spiked during the time of the Shahbag movement. This happened due

to the increased online intensity the Shahbag movement was able to generate.

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[59] https://trends.google.com/trends/
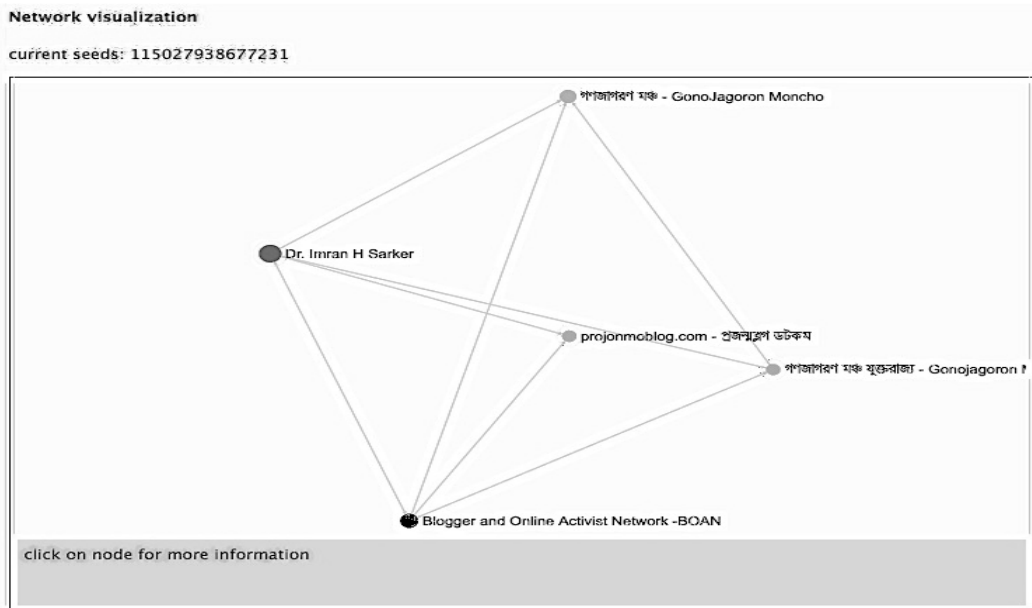
Figure 32. The multimodal network of BOAN in Facebook, among different digital protest sites in the digital localities of Shahbag.

Using the open source network software Netvizz[60] in analysing the network connection of the Facebook page of BOAN[61], it is revealed that it is multimodal within the digital locality of Facebook. The BOAN Facebook page[62] and its digital connectivity is strongly linked with that of Shahbag activist, BOAN organiser, core member of Gonojagoron Moncho, Imran H. Sarker[63], UK based pro-Shahbag digital Facebook page Gonojagoron Moncho UK[64] and Projonmo Blog[65]. It can be argued that the multimodal connection is furthering the identity of the connected digital localities as the pro-Shahbag digital entity and credible source of information, digital places for the pro-Shahbag audience.

The digital protest did not remain in the lone digital locality of BOAN but also spread across other digital localities. The online and offline ethnographic observation also revealed that social media activity regarding Shahbag movement did not remain in the geographical

[60] https://tools.digitalmethods.net/netvizz/facebook/netvizz/index.php?module=search
[61] https://www.facebook.com/pg/boan.bd/about/?ref=page_internal
[62] https://www.facebook.com/pg/boan.bd/about/?ref=page_internal
[63] https://www.facebook.com/imranhsarker1971
[64]https://www.facebook.com/%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%A3%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%A3-%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%9E%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%9A-%E0%A6%AF%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9C%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF-Gonojagoron-Moncho-UK-170767136406849/
[65] https://www.facebook.com/projonmoblog/

Dhaka metropolis but also dispersed in many cities in Bangladesh, such as Chittagong, Sylhet, Dinajpur, Barisal and also many sub-urban areas.

এবার বরিশালের বন্ধুরা নিজ জায়গা থেকে প্রতিবাদের সময় আসল

লিখেছেন নষ্টছেলে তানিম, ০৬ ই ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০১৩ রাত ১০:১৬

প্রহসনের এই রায় মানি না, মানবো না...বরিশাল এর আমতলা মোড়ের বিজয় বিহঙ্গ হোক আমাদের বরিশালের শাহ্বাগ।

প্রহসনের রায় চাই না , চাই না সান্ত্বনার রায়, লক্ষ শহীদদের রক্তে বাংলার মাটি লাল সেই লালে রাজাকারের হাঁটার বেচে থাকার অধিকার নাই .

যারা বরিশাল আছেন আমাদের সাথে অংশ নিন প্রতিদিন সন্ধ্যা ৬ টায় ।

Click This Link

যুদ্ধ... বাকিটুকু পড়ুন

১৩ টি মন্তব্য   ৮৪ বার পঠিত   ৩
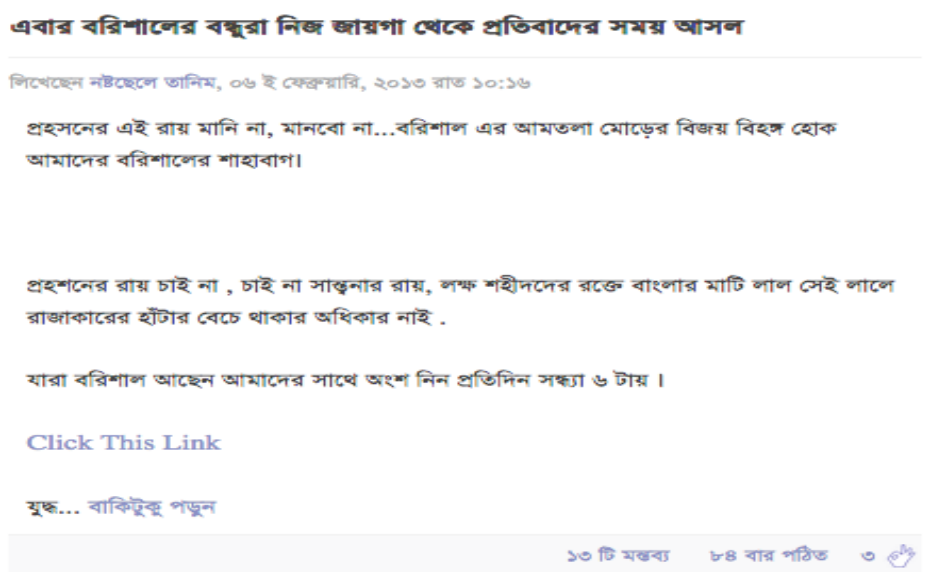
*Figure 33.*Protest calling of Shahbag from Barishal (southern city of Bangladesh)in somehwreinblog, 6th February 2013, 10:16 pm.

On 6th February 2013, the 2nd day of the protest, blogger Nosto Chele Tanim wrote in somewherein.com (Figure 33), "This is the time for protesting from Barisal." He also invited other bloggers to join him in street protests against war criminals in Barisal (which is a major town in south central part of Bangladesh), thus mimicking the Shahbag movement which started in Dhaka. This indicates the transformativity of social media platforms into digital and physical localities. On one hand, the intensity of the Shahbag movement expanded the local and global digital sociality; on the other hand, it transformed into physical socialities in other districts and countries.

4.2 Politics of The Non-Partisan

There have been many uprisings in Bangladesh's history: from the language movement of 1952, mass movement for autonomy in 1969, armed struggle for liberation in 1971, and civil-political struggle for democracy in 1990s. Uprisings in history show how

people of Bangladesh are deeply political. Yet, Bangladeshis scorn politics because they find it murky and exclusive. Through the development of Bangladeshi mainstream politics, partisanship has infiltrated all walks of life. From student politics to government employees' association, mainstream media to professional journalism, one can find bi-polar partisanship throbbing in every sector of the country (Siddiqi, 2011). Shahbag started off as a non-partisan protest challenging the verdict on Quader Mollah handed down by the ICT. The protesters called themselves Shahadharon Jonogon (the ordinary people). As one of the Shahbag participants related,

> I have not participated in any protest before. I do not have any affiliation with any party, Al, BNP or any youth activism. I have never participated in student's politics either. I do not have any political connection. But I feel proud to be part of Shahbag, I love this atmosphere, I feel I belong here. I want justice, I want that war criminal to get maximum punishment, joy Shahbag. (Corporate employee, 8th February 2013, Shahbag, Dhaka)

Protesters were assuming an entente between the ruling party Al and JIB, despite the manifesto of Al claiming "bringing war criminals to justice" as a key point during the 2008 general election. For decades, people of Bangladesh have been demanding a fair trial for the 1971 war crimes (as discussed in Chapter 2). However, recent trials clearly showed the Al tendency to retain power through backdoor politics through instances of a tribunal falling far below international standards, jury lacking qualifications and most reputed local lawyers not participating. A 5th Amendment to ICT Act 1973 was made to avoid retrial although the Act originally permitted citizens to appeal the outcome of any war crimes retrial. One of the core Shahbag activists, Parvez Alam, a senior blogger from somewhereinblog and founding member of BOANI explained,

I was waiting for the execution of Quader Mollah. The long wait is coming to an end. I have wanted justice for poet Meherunnesa (a promising poet brutally killed by Quader Mollah in 1971) since my school life. I have been participating in the movement of the punishment of war criminals. But I have always had some confusion about Awami league owing to their compromising politics for power. Jahanara Imam, the mother of freedom fighter Rumi and leader of Bringing War Criminals to Justice movement in 1990s, was once asked her thoughts on whether or not Awami league will proceed with the trial of war criminals if they come to power. She replied that they will not do so if we do not have any movement. This is why I was not in support of the idea of depending solely on Awami Leauge. I have decided to take the role of being a strong critic of Awami league and to always create pressure on them through blogging or in the streets/highway. (Online, Personal communication, March 20, 2017, Dhaka)

Historically the Al-JIB alliance has frequently emerged in Bangladesh's political history. In 1986, Al first refused to participate in elections under martial law, though later in an effort to secure the position as opposition leader over BNP, Al joined hands with JIB. In the mid-1990s, when secular political figures and intellectuals created Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee, (Committee to exterminate the Killers and Collaborators of 1971), Al once again allied with JIB in 1994 in an effort to win the election and, upon taking office, labelled the committees' activities as unlawful. Such backdoor politics is not uncommon behaviour for either Al or BNP.

The Shahbag movement was initiated by bloggers and online activists who were mostly unknown to the general public. BOAN is a non-partisan network that emerged

through its digital activism, primarily for its pro-liberation war online forum where many non-partisan bloggers and online activists participate with their own take on the liberation war, role of JIB, contemporary politics. One of the key organisers of the Shahbag movement is Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, a founding member of BOANI and BOAN and core member of Gonojagoron Moncho. He explained,

> There are many types of bloggers in the network of BOAN. They have their own political views but none stronger than the idea of non-partisan digital activism in the blogosphere. Because over the years, it was proven that if we want to do something, we have to leave our political ideology behind. With only one exception, digital activists in Bangla blogosphere never collaborated with Jamaat (JIB). Anti-liberation war forces were always excluded in digital activism. On 5th February (2013), we called an event to protest against the verdict by ICT. A proven mass murderer and rapist should not get away through backdoor politics. This time, Al was acting like anti-liberation war forces, so we stood against Al as well. But we never assumed it would be this big, we all were surprised. (Personal Communication, July 6, 2014)

The spontaneity of mass participation in the Shahbag movement was unprecedented. Traditionally in Bangladesh, when any political party arranges a rally or demonstration, they plan many days or months ahead. Party members and local politicians are informed and assigned to several tasks in arranging the rally. The publicity of the rally undergoes several stages; posters, festoons, media coverage are arranged by the party members. Party fund or donation by the party members are used to manage the cost. In many cases, especially in Bangladeshi politics, people are hired to attend events to show the world that many people have participated in the rally or mass gathering. On the contrary, protest information was

solely distributed through social media and mobile networks in the case of the Shahbag movement. Ibrahim Khalil Sobak narrated about the beginning of the protest.

I was in my office. My company is an IT (information and technology) company, they sell recorded data from television and other media to other company. While I was working, I saw the news about Quader Mollah on television. The verdict of the ICT trial has been a subject of interest to all of us. Especially after the 'skype controversy'[66]. I was shocked and immediately posted a Facebook status saying that I do not agree with this verdict, shame on Al and ICT. Within half an hour, I saw Facebook and blogs flooded with posts against this verdict. I called Imran (spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho, a platform born from the Shahbag movement) and Badhon (one of the leaders of the organisers of Shahbag movement) and planned to create an event on Facebook to show our disagreement and make a human chain. Since I was in the office, I had to ask my boss that I will go out early. He permitted me. (Online, Personal communication, July 27, 2015, Japan)

The cost for the initial human chain was only the price of the banner which was designed and printed by Shahbag activists.

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[66] The 2012 ICT Skype controversy involved the leaking of Skype conversations and emails between Mohammed Nizamul Huq, head judge and chairman of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal, and Ahmed Ziauddin, a Bangladeshi lawyer based in Brussels.

Figure 34. The first human chain organised by BOAN. The text of the banner states: "Demanding for cancellation of the verdict of life imprisonment of Razakar Quader Mollah and to ensure death by hanging. Unrest demonstration and rally. Blogger and Online Activist Network."

To receive media coverage for the protest rally from mainstream broadcast media, activists contacted their peer group. At the same time, they also invited them to join in the street protest. Ibrahim Khalil Sobak explained the process,

> We have already contacted our journalist friends and friends in the broadcast media to cover our event. We contacted them through Facebook, blogs and mostly by mobile phone. I have a close friend working in Channel I (TV channel); I told him to start a scroll on TV saying, "Bloggers and online activists are protesting at Shahbag." So he did. Even before I could get to Shahbag, the scroll was already on air. On Facebook, normally many people would say they would be coming to an event but finally, very few show up. But on 5th February 2013, when we reached the front of the national museum, the number was pretty high. Around 150 people were there, bloggers and online activists, Facebook friends, blog friends, students, journalists, writers, student leaders, activists, singers – all of them were there. However, we

never thought that the protest will be this big. The cause of the protest may be the reason. (Online, Personal communication, July 27, 2015, Japan).

Figure 35. Protesters are writing slogans on paper using their own resources on the streets of Shahbag on 5th February 2013.

Unlike in a traditional political system, there was no hierarchy in the spontaneous movement. A horizontal space was created so that anyone can join. The first instance was the merging of the different groups into the street protest.

Baki Billah (aged 40) was a leader of the student wing of CPB (communist party of Bangladesh), studying in Dhaka University and comes from a suburban middle-class family (living in the southern district Satkhira). He not only had experience in student politics but also in digital activism as a senior blogger in somewhereinblog. He is a Shahbag activist, member of BOANI, and core member of Gonojagoron Moncho. He narrated his experience.

I was busy with the printing press at that time you (the author) called me. We were planning to organize a rally in front of the press club the next day. Parvez (a blogger, online activist, and writer) already made an event on Facebook. But when you informed me about the mass gathering in front of the museum, I called him to join you guys. (Personal communication, March 13, 2017, Dhaka)

In the streets of Shahbag, members of BOANI joined in the protest organised by BOAN.

Like BOANI, student organisations operating in the University of Dhaka also started to join in the protest and later merged with the protest group demanding capital punishment for Quader Mollah. The innovative and immediate protest programme had been made on the ground. Protest organisers were discussing with other participants what would be the next move, after the human chain. Then, protesters decided to go for a protest rally. Shahbag protest organiser Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, recalling the situation on the street on 5th February 2013, explained,

> The human chain was much bigger than we have expected. When the crowd began to soar, we were thinking what to do next. Should we finish the programme after the human chain? Imran was going to other offline activists to get suggestions and understand their views. One of them, a famous one, you will know if I say his name; he suggested to call off the protest and end it there. However, Badhon was determined, we all were so angry that we went for a protest rally. That was one of the biggest in Shahbag. The rally was moving towards the Shahbag intersection. Usually what we do is, we turn right and move towards the sculpture of Raju at TSC and come back. This time, we decided to do something completely new, no one has ever done before – we decided to occupy Shahbag intersection. And that was it. Shahbag was ours now. Except for the protesters, everybody was shocked but we did occupy the Shahbag intersection to send a strong message to government about the ICT trial. (Personal communication, February 6, 2014)

Figure 36. BOAN's call for action on Facebook translated into a street protest, 5th February 2013.

Though bloggers and online activists were leading the protest, the Shahbag movement was, from the first day, based on plural participation. From participant observation on the street of Shahbag on 5th February 2013, it was clear that after occupying the Shahbag intersection, the participation of the general people started to rise. Protest organisers had to consider the next best move because it was going to be dark soon so they discussed and made a decision. Depicting those unfolding moments of the Shahbag movement, BOAN and Shahbag movement organiser, and spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho, Imran H. Sarker said,

It was going to be evening soon, we bought candles from the nearby shop. The whole area was surrounded by candle lights. Meanwhile, drums came, we don't know from where these came. Slogans roaring in the air. Nobody had experience to give slogans before. The general people were giving slogans; slogans came spontaneously. That was how the movement continued; people started coming even at night. We did

not think that people will stay there through the night. None of us had had this experience. The bloggers who were coordinating the movement were all non-partisan. We had no clear understanding of what to do. We were discussing whether to stay at night or not. There were different opinions regarding staying at night; some were saying stay at night, some said to come again in the morning. The comrades were giving their opinions like this. In this situation, we decided to stay because many people actually came prepared to stay through the night. So, none of us left. Lots of people stayed at night. We did not expect this much. (Personal Communication, February 6, 2014)

Figure 37. Bloggers and online activists occupied the Shahbag intersection, 5th February 2013.

As observed on the street of Shahbag on 5th February 2013 (Figure 37), the sit-in protest continued through the night and by daytime, people had started to pour in by the thousands. A few thousand people were in Shahbag at 10 am of 6th February 2013, the second day of the movement. People were coming from everywhere. Many other organizations, who

could not come on the first day, started to arrive. Then, with a little effort made by the BOAN members, the cultural groups who joined were allowed to perform one after another. Many people came and started sitting in different places outside the centre of the occupied Shahbag.

UP: Night 5th February 2013.
Down: Night 8th February 2013.

UP: Morning 5th February 2013.
Down: Afternoon 8th February 2013.

Figure 38. Comparative photos showing the increment in participation of Shahbag protesters from 5th to 8th February 2013.

One of the major achievements, during the Shahbag movement, is the assembly of first-time protesters who made up the great majority of the demonstrators. The Shahbag protesters could avoid becoming marginalized during this period owing to the participation of the masses within the demonstrations and the coming together of the already organized student, political and cultural groups. People from all walks of life – corporate, NGO, street vendors, rickshaw pullers, street children, small shop owners, doctors, university teachers – joined this horizontal protest demonstration. Creating and shouting their own slogans, echoing the main demand, and adding up their own version of demands. Imran explained,

We, the BOAN members, decided that we will not try to control it in any way.

As it is a mass movement, we will not interfere in other's way of doing here. Rather,

we tried to ask them if they are all right, which organization they are, or their whereabouts but we never tried to guide them. In that way, it continued. The media started asking about the next program. Since we did not have the experience of running such a big movement, we could not understand what the program would be. We took time to decide, what would be the primary program. I was discussing with the fellow fighters when I got the chance. Everyone was giving his own opinion. Finally, since the media was asking repeatedly, we made a press meeting and declared a great gathering on 8th February. (Personal Communication, February 6, 2014)

শাহবাগ ঘোষণা'র খসড়া।। রেজা ঘটক

লিখেছেন রেজা ঘটক, ০৬ ই ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০১৩ বিকাল ৫:৫১

১৯৭১ সালে মানবতা বিরোধী অপরাধের সঙ্গে যুক্ত পাকিস্তানের চিহ্নিত দোসর রাজাকার, আলবদর, আলসামস জামাত কসাইদের, আন্তর্জাতিক অপরাধ ট্রাইব্যুনালে বিচারপ্রক্রিয়া একটি সুনির্দিষ্ট সময় সীমার মধ্যে শেষ করার জন্যে, ঢাকার শাহবাগ চত্বরে সর্বস্তরের মানুষের যে আন্দোলন শুরু হয়েছে তার সঙ্গে আমি সম্পূর্ণ সংহতি প্রকাশ করছি। যদিও এই আন্দোলনের সূচনা ঘটল চিহ্নিত মানবতা... বাকিটুকু পড়ুন

১০ টি মন্তব্য   ২৮২ বার পঠিত   ৫

Figure 39. Blogger posting about mass participation and declaration of Shahbag in somehwreinblog, 6th February 2013.

At its peak, the Shahbag movement drew an estimated 100,000 people from diverse backgrounds, united for the very first time in years under the banner of Shadharon Jonogon (ordinary people). Shahbag protesters threw out political leaders such as Al general secretary and special aide to the Prime Minister, Al Presidium Member Sajeda Chowdhury who attempted to infiltrate the gathering. They were forced to leave, without speaking a word, by the protesters gathered at Shahbag square.

Initially, the Shahbag movement enjoyed mass support due its "non-partisan" and non-violent character. As Roy (2018) showed, most of the Shahbag participants had no political affiliation and the greatest strength of Shahbag was its support from the general public. The legitimacy of this movement was mainly dependent on its "non-partisan" character. However, as the movement evolved, it started to lose this "non-partisan" face and the demand of Shahbag rose from one to six. The movement which started with a single demand of "bringing war criminals to justice" and changes in the ICT Act later called for banning the politics of JIB and all business, social and cultural organizations of JIB. Hasan (2014) clearly noted, "for the people, when Shahbag was demanding justice for war criminals, it was not only meant for JIB leaders but also for all war criminals in all political parties including Al" (p. 74). As observed, during the development of the Shahbag movement from 8th to 18th February, it failed to continue its autonomy to its fullest, which was one of the main reasons why Shahbag lost its popular support. The case of "Martyr Rumi Squad"[67] is an essential inclusion in this regard. It shows plural participation and internal differences in the Shahbag movement. From the grand rally held 21st February 2013, the Gonojagoron Moncho put forwarded an ultimatum to the Al government to ban the Jamaat Shibir within the 26th March. However, the demand was not realised. From 26th March, seven young activists started the incessant hunger strike to realise the demand. As discussed in Chapter two, Rumi was the young freedom fighter and son of Jahanara Imam, who started the civil movement against war criminals in 1990s (Welle, 2013). These seven youngsters were not the blogger and online activists, unlike Gonojagoron Moncho they felt the need to put forward much stronger protest activities Adhikari (2013). Many people and organisations showed solidarity from the country also from abroad (Pantharahmanrez, 2013).

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[67] https://www.facebook.com/shaheed.rumi.squad

Their effort created much debate; some argued that if their activities are in contradiction to that of Gonojagoron Moncho. Some said it is parallel to the spirit of Shahbag. Some argued that this is the response to the compromising leadership of Gonojagoron Moncho (Shaherin, 2013). The observation of Ritu (2013) is thus crucial, when she argued the activities of Rumi Squad is vital because it gave the movement a new language, a semantic of incessant hunger strike, a much stronger resistance outside of the realm of Gonojagoron Moncho although coherent to the spirit of Shahbag.

The process of losing the strength of the movement continued because, through time, the leadership of Shahbag started to be more influenced by the Al government. Eventually, the mass support realised that "Shahbag" was no more the movement of the people but influenced by Al government. The government might be using it for their benefit to tame political opposition and to win the 2014 general election. Which the Al government did win and where the main political opposition BNP (in alliance with JIB) did not participate.

One of the BOAN members and Shahbag activists, teacher by profession and coming from an urban middle class Muslim family who is in exile in a foreign country and do not want to reveal his identity explained, "we tried hard to remain apolitical, but the pressure was so high (indicating government, other political party, law enforcement and so on) that we had to negotiate from time to time, in some cases we win and in some cases they win. Nonetheless, we have managed to fulfil our key demand, bringing war criminals to justice, not all but most of them" (Online, Personal communication, January 7, 2019, Japan).

It was also observed during 2013 to 2018 in the political landscape of Bangladesh, even after the Shahbag movement, that the appeal of the "non-partisan" image continues, as can be seen in the rise of HI, which is a "non-partisan" Islamic force as a counter discourse of Shahbag. Interestingly, since 2013, all the popular social movements in Bangladesh, such as road safety movement (2018) and quota movement (2016), happen to be "non-partisan."

4.3 Becoming "Shahbagi", Between Collective Identity and Connective Action

As abovementioned, the rise of the Shahbag movement and its mass participation can be credited to its "non-partisan" character. This is true despite the fact that, from the very beginning, members of traditional political parties such as the student wing of Al, BNP and old leftist groups such as CPB were present at Shahbag and coordinating with BOAN members. The massive presence of the self-convened and networked protesters slowly altered the makeup of the protests and prevented the Shahbag protests from being marginalised or contained within a narrowly-ranged activist group.

One of the organisers of the Shahbag movement, Maruf Rosul who is also a core member of BOAN and Gonojagoron Moncho, narrated,

> In the morning of 6th February, people in general began to join in the Shahbag protest in waves. From the night of 5th February, the roads were closed from public transportation; commuter buses changed their routes. Police cordoned off the area but did not dare to infiltrate. The circle of people was growing by the minute and police was not in any position to control the mass anymore. People were bringing their homemade festoons, banners, placards. Many organizations started to join in the protest and showed solidarity. Compared to the participating masses, the number of organisers were very few. We were only trying to facilitate the movement. Following the initial pattern of street protests, new protesters were coming with their protests, making a room for themselves in the sea of people, making a human circle and starting to chant "hang now, hang now," roaring the slogans. People were the leaders (*Jonotai Neta*). We did not want to interrupt the process but felt the need to create some sort of organisation. Media was asking for interviews, they wanted to know who

we are, what we want. We wanted to send a clear message to the people, that we are
not political, we have no benefit in this, we are here for justice. (Online, Personal
communication, January 23, 2017, Dhaka)

Figure 40. Occupied Shahbag by mass participation on 8th February 2013. Shahbag protester wrote in his back
"We will not leave the street".

Figure 41. Shahbag supporters showing solidarity by Shahbag procession, banners, placards and festoons, 7th
February 2013 in Shahbag.

Therefore, collective identity, in the sense of a shared ideology, defining the political goal and group interest in order to distinguish the Shahbag protesters from the mass support did not exist, especially when the protesters were claiming capital punishment for the war criminal. As Bennett and Segerberg (2012) have argued with regard to the logic of mass participation, people may still join an action in large numbers even if the identity reference is derived from an inclusive and diverse large-scale personal expression rather than from a common group or ideological identification. One of the street participants in Shahbag explained, "I have been involved in BNP (JIB alliance) politics for a long time but today I am a Shahbagi, I want justice for the war criminals, even if he belongs to BNP" (Businessman, 8th February, 2013, Shahbag, Dhaka).

The Shahbag movement showed an autonomist character which is exemplary in recent social media movements. These recent social media mediated movements do not necessarily present a representational "we" (Arda, 2015) but an identity that is always in the making, fluid, open and malleable. As observed in the Shahbag movement, people from diverse backgrounds participated in the movement adhering to a temporal identity as "*Shahbagi*." Shahbagi meant many things. For some, those who support the cause can be called Shahbagi; those who went to Shahbag protest ground can be called Shahbagi; and those who only showed solidarity in the digital locality can still be called Shahbagi.

Figure 42. Diaspora Bengali community, from Chicago, US showing solidarity with Shahbag movement. Facebook, 12th February 2013.

The identity and meaning of Shahbagi is diverse, as diverse as the participants of the movement in both digital and physical localities. Social media helped in expanding this identity beyond the physical protest ground and transcending boundaries. At the same time, this identity helped eased pre-existing frictions or indifference among bloggers and online activists. Since 2008, one of the oldest and lingering disputes between two blog sites, amarblog and somewhereinblog, was on the issue of pro and anti-liberation war blogging. However, during the Shahbag movement, these two blogger and online activist groups merged and celebrated the Shahbagi identity. Since the common call by BOAN spread through social media, everyone who was able to access the internet shared the anger and found justification for the call.

Thus, Shahbag protesters were not only a crowd of individuals but people from diverse backgrounds affected by a common call. When the traditional political system and physical spaces were repressed, digital locality created the possibility of encounter. Melucci (1996) understanding of processual collective identity seems applicable, such that when the intensity generated in social media translated into a physical locality, it reenergised the process of expanding collective identity. While protesters were posting about their experience in the physical locality of Shahbag into the digital locality, it created a further wave of

interaction and engagement in which videos and photos and minute-by-minute description added value and authentication for the broader social media audience. Users in the digital locality started to share news and information voluntarily about the movement, such that this spontaneous collectivity created a connectivity which transcended boundaries from physical to digital locality. During the movement, in the street of Shahbag, it was observed that people were greeting each other in the physical protest sites saying the likes of *"I am here because I saw your post in Facebook. I like your posts and comments; I am a big fan. I have followed you for long, but never had the chance to meet you in person. This movement made this possible. Brother, I am a Shahbagi, too."*

Figure 43. In the street of Shahbag, blogger and online activist meeting with Shahbag supporters, 8th February 2013.

In the digital protest sites, messages were also being posted online about the spirit of transcending boundaries, such as one written by Shama on 05 February, 2013 at 11:56 pm. "We are with all of you the whole night! Not agree with this verdict. I feel like going to

Shahbag badly. Who are you in Shahbag now, want to tell you that we are with you. The whole night…we are all with you."

The Shahbag activists shared a common overwhelming experience. As blogger Parvez Alam described, "I think I have met so many people unknowns to me during this movement than I have ever had in my whole life. People from other districts, even neighbouring countries, showed up at the protest and suddenly greeted "hello." Some I can remember from the blogs; others, I have no idea. In social media, I got so many calls, messages and comments, I stopped counting. It was overwhelming." (Online Personal communication, January 12, 2019, Japan)

In many cases, it also happened that Shahbag activists were calling for support on Facebook, and supporters responded quickly. One such experience was shared by a Shahbag activist and BOAN member Mahmudul Haq Munshi (Badhon).

In the middle of the movement, one of our fellow activists got very sick. He fainted in the street, so we asked for immediate medical help. Another protester who is a doctor checked him on the ground and diagnosed that he is suffering from anemia. As his blood type was rare, we posted on Facebook seeking help. Within hours, a nearby hospital was filled with willing blood donors. This kind of activity and camaraderie, I have never experienced in my life. (Online, Personal communication, September 21, 2017, Japan).

Figure 44. Free medical support in the street of Shahbag.

The digital sociality that helped in generating the Shahbag movement in the physical locality produced connective action not only in the digital locality but also in the physical locality of the Shahbag square. The collective identity as Shahbagi thus represented a sense of belonging although it was fluid and contextual. For the general Shahbag protesters and supporters who helped to generate autonomous resistance socialities, on the other hand, it also produced loosely wavered ties. As Postill (2008) has argued, this sense of fellowship is contextual and case specific.

As the movement evolved with killing of bloggers, bloggers being accused of blasphemous writing, and allegations involving AI, the initial mass support towards Shahbag started to fade. The contextual fellowship became loosened. One of the Shahbag protesters explained, "I went to Shahbag because I felt what they were doing was right; we needed to bring the war criminals to justice. However, later when I saw AI people were at the Gonojagoron Moncho, they seemed biased. Their ultra-secularist demands appeared unjust. So I stopped going there. I was not a Shahbagi anymore." (University student, February 23, Dhaka).

4.4 The Epicentre of Resistance Sociality in Physical Locality: Frontline Activism of Gonojagoron Moncho

BOAN's resistance sociality translated into physical resistance at Shahbag and through the night sin-in protest, people from all walks of life started to pour into the Shahbag intersection to join the protest. By then, broadcast media started a live telecast update of the protest. As earlier mentioned, BOAN members who initiated the movement admitted not having any experience in organising any protest of this scale. The physical resistance at Shahbag on 5th February night was mostly covered by bloggers and online activists along with their close networks, and the next day, the sit-in protest began to gain momentum with the participation of some noted non-political personalities. People and students from extended networks of the initial participants started to gather at the venue.

Figure 45. People gathering in Shahbag 6th February 2013.

On the second day, (6th February) a general strike was called by JIB, but it did not stop the protestors gathered in Shahbag. As one of the participants explained, "Today, Jamaat called a general strike to save razakars, that is why I came here, I want to show them we are not afraid, we will bring war criminals to justice" (University Student, 6th February 2013).

Participating in the Shahbag protest became the mode of resistance against war criminals and whoever (JIB) was trying to save them.

From participant observation on 6th February 2013 in Shahbag, it was also detected that the surface of the road of Shahbag to TSC (teacher's student centre of Dhaka University) was painted; a symbolic trial was staged by hanging a dummy of Quader Mollah. A snake-shaped wooden statue of Golam Azam (another war criminal and leader of JIB), considered the mastermind of war crimes, was placed at the square. By the evening, even more people, including female and children stepped in, when the strike was over. The protest venue got a new look with thousands of candle lights and torches lit all around.

Figure 46. A symbolic trial stage in the physical locality of Shahbag, 6th February 2013.

People from all walks of life were seen expressing their solidarity with the movement. On 6th February 2013, during the participant observation at the Shahbag square from morning to night, talks among enthusiastic Shahbag protesters and activists in the street were prevalent with touching stories like "rickshaw-pullers carried activists to the venue for free;" "beggars spending their whole day income to buy food for the activists;" and "grassroots level candle-light retailers willing to sell their entire stock at half-price." The protest spread across other

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major cities in Bangladesh.

It was also observed that, during 6th-7th February 2013, members of different political organisations, especially student leaders of Al wanted to push in and capture the protest leadership, and tried to brand the protest as one of Al against JIB. From the experience during that billowy time, negotiating with Al members, the Shahbag movement organiser and BOAN member, Mahmudul Haq Munshi explained,

It is a common practice in our political culture for a popular movement to be snatched away by others. Experienced political parties are very good at this. We wanted this movement to remain a people's movement, not a political movement. We wanted people's support to continue and the only way was to remain non-partisan. We resisted the political infiltration as much as we can. However, we also needed the support of the student leaders of political organisations to remain non-violent. So, when media was asking who are the bloggers, why we have started the movement, we were very strict and clear about it. This is one of the main reasons we felt the need for creating a platform, a central body to convey our message. (Online, Personal communication, December 18, 2018, Japan)

Figure 47. Blogger and online activists discussing about next steps in the movement,8th February 2013.

Regarding the issue of creating BOAN's own identity as a protest entity in the midst of political pressure by Al, BOAN members made yellow scarves and wore it at the Shahbag square on 6th-7th February 2013 in order to be identified as the organisers. That time, the yellow scarf was distributed very carefully and selectively by the BOAN members. In many cases, it also happened that some participants were claiming they are part of Blogger and Online Activist although in reality they were not. Some of them were giving interviews in traditional media, some were explaining what the next protest programme was, and so on. While the horizontal and heterogeneous nature of the movement enabled mass participation, it had also created confusion. Hence, a vital question was raised: who is the leader of the movement?

Figure 48. BOAN members wearing yellow scarf to be identified as organisers of Shahbag movement, 8th February 2013.

To become visible, and to be established as Shahbag movement organisers, BOAN arranged for an open top truck at the venue to convey their message to the masses. Access to this platform was restricted strictly for BOAN members, known activists and fellow protesters. Loud speakers and microphones were set across the street.

On the fourth day of the protest, on 8th February 2013, a grand rally was called. More and more people started to gather at the venue. The crowd overflowed unto the nearby areas

of the Shahbag square. Rooftops of the surrounding buildings were populated with tenants. About 300 reporters from local and international media houses were present along with their equipment. Noted personalities from all arena including politicians (except from JIB and its allies), teachers, freedom fighters and media personalities expressed solidarity with the movement and delivered speeches on stage.

Figure 49. The physical resistance platform Gonojagoron Moncho, makeshift on an open truck, in the 8th February 2013.

Thus, the Gonojagoron Moncho, the central platform of Shahbag protesters was created on 8th February, 2013. By this time, Shahbag became a mass movement spreading across the country and Bangladeshi diaspora. Members of bloggers and online activists and also representatives of student and cultural organizations who supported the Shahbag movement from the beginning created this platform. It was not a formal (registered) organization as such, like a political party or a cultural organization, but it remained the central platform of Shahbag.

It was the combined decision of BOAN and other student organizations that they will not have one leader or group of leaders. Rather they have decided that Imran will be the spokesperson on their behalf. He was selected as a spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho. Till today, he is recognized as the spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho. Later, on many occasions, he was considered the "leader" of Gonojagoron Moncho by media but his identity as a spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho was sustained.

Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, a Gonojagoron Moncho member, shared his view about Imran H. Sharker in an interview as expressed below.

> Imran was in the forefront of the movement from the very beginning. Though he was not a renowned blogger or activist before the movement, he showed maturity and guts. He used his experience from previous protests, like how he handled police, his connection to political leaders, and most of all his ability to listen to others and different views. At the same time, his past experience in Al student politics also helped us sustain this movement under tremendous pressure. If he was only identified with Al student politics, then we surely would have lost mass support; and if he was only a blogger and online activist, than we could not have sustained the movement. I would say he was a unique combination of an organic leadership and an organiser who had experience in student politics. Most of all, he wanted to be the leader." (Online Personal communication, September 23, 2018)

Figure 50. Arif Jebtik's post on Facebook, 11th February 2013.

Arif Jebtik, a *Gonojagoron Moncho* and *BOAN* member *and* a *Shahbag activist*, also *shared his view on decision making* on a *Facebook* post on *11th February 2013.* In one event during the Shahbag movement, when asked whether Imran was pious or not, Arif Jebtik wrote that the decision-making group consisted of representatives from all political parties except Shibir and NSD and that the decision-making process was inclusive. He also added,

> What are the specific allegations against Imran? He has many *pajama panjabi* (traditional clothes), what else? Imran remained as a spokesperson from the beginning. All student and cultural organizations selected him as a spokesperson. He has many qualities and also many limitations. He is not a veteran politician, but he is learning by negotiating through the obstacles. But it is also true that he sticks to it (the Shahbag movement) with sheer determination and is involved with full determination.

Decision making in Gonojagoron Moncho was inclusive, with representatives of different organizations collectively making decisions and the day to day plan of action of the Moncho. Though inclusive in decision making, there are many instances of conflict among the organizers of the Gonojagoron Moncho. The role of Imran H. Sarker did not remain only as a spokesperson but rather, he also became the organizer and decision maker in Gonojagoron Moncho and in the Shahbag movement. During the movement, it was observed through participant observation that many instances of attempting to influence Imran H. Sarker and the Moncho were made by political leaders (including leaders of political party,

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ministers of the government and many more). Gonojagoron Moncho member Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, elaborated about this matter by saying,

> Through the development of the movement, Gonojagoron Moncho became the central platform for decision-making and organizing day to day actions to advance the demands of the movement. However, Shahbag was very dynamic that it had to adapt with the situation every moment. What would be the next step, how to keep people engaged in the movement, how to bear the cost, from whom should funds come from, whom should be avoided, who would be on stage, and so many things all together. So, the pressure from different stakeholders such as government, police, media personalities, political leaders was very high. Everybody wanted to influence the Moncho. One day, I overheard Imran was saying, "I cannot stop the movement. If I stop, people will kill me." Then Imran explained that it was a phone call from a very high official to call off the protest. He said, "No, I can't. It is the peoples' movement." (Online Personal communication, September 23, 2018)

Although fluid in nature, Moncho became the physical protest site at Shahbag, upholding the spirit to bring war criminals to justice. At the same time, it also became a replicable protest entity emerging in different cities in Bangladesh and abroad. The sporadic Gonojagoron Moncho was created in different Bangladeshi cities such as Barishal, Sylhet, Chittagong, Dinajpur, and foreign cosmopolitan cities such as London, New York and so on. Although all of them are connected thematically, the leadership and management of the protest programme was different from each other. Social media movements, like Shahbag, created socio temporal and spatio-temporal physical protest sites. As in the case of Sylhet Gonojagoron Moncho[68], organiser Mrinal Ghosh said,

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[68] https://shahbaghjournal.wordpress.com/2015/08/08/%e0%a6%af%e0%a7%87%e0%a6%ad%e0%a6%be%e0%a6%ac%e0%a7%87-%e0%a6%b8%e0%a6%82%e0%a6%97%e0%a6%a0%e0%a6%bf%e0%a6%a4-%e0%a6%b9%e0%a6%b2%e0%a7%8b-%e0%a6%b8%e0%a6%bf%e0%a6%b2%e0%a7%87%e0%a6%9f-%e0%a6%97/

In 2013, when we heard the news of Quader Mollah, we decided to call a protest. The progressive youth of Sylhet was fighting against fundamentalists who were against building a statue in Shahjalal University of Science and Technology. On the night of 5th February, we saw through online and regular TV that the bloggers and online activists were protesting. So, we created a Facebook event by ourselves and informed others. We also decided to inform university students. We arranged the protest in front of Sylhet Shaheed Minar and by the afternoon, the place was filled with protesters. We never met the organisers of Dhaka Gonojagoron Moncho before. Although, later at the Dhaka conference of Gonojagoron Moncho, we met in person. We followed the protest programme of Dhaka Gonojagoron Moncho and introduced our own protests programme. Many local political leaders wanted to influence us but we remained strong. All of the Gonojagoron Monchos were inspired by the Dhaka Moncho, but they were all spontaneous and independent.   (Online Personal Communication, August 12, 2015, Dhaka).

While Gonojagoron Moncho was inclusive in character, it specifically excluded JIB and BNP leaders from joining. In relation to how the process of exclusion and inclusion evolved in the movement, it can be said that the membership in the Gonojagoron Moncho platform was fluid and is open to either an organization or individual who is a supporter of the Shahbag movement. Although membership was fluid, being part of the decision-making group was not easy.

The core group of Gonojagoron Moncho consisted of 20-25 members. They included bloggers and online activists Imran H. Sarker (also spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho), Badhon, Arif Jebtik, Maruf Rasul, Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Omi Rahman Pial (also with political affiliation to Al and BCl), Baki Billah (also leader of a left-leaning student political

party CPB), and activists Lucky Akhter (also member CPB), H.M. Bodiujjaman Shohag (student leader BCl), and Nasir uddin yousuf bachchu (freedom fighter).

To be a part of the core group of Gonojagoron Moncho was difficult. Every supporter of Shahbag movement can be a Shahbag protester but not all can join the core group of Gonojagoron Moncho. At different phases of the development of the movement, the core membership of the Gonojagoron Moncho was also changed, but not radically. Some core member would remain. While every member of the Moncho is a member of the Shahbag movement, not every member of the Shahbag movement can be a member of the Moncho. Furthermore, not every member would be equally influential all the time.

In the physical sociality, the socio temporality of the Gonojagoron Moncho on one hand helps it operate but sometimes causes conflict. At one stage, the Gonojagoron Moncho was surrounded by Al leaders who restricted some other bloggers and online activist from joining, which created an internal dispute among the organisers. Later, in another event, when bloggers and online activists were outnumbered in the decision-making process, other bloggers and online activists would help them. As the movement evolved, there were many groups who participated in the movement but were not necessarily a part of Gonojagoron Moncho.

The space of Shahbag accommodated a diverse range of resistance socialities such as political organisations (e.g. *Bangladesh* Chhatra League, Bangladesh Students Union, the Socialist Students' Front, Bangladesh Chatrya Andolon), cultural organizations (e.g. UDICHI, Sommilito Sangskritik Jote SSJ), NGO (e.g. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad) business organisations (FBCCI, The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry), university-based student cultural organizations (e.g. Dhaka University film society, Jahanagirnagar University photographic society, Jahanagirnagar University alumni) and so

on. These sporadic resistance socialities in the physical locality were all part of the Shahbag

movement and also thematically inclined with Gonojagoron Moncho.

*Figure 51.*Gonojagoron Moncho Sylhet 7th February 2013.

*Figure 52.*Gonojagoron Moncho, London, UK (from Facebook, 5th February 2013).

*Figure 53.*Media cell of Gonojagoron Moncho 15th February 2013.
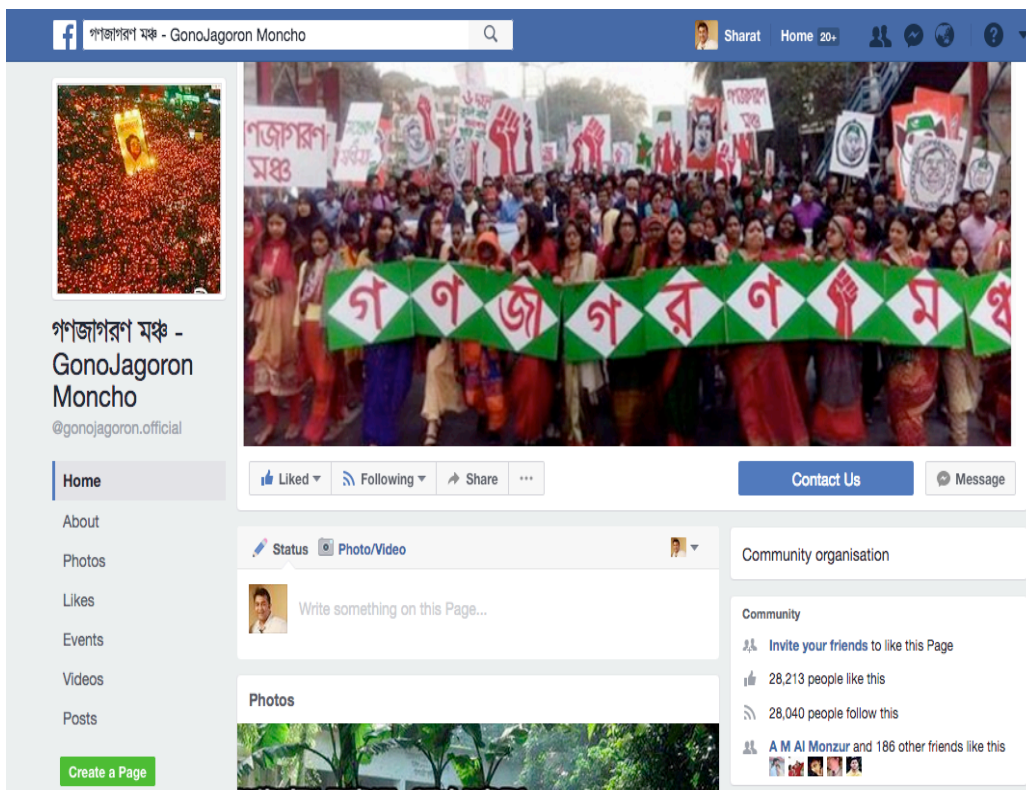
Figure 54. Gonojagoron Moncho page on Facebook.

Gonojagoron Moncho did not merely remain in the physical locality. As its Facebook page generated immense digital intensities, it made its presence in the digital locality. Like the physical platform in Shahbag, the page of Gonojagoron Moncho started to operate at the digital localities and was used as a credible source of protest information and upcoming events as well as a digital protest site.

4.5 Resistance Sociality, Transcending Temporality of Space: Prajanma Chattar, Chobir Hut

The spatio-temporality of the occupied space of Shahbag resulted in several changes. The mass gathering of the Shahbag movement ended on 5th March 2013. By then, the Shahbag movement had passed a one-month sit-in protest. Shahbag activists who occupied the area for one month cleared the area and life went on as usual at Shahbag intersection. The resistance sociality that started in the digital locality translated into the physical locality and had then transformed it.

Before the Shahbag movement, the venue was known as the Shahbag intersection. The name of the intersection has since been changed to "Prajanma Chattar." During Shahbag, activists were hailed as the "second generation of freedom fighters" by the Shahbag movement supporters because they tried to resolve the problem of the past (liberation war of 1971, bringing war criminals to justice). Bloggers and online activists were celebrated as "heroes" by the mainstream media. *Prajanma* in Bengali means generation. During the mass gathering on 8th February 2013, a declaration was made about the name of the movement Gonjagoron Moncho, by the spokesperson Imran H. Sarker. He also elaborated on the naming of Shahbag intersection and why it is different from other social media movements. On this matter, two women played important roles. One is Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, the widow of the freedom fighter Dr. Alim Chowdhury who in 1971 was killed by razakars, JIB's armed forces Al Badar. The other is Ferdousi Priovashini, a Bangladeshi sculptor, who publicly announced herself a rape victim during the liberation war. Imran H. Sarker further explained,

Many people started calling Shahbag as Shahbag Square copying Tahrir Square, so we thought we can give it a name. There were many differences between other movements like Tahrir Square or Wall Street when compared with the Shahbagh movement. Shahbag is more of an ideological movement. Different misconceptions were being made about the name and even foreign newspapers began explaining the movement in a different way. This why it was named Prajanma Chattar; the YPD blog name was also Prajanma Blog, so the name was taken from this. The official declaration of the name came in the gathering of 8th February. In the gathering, Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury proposed the movement be named "Ganajagoron Mancho" (mass uprising of the people against razakars and Al Badar) and Ferdousi Priovashini proposed the name of Shahbag to be "Prajanma Chattar" (new generation of freedom fighters). Everybody accepted that decision of name changing.

During and after the movement, the intersection of Shahbag from then on was recognised as Prajanma Chattar. The name of the anti-liberation war blogsite "prajanmablog" in the online space transcended into the physical space and through the Shahbag movement, changed the meaning in the physical space.

As discussed in Chapter 3, in the physical locality, blogger Adda served an important purpose: those they knew only by name or nick (bloggers ID), they could now meet in person. These were the events where bloggers meet, a blog rally where the online world and physical world meet and reconfigure the relationship between online and offline spaces.

In the dynamics of spatio-temporality between physical and digital worlds, few spaces in the physical locality played vital roles. From the participant observation in the digital and physical locality of the Shahbag movement in February 2013, it was observed that Chobir Hut (place where bloggers meet and blog Adda) in the physical locality played a crucial role

in organising the event. Chobir Hut is regarded as a crucial place for progressive activities. Over the years, Chobir Hut grew a reputation as an "autonomous" free space for debate and discussion. It is a physical place of Adda, incorporating radical and progressive views including criticism of the government and ultra-nationalistic narration, religious rhetoric, sexuality and so on. It was also growing as a physical place where bloggers were debating and discussing about sensitive issues unafraid and freely.

During the Shahbag movement, blog Adda of Chobir Hut was playing the role of protest programming, organising the demands and many more things. According to the "Affect Space" notion, where technology affects and hybrid urban space develops horizontal translocal connections (Kluitenberg, 2015), Chobir Hut emerged as a hybrid urban space. Not only was Shahbag linked with four major roads, it was surrounded by several gathering points, a physical transition point where digital sociality meets with the physical sociality. "The space was ready for a movement like this, involving participation of people from many walks rather than students only. The space itself ensured formation of a collective action and identity." (Khan, 2015: 79)

Later in 2013, the Shahbag protest platform Gonojagoron Moncho was demolished by police and Adda and gathering in Chobir Hut were also shut down upon government orders in 2014. The hybrid urban space that developed the horizontal translocal connections was also demolished.

Chobir Hut 2013

Chobir Hut 2014

Figure 55. Chobir Hut during and after Shahbag.

Shahbag 2013

Shahbag 2017

Figure 56. Shahbag during Shahbag movement and later.

In the digital locality though, digital protest sites which emerged during the Shahbag

movement such as the Facebook page of BOAN, Gonojagoron Moncho, Cyberwar@Shahbag

continued to operate.

4.5 Re-emergence of Resistance Sociality Through Connectivity: Extremist Attack on Professor Zafar Iqbal

The Shahbag movement began on 5th February 2013 but the mass gathering and street protests continued until 5th March 2013. The resistance platform and organising body that emerged from the Shahbag movement was Gonojagoron Moncho. Although the physical stage of Gonojagoron Moncho was later demolished, it continued to re-appear as a protest entity at Shahbag Prajanma Chattar and other parts of Dhaka city. The Facebook page of Gonojagoron Moncho operates as a digital protest entity.

The process of participation in any Gonojagoron Moncho protest remains fluid; anyone who wants to participate can easily join. At the same time, some known activists who made a name for themselves as Shahbag activists or Gonojagoron Moncho activists such as Baki billah, Arif Jebtik, Akram Hossain, Maruf Rasul and others keep re-appearing. By 2018, Imran H. Sarker, the spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho, had been established as the leader of the protest entity. In this five years, under the leadership of Imran, Gonojagoron Moncho participated in many protest activities, also showing solidarity with others.

*Figure 57.*Gonojagoron Moncho calling of protest events after Shahbag movement in Facebook 2013-2018.

On 3rd March 2018, a famous writer and pro-liberation war intellectual, Professor Muhammed Zafar Iqbal was attacked by a bearded youth, aged around 25. He was caught red-handed after he stabbed Professor Iqbal around 5:30 pm. Professor Iqbal was attending a function in Shahjalal University of *Science and Technology* (SUST). The university is situated in Sylhet, a divisional city 243 km. away from capital city Dhaka.

The news of this attack spread like wild fire in social media. Social media users were expressing their anxiety and rage against this attack, others were protesting about the attack in social media. The minute by minute updates of Professor Iqbal could also be found on social media.

Figure 58. Shared photo of professor Iqbal on the way to hospital, Facebook 3rd March 2018.

I am ashamed and speechless like all other fellows!! Strongly condemn this barbaric attack on our most respected Zafar Iqbal sir. May you get well soon sir. Hope the perpetrator will be brought to justice and will be given capital punishment. #Shame!

Figure 59. Expressed anger in Facebook from abroad 4th March 2018.

Figure 60. There was rampant protests and messages of condemnation on social media, locally and overseas, about the attack on Professor Iqbal. Shown here are Bangladeshi students of University of Washington staging a protest.

On 3rd March 2018, news of the attack on Professor Iqbal started to appear on social media. From online ethnographic observation, it was found that, immediately after the attack, almost everyone in the Bengali digital locality (Facebook) was posting, sharing, informing about this matter. Social media feeds started to grow by the seconds and different hashtags started to emerge, such as #Shameon the attack, #ZafarIqbal, #we are sorry ZafarIqbal #stopextremist, #we are sorry sir, and so on.

At the time of the attack, the researcher was interviewing Baki Billah. Baki Billah's first reaction was full of shock, "Is it true? Is it really true?" (Personal communication, March 3, 2018, Dhaka). As we were in the middle of the research interview, he also informed me about the matter. Within few minutes, he started to contact fellow protesters whom he knew from the Shahbag movement and previous protest experience. He also posted consecutive Facebook statuses condemning the attack.
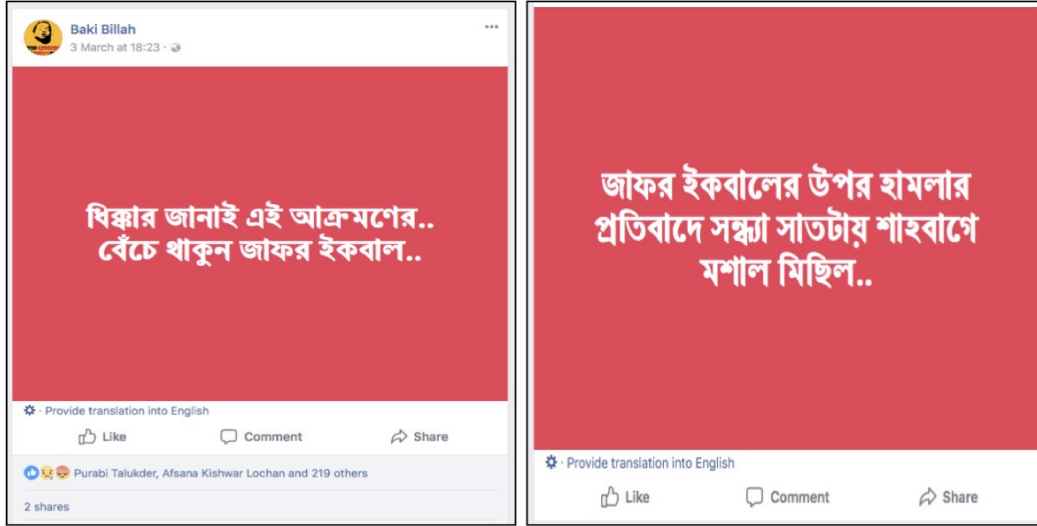
Figure 61. Shahbag activist Baki Billah's posts in Facebook, 6:23 pm, from Dhaka, 3rd March 2018.

While conducting online and offline ethnography fieldwork it was also observed that the intensity about the event in digital locality was in the process of being translated into the physical locality of Shahbag. Shahbag activist Baki Billah was using social media not only to give his opinion about the matter but to also spread the anger to a wider audience. He was also using his protest network, built through the Shahbag movement as well as his connection with Gonojagoron Moncho, both in the physical and digital locality to arrange the demonstration at Shahbag that night. He was not only using social media but also calling fellow Gonojagoron Moncho activists using his smart phone. On Facebook, he was also liking and sharing other related posts on Professor Iqbal and then shared the protest information about Shahbag by sharing the Facebook event.

After the Shahbag movement in 2013, Shahbag Prajanma Chattar became an even more important location for protests and demonstrations. Gonojagoron Moncho also emerged as a popular protest entity. As Baki Billah has explained, *"Gonojagoron Moncho is known to everybody in the country now. As a spokesperson of Moncho and Shahbag, activist Imran's*

opinion carries value. Being a Shahbag activist, I think we should protest against this attack.'' (Personal communication, March 3, 2018, Dhaka).

After calling of protests on Facebook and organising the protest in Shahbag Prajanma Chattar, Baki Billah started moving towards Shahbag. His home was some distance from Shahbag Prajanma Chattar. During the journey towards Shahbag Prajanma Chattar, it could be observed that he was using Facebook to get further information about the current condition of Professor Iqbal and, at the same time, using the event call to reach other people.

Figure 62. The circle of resistance sociality through social media (see clockwise, starting upper left) 3rd March 2018.

In Figure 62, Shahbag activist Baki Billah receives information about the attack through social media, posts his reaction about the incident on Facebook, engages other Facebook users in his network by using a digital tool (Facebook status), and further intensifies the issue of the attack. He was using social media to communicate and be informed as well, and arranged protest activities in the physical locality.

At around 8pm on 3rd March 2018 in Dhaka, Baki Billah reached Shahbag Prajanma Chattar. During that time, it was further observed that other bloggers and online activists have gathered in Prajanma Chattar. They made a torch procession on the street. BOAN organiser and spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho Imran H. Sarker gave a speech on the street accompanied by Arif Jebtik and Baki Billah, fellow Shahbag activists and members of BOAN, core members of Gonojagoron Moncho.

As observed on March 3, 2018 at Prajanma Chattar Dhaka, blogger and online activist Akramul Haque also joined in the street protest and started using social media tools (Facebook Live) to broadcast the protest event. This live coverage of the protest in the street intensified attention to the topic, condemning the attack on Professor Iqbal, as more and more users from Facebook started to watch the Live coverage of the protest organised by Gonojagoron Moncho that evening. This started to influence the engagement of a wider social media audience regarding this issue.

*Figure 63.*Blogger and online activist Akramul Haque using Facebook Live from Shahbag Prjanma square 3rd March 2018.

As observed on 6th March 2018 in the online space, Imran H. Sarker created another protest event using his Facebook page. In his calling for a protest on 6th March 2018 to

condemn the attack on Professor Iqbal, the appeal was to create a human chain in all educational institutions.
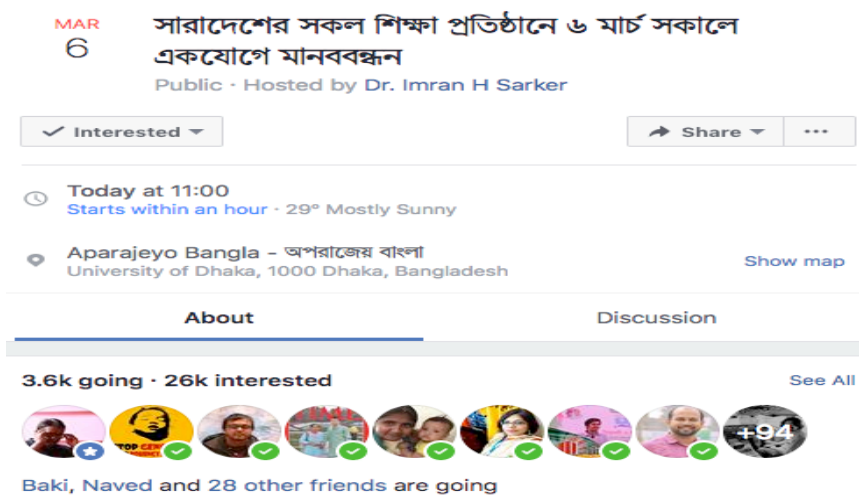
*Figure 64.*Event calling from Imran H. Sarker, Facebook created in 4th March 2018.

That event calls also generated engagement among the social media users. As the identity of *Imran H. Sarker* as spokesperson of the protest entity Gonojagoron Moncho grew immensely after the Shahbag movement, this event call became more influential.

As observed on March 3, 2018 at Prajanma Chattar Dhaka, many activists who were involved in the Shahbag movement also joined the protest against the attack on Professor Iqbal. Some of them were regular participants of the Gonojagoron Moncho activities, while others were not. One of the protesters was a Shahbag activist in 2013 but was forced to flee to a foreign country due threats on his life because of his involvement in blogging and online activism. He, too was protesting on the street and said,

I have been out of the country for so long, I came to Bangladesh for a few days. But when I heard the news about Zafar, Sir, I couldn't control myself, I was so furious. I came here to protest, just to protest. For years, killing of bloggers continued and the government did nothing. Now, this attack on Zafar. Sir, we have to do

something, we have to do something immediately. (Personal communication, March 3, 2018, Dhaka).

Figure 65. Gonojagoron Moncho and Shahbag activists having tea after the protest rally, 3rd March 2018.

After the Shahbag movement, Gonojagoron Moncho emerged as an influential protest entity. On different occasions, Gonojagoron Moncho and Shahbag activists re-emerge through increased connectivity. At the same time, the essence of the Shahbag movement continues as resistance socialities through social media and helps to bring forth different movements in Bangladesh. The use of social media in social movements and the emergence of different resistance socialites became strongly visible in several movements after Shahbag. For example, there is the "quota reform movement" (2013-18) in which Bangladesh General Students' Right Conservation Council demanded equal Quota in government jobs. The movement initially began in Shahbag and later spread country wide. The "road-safety movement" (2018) which is advocating improved roads in Bangladesh led by school and college students after the brutal death of their fellow friends and classmates on the road. It was also observed that, in both of these movements, social media was used not only as a

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protest tool but also as a digital protest site; hence, social media was used to create resistance socialities which are in different occasions challenged by consecutive government crackdown.

Summary

Through an extensive analysis of social media resistance in the Shahbag movement, it can be said that a complex dynamics and forces of spaces and socialities were operating in the field which is fluid, malleable and context-specific. The interactivity of subjective actions (i.e. bloggers and online activists, offline protesters and participants, political leaders, state operators) in this social media movements have been analyzed through the theoretical perspective of socialities of resistance, which is consists of politics of the "non-partisan," connective action, frontline activism, slacktivism, social media political efficacy, transformation of connective leadership, tagging-activism, socio and transcending temporality, and re-enforcement of connectivity.

In order to better grasp this complex dynamics and forces of spaces and socialities, where subjective actions are defined as "political" but self-proclaimed identification by the subject is "apolitical" seemed influential in the dominant political practices. Social media provided the space of connective action which generated the intensities in digital localities and translated into frontline activism. This challenged both the activists and participant's social media political efficacy. Frontline activism operated in the physical locality and produced connective leadership in the physical and digital locality. With regard to the digital locality, this connective leadership encouraged the production of socio-temporality, which is multi-layered, multi-vocal and context specific. There is a re-enforcement of the socio and spatio-temporality through connectivity, portraying the fluidity of identity of the bloggers, online and offline activists and their actions in digital and physical localities. Which clearly

indicates the transformative nature of resistance sociality transcending from online to offline

spaces and also re-enforced through connective action.

CHAPTER 5

Counter Movement Against Shahbag

While the Shahbag movement was initiated by bloggers and online activists, the rise of HI became visible in the political landscape of Bangladesh through the mass mobilisation of Qawmi madrasa students and teachers in Dhaka on 5th May 2013. Shahbag was demanding capital punishment for the war criminals while HI, in turn, was demanding capital punishment for the allegedly "atheist" bloggers of Shahbag. Shahbag supporters were for Bengali nationalism and secular identity, shouting "Tumi ke ami ke, Bengali Bengali." (Who are you, who am I, Bengali Bengali). Hefazat supporters were upholding Muslim and religious identity, shouting "tumi ke ami ke, Muslim Muslim" (who are you, who am I; Muslim, Muslim). Interestingly, Shahbag achieved mass support due to its "non-partisan" face while, and Hefazat was also claiming itself as non-partisan and "apolitical." The counter movement of HI against Shahbag is generated through a complex dynamic among anti-Shahbag digital resistance (Basher Kella) and killing of bloggers during the Shahbag movement in physical space. With the collaboration of print media (Aamar Desh Daily), this has led to painting a "controversial" image of pro-Shahbag bloggers. This chapter will analyse the process of transformativity of spaces which will help in better understanding the socio temporality of the Shahbag movement and corresponding rise of a counter movement.

5.1 Basher Kella: The Anti-Shahbag, Anti-Liberation War, Pro-JIB, Digital Resistance

As discussed in Chapter 3, the ubiquitous pro and anti-liberation war online discourse was the reason for the rise of pro-liberation war digital resistance, which then resulted into pro-liberation war digital activism in the Bangla blogosphere. This translated and culminated into the Shahbag movement. Looking back, before the Shahbag movement, the anti-

liberation war digital activities were low key and anti-liberation war digital resistance was marginalised by the dominant pro-liberation war online activism. However, with the drummed up mass support and success of Shahbag as a strong political force and its louder call for retribution for war criminals and negative backlash on JIB leaders, it was just a matter of time for retaliatory online digital resistance to strengthen against Shahbag and its pro-liberation war stance.

To recall, the Shahbag movement gained much momentum and the mass protest was celebrated across Bangladesh and in other countries. At the grand rally of 8th February, the Gonojagoron Moncho was created and its spokesperson Imran H. Sarker led the participants in an oath-taking ceremony where they swore to continue their protest until their demands are met and to boycott JIB and their businesses by all means. By this time, Gonojagoron Moncho was hoping to position itself as a separate entity outside of established political norms.

All the speakers on that day, including members of political parties, civil society members, public intellectuals, teachers, freedom fighters and media personalities, were instructed to give a speech as individuals without political inclination. The Gonojagoron Moncho was being established as a "non-partisan" political entity fighting for a cause which was to bring war criminals to justice. Diametrically opposed, however, was the administered oath to boycott JIB which immediately placed Gonojagoron Moncho in direct opposition to JIB activists, an act which was deeply political. One of the critical voices of Shahbag, journalist Faruk Wasif, explained,

Bloggers and online activists are from diverse backgrounds. Not all of them are ultra-nationalist nor agree on the Awami narrative of the liberation war. The mass participation was ensured by the ideologically neutral demand of the Shahbag movement. However, as the Gonojagoron Moncho formed, the "ultra-secular"

nationalist voices became prominent. They were heading for the "us vs. them" political trope although the Shahabag movement emerged protesting against Al, ICT and Jamaat. Now their focus shifted towards Jamaat only. (Personal Communication, February 19, Dhaka 2018).

As observed through online and offline ethnography in February and March 2013, in response to the mass uprising of the Shahbag protest and the media focus it garnered, several blogs and Facebook pages became active in dismissing the demand to punish war criminals. Among them, the most prominent was "Basher Kella" (bamboo fort), "Bokhtiarer Ghora" (the horse of Bokhtiar), and so on. Anti-Shahbag digital resistance was led by JIB members and Shibir (student wing of JIB) online activists. The administrator of the Facebook page of Basher Kella is K.M. Jiauddin Fahad. He is the chief coordinator of the publicity wing of Shibir and led a group of 50 technical experts to run online propaganda against the Shahbag movement. Using fake names and IDs, he used to operate 50 Facebook pages (Dailystarnews, 2015) for the purpose.

Jamaati bloggers and online activists were constantly manipulating the demands and protest by using Islamic rhetoric (Khandoker, 2015). The anti-Shahbag discourse generated and spread through social media pages (such as Basherkella, Titumirer Basherkella, Basherkella USA, Awami Tribunal, BAKSAL Nipat Jak and so on) and were mainly focused on saving the JIB leaders and defaming the Shahbag movement and its supporters. They were propagating information online on how the accusation against war criminals were false, all were a political play of Al, and JIB leaders did not cooperate with Pakistani soldiers. The atheist bloggers were at the forefront of the Shahbag movement, and they wanted to destroy Islamic superiority and morality.

5.2 Killing of Blogger "Thaba Baba", Transcending Borders of Spaces, Socio Temporality of Shahbag movement

Socio-temporality in social media movements often reflected on the fluidity of support from the protesters, which is often contextual and dynamic depending on the different stages and progress of the movement. On one hand, the mass support is collective; on the other hand, it depends on the individual choices of the actors or protest participants.

On Friday, 15th February 2013, the Shahbag movement was on its high and a second grand rally, following that of 8th February, was scheduled. By 3:00 PM, hundreds of thousands of people have gathered at Prajanma Chattar. Gonojagoron Moncho started the program by singing the national anthem. Leaders from different student organizations addressing the rally demanded justice for war crime victims and banning the JIB-Shibir activities. Finally, Imran H. Sarker delivered his speech, presenting guidelines for the movement. He declared the decision to shorten the protest schedule from 24 hours (every day) down to 7 hours, i.e. 3:00 PM to 10:00 PM. Soon overtaken by a gruelling event, this shortened protest schedule did not last for long.

Ahmed Rajib Haider, a young architect blogger and Shahbag activist, was brutally stabbed and slaughtered to death by Islamist extremist groups, while he was returning home from Shahbag Prajanma Chattar. His throat and wrists were slit and he was left to die. The news of his murder spread like wildfire both in Prajanma Chattar and in the digital locality of Bangladesh. Shahbag protesters immediately cancelled the 7-hour protest limit and returned back to the 24-hour schedule of non-stop protest.

The entire crowd observed a minute of silence to show their respect to Rajib Haider at 11.22 pm that day. Later in the night, Imran H Sarker claimed in front of the crowd that his assassination was carried out by JIB-Shibir. The demand for restrictions on JIB-Shibir strengthened further. The next day, Rajib's dead body was brought to Prajanma Chattar in a

coffin draped by the national flag for the first Namaz-e-Janaza (final prayer before burial). He was declared the first martyr of the "second liberation war" (the Shahbag movement). It was said that the murder was nothing but a ploy to divide the people into "atheist" (Nastik) and "believer" (astik) camps so that this divide would go against the sentiment of a collective Shahbag (Sabur, 2013).

Kowshik explained,

This was the beginning of the process of dividing the support towards Shahbag; after the killing of Rajib, news about his identity as an atheist blogger was overly publicised by anti-Shahbag forces. In a Muslim majority country, the moral justification of the movement started to weaken. This was also the crucial point when bloggers and online activists started to feel threatened for their lives, the private and public domain division was no safer for bloggers and their writing. (Personal communication, February 17, 2015, Dhaka).

The Atheist vs. Believer debate and discussion was not new in the Bangla blogosphere although the number of bloggers engaged in this debate was few. The writing of Rajib Haider under the nickname of "Thaba Baba" remained unnoticed for long.   As observed in online ethnography during 15th to 16th February 2013, immediately after his murder, JIB funded anti-Shahbag digital resistance Basher Kella to start posting online and sharing posts claiming that "Thaba Baba" is blogger Rajib Haider and his "writing" is defaming and demeaning Prophet Muhammad and Islam. The claimed narrative was that Rajib Haider was a core Shahbag activist; thus, the whole Shahbag movement was being run by "atheists" and anti-Islamic bloggers and online activists. Simultaneously, anti-Shahbag digital resistance Basher Kella tried to "justify" the murder of blogger Rajib Haider for his being critical to Islam and Muhammad in a Muslim majority country.
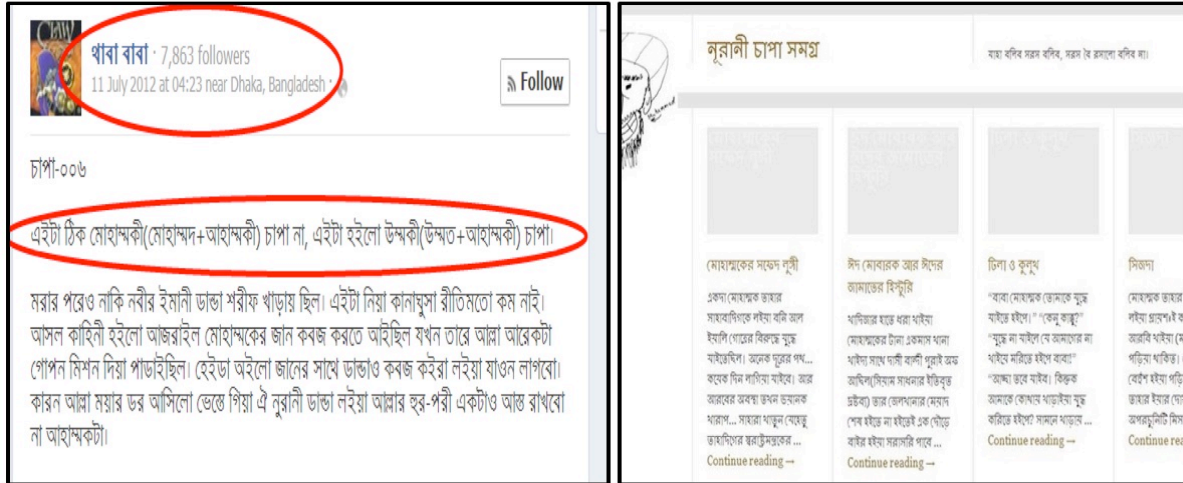
1. Basher Kella page (February 15th 2013) claiming, this is blogger "Thaba Baba's" ID and recent post in Facebook, against Islam and Muhammad, which says Prophet Muhammad is stupid and his followers are even more stupid.

2. Basher Kella page (February 16th 2013) claiming, this is blogger "Thaba Baba's" WordPress page, "Nurani Chapa Smagra" which is defaming Islam and Muhammad.

3. Basher Kella page (February 16th 2013) identifying slain blogger Rajib Haider as "Thaba Baba" who is defaming Islam and Muhammad.

4. Basher Kella page (February 17th 2013) identifying Rajib Haider as a hard core Shahbag activist who is defaming Islam and Muhammad.

Figure 66. Basher Kella Facebook page spreading the news about Rajib Haider and his affiliation with Shabag movement, and his writing in blogs.

As shown in Figure 66, No. 1, Basher Kella has shown a screen shot of the post of alleged blogger "Thaba Baba" defaming Prophet Muhammad by having written "Prophet Muhammad and his followers are stupid." However, posts from pro-Shahbag digital resistance, such as Cyberwar@Shahbag, have argued that the quoted post may be fake as

anyone can make a fake ID on Facebook and post under that nick. They emphasized that the timing of Basher Kella's action was suspicious, done immediately after the death of Rajib Haider, because the post is dated July 11, 2012 and Rajib Haider was killed on February 15, 2013. If he was killed for his writing, then why not earlier or later, why was it done during the Shahbag movement? Moreover, Basher Kella's Facebook page claimed the WordPress site "Nurani Chapa Samagra" (the enlightened lies) (see Figure 66, No. 2) also belongs to blogger Rajib Haider. On the contrary, a pro-Shahbag blogger from somewherein blog "Tailung"[69] used "quatacast" social media traffic analysis and learned that the mentioned WordPress site only started to operate from 15th February 2013, the day blogger Rajib was killed. Within two days, the online traffic of the website increased tremendously. This indicates that the Basher Kella online activity regarding Rajib Haider and his writing was orchestrated and pre-determined.

Social media has blurred the distinction between public and private spheres. This is reflected in how the killing of Rajib Haider during the Shahbag movement was being justified through anti-Shahbag digital propaganda, wherein they have created an identity for the victim in the digital locality, labelling him an atheist and claiming it unacceptable in Bangladesh, a Muslim majority country. It should be emphasized that this incident is not exclusive to social media since, as Miller (2012) has suggested, in a polymedia environment, digital sociality operates hand in hand with other media.

5.2.1 De-contextualisation of Blogging through Print Media: The case of Bangla daily, "Aamar Desh"

As discussed earlier, in the initial days of the Shahbag movement, bloggers and online activists were celebrated by mass media as "heroes" of Bangladesh who were reclaiming the

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[69] https://www.somewhereinblog.net/blog/tailung/29774847

nation from anti-liberation war forces and their supporters. Simultaneously, this "image" was actually being repeatedly challenged but the opposition heightened after the killing of Rajib Haider. Amar Desh, a pro-Jamaat daily, started to publish reports in its front page, putting extra effort to problematize the Shahbag movement, with   headlines such as "Shahbag is headed by Awami league and Left-wing Leaders" and "Shahbag is a fascist movement igniting civil war."

Figure 67. Amar Desh daily in 18th February 2013 headline and text depicting bloggers as Islamophobic and blasphemous, repeatedly shared in Basher Kella Facebook page.

*In its 18ᵗʰ February 2013 issue, the Amar Desh headline depicted bloggers as Islamophobic and blasphemous. The h*eadline *and subheading read, "*Slain Rajib alias Thaba Baba is not a hero *but* a villain. Dreadful Islamophobic Blogger Syndicate. The Great Prophet (st.) is the main target. Unimaginable obscenity in the Blog.*" The report*, translated below in English, *read:*

Through the expansion of information and communication technology, blogs have become popular medium for expressing opinions. One group of youth is using this blog as a tool to publicize slander and religious animosity against Islam. This apostate and atheist group of youths are using obscene heinous language about great

Allah, his holy Quran, great prophet Hazrat Muhammad, Eid, Namaj, Roja, Hajj, which is attacking the Faith and Akida of the Muslims. It is difficult for any Muslim to remain steadfast after reading their slanderous and obscene texts. Even the conscientious non-Muslims will shiver. In the blog, Islamic rules and customs are being criticized, in an unpublishable language. The ridicules, myths and opinions are being written about prophets. The blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider, alias Thaba Baba, was one of the significant blasphemous bloggers and the entrepreneur of the Shahbag movement who was killed in Mirpur on Friday night. However, links to anti-Islam writings on Rajib's blog have been removed after his death. Now, those insolent articles are not available on the Internet anymore. Government efforts have already been made to delete these links to keep them from debate. Not only that, those who have criticized the writings of Thaba Baba, those links have already been blocked by the Government. Furthermore, many people have complained that a link has been blocked in the Inqilab website, which has published a report titled, "Rajib's obscene writing, insulting Islam and Prophet Muhammad (S.) on the blog."

Amar Desh was also manipulating the speeches of intellectuals who were supporting the Shabag movement. In its 9th February 2013 issue, a report was manipulated to state that "intellectuals are provoking the crowd to take violent measures against Jamaat at the Shahbag movement."

উসকানিমূলক বক্তব্য : সমাবেশে আওয়ামীপন্থী লেখক ড. মুহাম্মদ জাফর ইকবাল ও ড. আনোয়ার হোসেন সবচেয়ে বেশি উসকানিমূলক বক্তব্য দেন। জয় বাংলা বলে বক্তব্য শুরু করে মুহাম্মদ জাফর ইকবাল বলেন, 'আমার জীবনে এত আনন্দের দিন আর কখনও আসেনি। যুদ্ধাপরাধীদের ফাঁসির দাবিতে আজকের ২০১৩ সাল একাত্তর সালে রূপান্তরিত হয়েছে। শিবিরকে প্রতিহত করতে আমাদের রাস্তায় লাঠিসোটা নিয়ে নামতে হবে। তোমরা আজ জেগে উঠেছো, বিজয় হবেই হবে। যারা আমাদের অস্তিত্ব নিয়ে খেলেছে, বিশ্বের কাছে আমাদের কলঙ্কিত করেছে, তাদের কোনো ক্ষমা নেই।' জামায়াত-শিবিরের সদস্যদের সমাজ, রাষ্ট্র ও সংবাদ মাধ্যমের সব ক্ষেত্র থেকে বর্জনের মাধ্যমে নতুন আন্দোলন গড়ে তোলার আহ্বান জানান তিনি।

Figure 68. Manipulated report by Amar Desh daily, 9th February2013.

Kowshik Ahmed (2016) explained how the idea of atheism had played a role in the liberation of war of 1971. "That time, those who wanted freedom had been tagged as Hindu or Atheist by the pro-Pakistani razakars." "So, the anti-religion sentiment was played as a trump card by Jaamat through Amar Desh daily." (Personal communication, February 17, 2016, Dhaka)

Faruk, (Wasif, 2013) explained this phenomenon as part of deeper politics which historically put Islam as an opponent of the liberation war. He explained, the "so-called pro-liberation Awami league also rescued war criminals and their party for political reasons several times. The spirit is where it has always been, in the people's resistance. Shahbag had stood strong against the various ploys employed to derail the movement by the shell-carriers, although they became the victim of the propaganda of Amar Desh." (Personal communication, February 12, 2018, Dhaka)

As observed in the field, the manipulative news about Shahbag worked well to divide the popular support of the movement. The identity of "bloggers as atheists" publicised by Amar Desh daily created a deep negative impact on the Shahbag movement. Proponents of Shahbag and its cyber army used photos of people praying and religious co-existence often with reference to the spirit of 1971, and Bengali nationalism to uphold the unity of the movement. On the other hand, the anti-Shahbag sociality, in collaboration with offline new media Amara Desh, tried hard to propagate the idea of Shahbag as corrupt. While the call to action by Gonojagoron Moncho was reaching the periphery, the growth of the movement faced severe backlash caused by the collaboration of traditional and social media of the anti-Shahbag resistance. The Atheist vs. Believer discourse prevailed in the blogosphere but only to a small community of bloggers with relatively moderate acceptance. When publicised for a wider audience, to the masses of Bangladesh, it was received as immoral and blasphemous,

something attacking the core of Islamic beliefs. As blogger Rassel (2017) explained, "the first few days of the movement, bloggers were the national hero, the apolitical youth, with a moral high ground, fighting for a just cause and accepted by all. Suddenly they became the villain, who demean Islam and the Prophet. For the public psyche, saving Islam and the Prophet is more important than bringing war criminals to justice." (Online personal communication, June 12, 2017, Japan)

5.2 Blogger Arrest and Series of Blogger Killing, "Reduced" Space

The attack on the secular atheist bloggers in the physical locality started through the attack on blogger Asif Mohiuddin on 15th January 2013. He survived the attack with serious injuries. He was on an Islamist hit list. The Islamist fundamentalist group Ansarullah Bangla Team claimed responsibility for the attack. Apparently, Asif Mohiuddin was receiving death threats on social media. Initially thinking that it was only a threat on the online sphere, Asif (2016) explained, "Before the attack I was thinking, who would attack me for my writing? Disputes and disagreements are things of the online sphere. However, I was wrong, I was very wrong. The fundamentalists were observing my every move, where do I go, where do I live, where do I work, they were observing my every online activity. Those who attacked me were students of a private university, they knew very well how to use social media." (Online personal communication, June 12, 2016, Japan)

After the killing of the Shahbag activist and secular blogger Rajib Haider (blog nick: Thaba Baba), the discourse of "Atheist vs. Believer" intensified in society. Anti-Shahbag forces were using this issue to divide the support for the movement. During Shahbag movement, a hit list of 17 bloggers and activists who happened to be important members of

Gonojagoron Moncho, including Imran (the spokesperson), was circulated in social media and in mass media. Arif Jebtik, one of the targets in the hit list explained,

First, we thought it was a Jamaati propaganda to weaken the organisers of the Shahbag movement. I never wrote anything in blogs that might hurt the sentiment of any religious groups. But, when Rajib was brutally murdered with a machete, we then realised, the threat is very real. After the killing of Rajib, we got a list of 17 bloggers who are depicted as atheists and Islamophobic. I was on this list of 17 people. After that, high officials from the police informed us to take police protection. So we did. Most of all, we became very careful about our movement. (Online personal communication, August 15, 2015, Japan)

On 31st March 2013, leaders of Hefazat provided a list of 84 bloggers to the home ministry. They demanded the arrest of these 84 bloggers, whom Hefazat claimed spread anti-Islamic sentiments online. On 4th April 2013, four secular bloggers were arrested; they were Asif Mohiuddin, Rasel Parvez, Mashiur rahman and Subrata Adhikari Shuvo. Their names were on the list of 84 bloggers, and after a preliminary hearing, the judge denied their bail. News of this event, with their photos, were published and telecast in mass media. As Asif explained,

The experience was horrible, detectives interrogated me for hours, deleted 120 blog posts. They also contacted the blog authority and they also stopped my account. They were treating us like we were murderers, rapists, criminals. Before, Hefazat supporters were demanding for our heads, and now the government is arresting us. In jail, I was put just next to the people who wanted to kill me. They were shouting at me, "Next time, you will not survive." (Online personal communication, June 12, 2016, Japan)

News of the hit list of 84 bloggers submitted by Hefazat group in the digital locality, 13 March 2013.

Arrested secular bloggers presented as criminals for defaming Islam and Mumamada in front of mass media and in the digital locality. April 2nd 2013.

Hefazat's placard demanding the of atheist bloggers in the physical locality. 5th May 2013.

Arrested Islamist blogger presented as criminal in front of mass media and in the digital locality allegedly involved in Blogger killing . 2nd march 2015.

Figure 69. Transcending spaces of digital and physical localities.

From fieldwork, it was observed that during this time, the government was listening to Hefazat's demand and arresting bloggers and online activists (E. Hossain, 2013). Fear and anxiety surrounded the blog community. Some blog moderators were forced by the law enforcement authority to delete blog posts of the "controversial bloggers" (such as Asif Mohiuddin) and provide sensitive information of blogger's IP (internet protocol) address so

that they can trace the bloggers location. Bloggers and online activists were deleting their posts, reducing their activities in the digital locality, and had become very careful about their daily movements and activities. At the same time, they had kept on protesting in the physical locality of Shahbag also in the digital locality (Bbcworld, 2013).

*Figure 70.*Bloggers and activists protesting about the arrest of secular bloggers in the physical locality of Shahbag, 3rd April 2013.

The killing spree, which started with the killing of secular blogger and activist Rajib Haider, continued. On 7th March 2013, Sannyur Rahman, a Shahbag activist and critic of various religious parties, was hacked to death with machetes. On 26th February, a well-known Bangladeshi writer, bio-engineer, and founder of the Bangladeshi free-thinking blog "Mukto-Mona," Avijit Roy was attacked, together with his wife, by machete-wielding assailants. Avijit Roy died from his injures and Bonya Ahmed somehow survived. His murder provoked protests in Dhaka and brought forth expressions of concern internationally. On 30 March 2015, blogger Washiqur Rahman was killed in a pattern similar to the previous killings. On 12 May 2015, atheist blogger Ananta Bijoy Das was hacked to death in Sylhet.

Niloy Chakraborty was killed in 7 August 2015. On 31st October 2015, a secular progressive publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan was hacked to death in Dhaka; the same day another publisher Ahmedur rashid Chowdhury was attacked by assailants with machetes. All of the bloggers who were killed or attacked was on the hit list of 84 names provided by Hefazat. This series of killings of bloggers forced many bloggers to take asylum in foreign countries. Their movement in the public space was greatly reduced.

Protesters holding banner in protest of salin blogger Ananta Bijoy.

Blogger and activist share their memory about secular bloggers who were killed.

Forced to take asylum in a foreign country, blogger sharing her thoughts about Bangladesh: Nobody is Standing here with a machete .

Secular blogger sharing his view on digital locality about blogger killing and the arrested madrasa students.

Figure 71. Killing of bloggers and its repercussions in the physical and digital localities.

Due to the crackdown on bloggers, places such as the Shahbag square, book fairs, Chobir Hut or any other open places where bloggers and online activists used to gather,

debate and discuss lost its sense of security. Kowshik Ahmed one of the few remaining Shahbag activists whose name was on the hit list, explained,

> When the killing of the bloggers started, it turned out really bad for all the bloggers, not just secular bloggers. After Shahbag movement, the dispute regarding bloggers and blogging took shape in a controversial way. It seemed government was doing nothing to stop the killing spree; they were in a way silently allowing Hefazat's demand of upholding "religious sentiment." We had no place to run to or no place to go. Especially for those whose name was on the list of 84 bloggers. I have moved my home to a more crowded place so that, if any occurrence happens, I can ask for help. For two years, either my brother or my wife, always accompanied me so that I can move safely. I helped many bloggers leave the country, organized funds for them, wrote recommendation letters. Since 2013 to 2015, my movement in Shahbag was very limited. Except for my wife and my brother, no one would know when and where I will be. Adda was shifted to my home or to my very trusted friend's home. Whenever we were in a friendly Adda at any place, we took extra caution. Only the very trusted will know. I have greatly reduced interaction in social media, avoided discussing controversial issues as much as I can. I was in total silence for long. Then the situation started to change, but the risk is still out there. I never wanted to leave the country, maybe this time I have to leave. (Personal communication, February 17, 2019, Dhaka)

David Bergman
1 hr · Dhaka, Bangladesh · 🌐

Interesting article by Ellen Barry in NYT about the killing of Oyasiqur Rhaman. This is particularly scary "They were talking with me very happily, that they have done a good job by killing the blogger," said a journalist who spoke to the men who are accused of murdering the man. "They don't feel any guilt. They think they have done a very good job for their religion." And a poignant quote about life and times in contemporary Bangladesh from Sara Hossain "People who have live... See More

Bangladesh Killings Send Chilling Message to Secular

Journalist's analysis of blogger
killing in social media.

Anik Dutta ▶ গুরুচন্ডা৯ guruchandali
30 mins · 🔒

অভিজিৎ হত্যায় ফারাবী গ্রেপ্তার

লেখক অভিজিৎ রায় হত্যা মামলায় সেই শাফিউর রহমান ফারাবীকে র‍্যাব গ্রেপ্তার করেছে, যিনি এর আগে রণদীপ রায়ের হত্যাকাণ্ডের পর ফেইসবুকে উসকানিমূলক স্ট্যাটাস দিয়ে গ্রেপ্তার হয়েছিলেন।

উগ্রবাদীদের পক্ষে বিভিন্ন সময় কার্যক্রম পরিচালনাকারী ফারাবী বাংলা বই বিক্রির ওয়েবসাইট 'রকমারি ডটকম' থেকে অভিজিৎ রায়ের বই সরায়েও হুমকি দিয়েছিলেন।

র‍্যাবের অতিরিক্ত মহাপরিচালক জিয়াউল আহসান জানান, "উগ্রপন্থি ব্লগার ফারাবীই লেখক অভিজিৎ রায় হত্যাকাণ্ডের প্রধান সন্দেহভাজন। সোমবার সকালে ঢাকা ছাড়ার চেষ্টা করলে বাড্ডাবাসী এলাকা থেকে তাকে গ্রেপ্তার করা হয়।

News of arrest of Islamist blogger
who may involve in blogger killing,
shared and discussed in social
media.

Figure 72. Repercussions of Blogger killing and Blogger arrest in digital localities of Facebook, 2015.

The series of killing of bloggers during and after Shahbag movement seized the openness and freedom of the public spaces drastically. The sense of safety and security reduced drastically. Not only in the physical locality but also in the digital locality. After Shahbag movement the emergence of repressive ICT laws and police crack-down on social media users made the digital locality more self-censored, cynical and a place of enmity.

Figure 73. Blogger Arju Poni sharing her experience in Facebook; at her book signing event in 2017 book fair in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Arju Poni (aged 39) (Figure 73) is one of the senior bloggers in the Bangla blogosphere and is a Shahbag supporter. Being an enthusiastic blogger, she had been participating in blog Adda, blog rallies and bloggers meet for over eight years. A university graduate and a promising writer, she published a book in 2017 at a book fair in Dhaka. Like Chobir Hut, the book fair is also a popular gathering place for bloggers to conduct blog Adda. After the series of killings, this practice of blog Adda was reduced as the "openness" and "safety" of bloggers' gathering had also been reduced. She explained,

> Like me, many bloggers and users of Facebook frequently use social media to promote their books. However, when the killing of bloggers started, especially the killing of Avijit Roy (26th February 2015), bloggers who gather in book fairs were reduced in great number. Due to the lack of security, we feared meeting in public. Also, due to high government surveillance, self-censorship also increased. The emergence of militant attack, especially in Holey Artisan, had a severe impact. Although in 2017 things are looking normal, the essence of bloggers meet had changed in quality. (2017)

Ananya Azad (aged 30) was a blogger, Shahbag activist and atheist, who was also a very promising secular writer in the blogosphere. During the Shahbag movement, his name was included in the hit list of 84 bloggers who were allegedly defaming Prophet Muhammad and Islam. Coming from an urban secular family, he had always been outspoken about religious belief. In 2013, he received several death threats for his writing in the blog, so he took asylum in Germany. His father was the famous atheist and secular writer, Dr. Humaun Azad who was brutally attacked by Islamic extremists on 27th February 2004 while returning from a book fair. The incident calls to mind a similar attack on slain blogger Avijit Roy, a secular blogger, who was hacked to death on 26th February 2015 while returning from a book

fair. During the 2017 book fair, when news spread about the presence of young bearded madrasa students wearing caps who were caught with knives in their bags at a book fair, he assumed it to be another attempt to kill secular bloggers and writers. Ananya Azad shared his view in the digital sociality, which states,

Ananya Azad
12 hrs ·

বইমেলায় দলবেঁধে দাড়ি টুপিওয়ালা যারাই যায় তারাই জঙ্গি। এখন পর্যন্ত বইমেলার যতো ভিডিও দেখলাম তাতে এবারের মেলায় জঙ্গিদের ছড়াছড়ি। চাপাতি-ছুরি ধার্মিক মুসলমানদের বিশ্বাসের বস্তু।
কিছুদিন আগে, বইমেলার সামনে থেকে কয়েকজন জঙ্গিকে চাপাতিসহ গ্রেপ্তার করা হয়েছিল। তাদের বাঁচানোর জন্য ফেসবুকে প্রোপাগান্ডা ছড়ানো হয়েছিল যে দাড়ি টুপি থাকার কারণেই নাকি গ্রেপ্তার করা হয়েছিল! যারা এই প্রোপাগান্ডা ছড়িয়েছিল তারাই মূলত জঙ্গিদের অর্থদাতা এবং প্রশ্রয়দানকারী।
প্রতিটি সংখ্যা গরিষ্ঠ মুসলমানদের দেশে কয়েকজন অমুসলিম থাকে, যারা মুসলমানদের থেকেও নিজেকে বড় মুসলমান প্রমাণ করার জন্য উঠে পড়ে লাগে। আমাদের দেশেও এমন আছে। বেশ কয়েকজন আছে, যারা সাধারণ মুসলমান তারা বোধ করে, বাহ- একজন অমুসলিম কতো সুন্দর করে আমাদের চিন্তাধারাকে সমর্থন দিচ্ছে, আমাদের হিংসাত্মক কর্মকাণ্ডকেও প্রোপাগান্ডার মাধ্যমে নির্দোষ প্রমাণের চেষ্টা করছে। কিন্তু সাধারণ মুসলমানেরা ভুলে যায়- এই ধরনের সুবিধাবাদী অমুসলিমরাই মুসলমানদের নাম খারাপ করার উদ্দেশ্যে তাদের ভুলকে প্রোপাগান্ডার মাধ্যমে সমর্থন দিচ্ছে এবং তাদের ব্যবহার করে আর্থিকভাবে লাভবান হচ্ছে সেইসব ব্যক্তি।
আজকে মাদ্রাসার ছোট্ট একটা ছাত্রের কাছ থেকে ছুরি পাওয়া গেছে। মাদ্রাসার ছাত্রের কাছে ছুরি-চাপাতি থাকাটা অস্বাভাবিক নয়। বরং মাদ্রাসার ছাত্রের কাছে গোলাপ ফুল পাওয়া গেলে সেটাই অস্বাভাবিক হতো। হয়তো, ছোটরা রেকি করবে এবং বড় জঙ্গিরা কোপাবে। এ আর নতুন কী! গত কয়েক বছর ধরে এমনই হয়ে আসছে। দাড়ি-টুপিওয়ালা হতে সাবধান।

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ➜ Share

👍😆❤ Kazi Moitry, Tahsib Hasan and 213 others   Top comments ▾
3 shares

Write a comment...   📷 ☺

R AK IB এইটা কীরকম যুক্তি আপনার একটু বুঝিয়ে বলুন
Like · Reply · 12 hrs
↳ View previous replies

Figure 74. Blogger Ananya Azad in asylum sharing his view on blogger killing and the shrinking public space.

Those who roam in groups with "beard and cap" at book fairs, all are terrorist/extremist. In videos of this book fair that I have seen, there are plenty of terrorists roaming around. A few days back, some terrorists were captured with machetes. To save them, the propaganda was circulated on Facebook that they were captured due to "beard and cap." Those who propagated the news, they were the real supporters and financiers of terrorism... Today, a knife was retrieved from a young madrasa student. Madrasa students bearing knife-machete is not abnormal. Rather, if a rose was found, that would be abnormal. Maybe the little one will reiki and the big terrorist will kill. Nothing new about it. This has been happening for the past few years. Be careful of "beard and cap."

5.3 Counter Movement of Shahbag: Non-Partisan Islamic Movement, Digital Sociality

Islamic force HI Bangladesh (protectors of Islam), then a lesser known Qawmi Madrasa-based group, emerged and demanded the death sentence for the alleged "atheist" bloggers. HI's 13- point demand included reinstatement in the constitution of the terms "absolute trust and faith in Allah", and the enactment of (anti-defamation) law at the parliament keeping death penalty as the highest form of punishment to prevent defamation of Allah, Muhammad, and Islam.

The response to Shahbag by HI was massive. HI organized a long march towards the Motijhil area, the business and commercial centre of Dhaka on 6th April 2013. HI activists were coming from different parts of Bangladesh to push for their 13-point demand. Again on 5th May 2013, nearly half a million people gathered in the Motijhil area of Dhaka demanding capital punishment for the "atheist" bloggers.

From online and offline observation during the time of this HI movement, it became clear that HI's movement was not generated through social media, although social media played a significant role. During Shahbag, the opposing propaganda by Basher Kella not only tried hard to establish a negative image of the Shahbag protesters in digital locality, but also used online content, printed those and spread them across different madrasas and mosques.

Abdul Hakim (aged 29) comes from a lower-middle class Muslim family and lives in Jamalpur, a northern district in Bangladesh. He had been a Qawmi madrasa student since 2015, studying in Jamia Islamia Mazharul Ulum Madrasa and Orphanage in Mirpur (a northern town in Dhaka metropolis). During the Shahbag movement, while in school at the local madrasa of Jamalpur, the anti-Shahbag propaganda reached him. He narrated,

During the Shahbag movement, I was in Jamalpur. One day, our Imam
(religious leader) and Alem (religious scholar) showed us a photocopied paper of a
very derogative writing against our prophet Muhammad and Allah. Imam told us it
was written by bloggers on the Internet. I was extremely furious; it was filled with
unspeakable audacities against our Muhammad and Islam. I did not know much about
the Internet that time, I was very angry towards bloggers. Imam told us we need to
protest against this. We agreed. We conducted a rally in Jamalpur and protested.
(Personal communication, March 20, 2017)

In this polymedia (Madianou, 2014) environment, the content created and spread on
digital locality transferred into the physical locality and incited rage among the madrasa
students. In the context of social media usage among madrasa students, this research found
that, in madrasa, a very strict and hierarchical student and teacher relationship is practiced.
Although social media usage by the leaders is not uncommon, visiting particular sites (such
as Islamic sites) and doing particular activities (such as Islamic sermons) is encouraged. As
they do in the physical locality, Hefazat also use social media to depict itself as an
"apolitical" organisation. The presence of Hefazat in the digital locality is not rare.
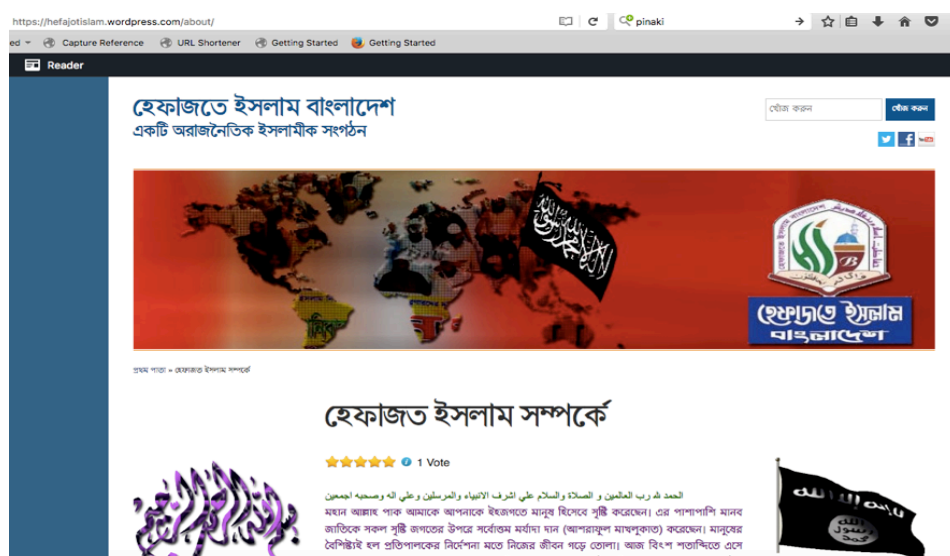
Figure 75. Hefazat webpage in WordPress, Hefazat-e-Islam, an "apolitical" organisation.

Figure 76. A photo of Hefazat-e-Islam shared in the anti-Shahbag digital locality of Basher Kella. The text in the placard says, "We will clear the streets only after the demise of the atheists."

Jamia Qurania Arabia Lalbagh is a reputed Qawmi madrasa located in Lalbagh town in Dhaka metropolis. Muhammad Faizullah is one of the leaders of Hefazat-e-Islam, Bangladesh and another Islamic party called Islamic Oikkojot. In a discussion about the rise of Hefazat and its relation to Shahbag movement, he explained,

> Who were the Shahbagi? They were just a bunch of crowds visiting the book fair. They were not real, they were just the 'atheists' bloggers, they were there for not any real cause, they were serving the purpose of Al or other political parties. We were serving the Allah; we were Tawhidi Jonota (saver of the religion). In a Muslim majority country, no one can abuse the feeling of religious Muslims. (Personal communication, March 19, 2018)

As observed in the offline field, institutionally, access to the Internet and social media is very restricted among the Qawmi madrasa students. Mr. Lukman Mazhari, Alem Ulama and also currently the Imam of Jamia Islamia Mazharul Ulum Madrasa and Orphanage, explained about the presence of the Internet and social media among madrasa students in his institution.

> There is no television, radio, mobile or Facebook allowed here. They practice Islamic songs like kerat, hamd/naat, quranic recitation, gajal, patriotic songs. They

practice how to make a good speech. How to use urdu, farsi. Nowadays, everybody's got a mobile, we seize the mobile in the beginning of the session. Later, we contact their parents through our mobile phones. If we find someone using a mobile, we seize it immediately. A few days ago, we found someone browsing Facebook using free wifi of the adjacent prime university. We just seize the mobile. (Personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Although access to social media by madrasa students at their institution seems very unlikely, the opportunity to access social media remains easy. As Mr. Faijullah, one of the leaders, elaborated,

We are very up to date; we have several IT experts in our madrasa. They all have access to social media; they also maintain the Facebook page of Hefazat-e-Islam. I have my own page, too. In Lalbagh Madrasa, we have rules of using social media, we cannot let our students do immoral things; that is why access is restricted. (Personal communication, March 19, 2018)

Figure 77. Hefazat leader Faijullah in the digital locality.

Against popular belief, it was also found, through online ethnography, that Hefazat is not as orthodox (against Internet, social media, technology and so on) as many usually assume. The social media presence of Hefazat began in 2012 and continued since then.

During the Shahbag movement, the social media presence of Hefazat was not visible. However, as the movement evolved, the Facebook page of Hefazat started to share and post much content about Shahbag. They became part of the digital resistance of the anti-Shahbag forces.

Figure 78. A post in Hefazat page saying how one Islamic leader is crushing the argument of Imran, the spokesperson of Shahbag.

From 2013 onwards, Hefazat's presence started to increase. This was observed by Mozaddid Al Fasani Jadid, moderator of Somehwreinblog, who said,

> From the later period of 2013, especially in November 2014, I have witnessed that there were many bloggers from Qawmi madrasa. I followed them in Facebook and saw that what they share are content that have been shared both in Facebook and Somewherein blog. Bloggers from Qawmi madrasa have very little knowledge about the world but when they saw by themselves what blogging is; I guess their opinion changed. But as you know, users of social media, they like the "bad stuff." It's not like because there might be porn on that site, I would not go there; rather there is something bad there so I will run after it. (Personal communication, March 23, 2017)

The growing presence of Hefazat in social media could not be denied especially in 2017, when Hefazat took to the streets demanding for the removal of the Greek Deity in front of the supreme court. As seen in the field, what started as a digital and physical protest against Shahbag later became a regular presence, spreading protest information, in the digital locality of Hefazat. Social media now became an important tool for spreading protest information for Hefazat, a group known for its orthodox method of protest.

Fahmidul Haque (aged 49) is a teacher in public university, a Shahbag activist and social media scholar. He observed different developments in the Bangla social media and commented about the presence of HI or anti-Shahbag narrative in social media.

Counter narratives about the Shahbag movement are present in social media but the level of interaction and presence varies in different phases. A few days before, I saw the Facebook page of Basher Kella alive again. In social media, new platforms can be created. Basher Kella can come again with a new name and extension. I don't think it is closed, somehow it is running (even with government surveillance), maybe by a new name – what, we do not know. Actually, many forces are in play, like traditional Jammat, traditional Hefazat, and new Jihadist groups (some claimed to be ISS, new JMB, home grown terrorist groups). I think they have some exchange as well. And target wise, their activities are also different. Some are focused on foreign Christians, some are focused on local atheists, some are focused on the removal of a sculpture. (Personal communication, March 16, 2017)

Figure 79. Hefazat's Facebook Page showing its protest call (above photo) and a multitude of protesters (below photo). The site is in front of the National Mosque, Friday 2nd June 2017.

Hefazat made a Facebook post calling for a protest on 2nd June 2017. Their banner reads, "Protest procession and Assembly." Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh Page writes: If the leader of Hefazat calls us, within 24 hours, millions of people will occupy the High Court. Please do not push us to come to the streets. If we come, the police cannot prevent us, if we come, RAB cannot prevent us. The day we will come, we will come with death clothes (kafoner kapor) Inshallah. Remove the Greek Deity (not sculpture, as termed by many) as

early as possible. If not, after Ramadan we will announce bigger events Inshallah, Allama Nur Hosen Kwashemi. The page also showed a photo, captioned with "Dhaka has now erupted with fierce protesters, remove the Greek deity."

Faijullah, leader of Hefazat, also clarified Hefazat's stand regarding social media.

Hefazat is a modern organisation. We need to know how to use social media. However, our students need to know how to use social media properly. That is not a good place for young madrasa students, so there are restrictions. They can also use it for spreading the call of Islam, sharing important message from our leaders, real explanation of Hadith and Quran. That is why only the experienced students should use social media, and we have the system for that. We are not based on social media, we are based on the Tawhidi Jonota (saver of the religion). If I give a call in any rally, tens of thousands of people will gather and join. This is the strength of our leadership. We do not need social media. (Personal communication, March 19, 2018)

During the online ethnography in the digital locality of Bangladesh, it was observed that there is a growing increment of Islamic discourse online, and many Islamic orators are using YouTube and Facebook Live to spread their Islamic narration.

Summary

The counter movement against Shahbag appeared in both the digital and physical localities. The pro-JIB digital resistance of Basher Kella emerged as an online counter protest platform. At the same time, the physical resistance against Shahbag appeared as a form of HI's mass movement. However, both the counter resistance to Shahbag seems to be connected. The propaganda of Basher Kella in the online space against Shahbag proved to be crucial. In a polymedia environment, digital resistance in collaboration with traditional print

media became a powerful anti-Shahbag entity which was not only able to divide the mass support of Shahbag movement but also able to create a disputed image of bloggers. This controversial image helped in creating the socio temporality of the movement and reduced the digital and physical space for pro-Shahbag bloggers and online activists not only in digital locality but also in the physical locality. Moreover, it was also found that anti-Shahbag entities started to create their presence in the digital locality and are creating online space for digital resistance.

CHAPTER 6

Online Contestation and Negotiation Between Pro-Shahbag (Pro-Liberation) and Anti-Shahbag (Anti-Liberation) Digital Resistance

The online contestation between pro and anti-liberation war digital resistance heightened due to the overwhelming mass support for the Shahbag movement and the focused demand of Gonojagoron Moncho towards JIB leaders and institutions. The connective action among pro-liberation war bloggers and online activists in online space resulted in the Shahbag movement. Consequently, this was contested by the anti-liberation war connective action which resulted in the upsurge of anti-liberation war digital resistance. As discussed in Chapter 3, the effort of occupying digital space in the Bangla blogosphere by JIB activists was not something new; it had been existing even before the Shahbag movement and had been contested by pro-liberation war digital activists. What is notable is the resistance sociality that emerged through the Shahbag movement (as discussed in Chapter 4) which not only threatened the established political scenario but also marginalized JIB in the political landscape of Bangladesh. Upon realizing the effectiveness and potential of social media in creating political domain, such as the Shahbag movement, JIB put enormous effort in the online space.

In view of the development and dynamics of the Shahbag movement, the online space became not only a site of protest and counter protest, but also a site of contestation frequently influencing the digital and physical locality. Digital activists from both camps (pro and anti-liberation war) felt the need to focus on the Shahbag digital locality. This chapter will analyze the online contestation and negotiation between pro and anti-liberation war digital resistance and the digital tools, techniques and activities which were used in this process.

6.1 Connective Action, Slacktivism and Social Media Political Efficacy: The Online Contestation and Negotiation

Bloggers and online activists were very few in number compared to the millions of participants of the Shahbag movement. They became heroes to the nation, transcending the digital locality into street protests and celebrated by mainstream offline media. Suddenly, they became national celebrities and got invited to television talk shows; they were under the spotlight of mass media. While the online dispute between pro and anti-liberation war forces was not new to the Bangla blogosphere, the success of the Shahbag movement and emergence of Gonojagoron Moncho pushed this online contestation between pro and anti-liberation forces to a new height.

The JIB propaganda started to flow in the digital space. The anti-Shahbag discourse were mainly propagated by anti-Shahbag, anti-liberation war digital resistance by JIB bloggers and online activists. The anti-Shahbag, anti-Liberation war digital spaces (i.e. Basher Kella, BAN Bashkhali Digital Rupe BAKSAL Titumirer Basherkella, Basherkella USA, Tarun Projonmo and Vision 2021, Awami Tribunal, BAKSAL Nipat Jak, I am Bangladeshi) became very active. They were focused on saving the JIB leaders and, in the process, defaming the Shahbag movement and its supporters. The Facebook pages of Basher Kella, BAN Bashkhali Digital Rupe BAKSAL Titumirer Basherkella started propagating information that accusations against war criminals were false, were AL's ploy, and that JIB did not cooperate with Pakistani soldiers. They claimed that the atheist bloggers, who were in the forefront of the Shahbag movement, were out to destroy Islamic superiority and morality. They insinuated that pro-Shahbag bloggers and online activists were also acting as an agent of India to eradicate Islam from Bangladesh. Further, according to them, Shahbagis were promoting free sex and immorality in public places, that at night, Shahbag becomes a place

for group sex, leaders of Shahbag practice group sex, the female leaders and participants were whores, protesters smoke marijuana, drink alcohol, dressing improperly, and that bags of condoms were found night after night in Shahbag.

Using the same skill set of digital activism used by the pro-liberation war bloggers, they were able to create connective action and connective leadership which could lead to frontline activism. As discussed in Chapter 4, these skills include understanding the potential of social media as a change maker and for mass mobilization; knowing the changing nature of social media (which platform to use and when, blog site to Facebook page, twitter and so on), understanding the tools and hierarchy in social media platform; adopting localized knowledge and practices according to local social media context to create a bridge between online and offline locality; having the ability to create carefully crafted distinctive characteristics in social media and using other traditional media to create more engaging content towards targeted population.

The anti-Shahbag discourses were very strong in popularizing the damaging image of the Shahbag protest and protesters (as discussed in Chapter 5). One of the key observations about this effort by anti-liberation digital resistance was clarified by a senior blogger from somewhereinblog and blog moderator Kowshik Ahmed. He is a Shahbag activist and social media analyst and he explained,

> the offline traditional media attention towards Shahbag movement was not only based on corporate interest to promote TRP, but also a general moral support to the movement. This moral support, Shahbag was enjoying throughout the whole time. I know so many journalists who supported the movement whole-heartedly, they all contributed to the movement. That is the reason why most of the mainstream media excluded Jamaati voices. This is also the reason why Jamaat was so much focused on

social media, they put their whole effort. (Personal communication, April 29, 2018, Dhaka)

The anti-Shahbag, anti-Liberation war digital resistance was also heavily funded, as one of the activists Parvez Alam explained,

Jamaati funding for capturing the digital locality of the Bangla blogosphere was not new, as you can remember, there were several blogsites funded by Jamaat since 2008, when they were rejected by the Bangla bloggers in the question of bringing war criminals to justice. They changed platforms but kept on coming again and again. During the Shahbag movement, they uses all their resources to defame and derogate the Shahbag movement. (Online, Personal communication, September 21, 2017, Japan)

Although some digital activists had already noticed this rising trend in social media, they were not organised. Thus, the protesters put up tents with several computers in Shahbag square adjacent to the Gonojagoron Moncho stage, and they started the online countermeasure against the propaganda.

This resistance sociality is referred to as "Shahbag e Cyberjoddho" (Cyber war of Shahbag). Initiators of this online resistance was neither BOAN members nor bloggers and online activists. They were a university-based organization called "Slogan 71." Before the Shahbag movement, their activities were mainly focused on offline events. Consisting of four members, among them two men and two women, they have been friends for years. They thought that they should do something against the Jamaati propaganda. One of the organizers of the Cyber war of Shahbag platform, Abdullah Kajol narrated,

While I was studying in Dhaka University, I went to Shahbag every day especially during the movement. I kept sharing my experience with my friends, we were so excited, I was also posting about the movement on Facebook. However, I am not a blogger or online activist, my focus was related to offline activism. On 8th February, after the grand rally, I got a call from the Imam (religious leader of the mosque) of my village. I was very surprised! He was so serious, asking me whether I am involved in Shahbag movement or not. He said, "Please do not go there, I know you are a good boy, all immoral things are happening there, people are drinking alcohol, having free sex, group sex and many more immoral things." I asked him, "How do you know all about these?" He answered that some local moulana (Islamic leader) showed him photos on the mobile. (Personal communication, February 17, 2016, Dhaka)

The above observation of Abdullah Kajol was echoed by Bithika, another Shahbag activist and member of Cyber. She explained,

While the whole nation was with us, Jamaat felt very excluded and insecure –that is why they were very active in social media. We had basic differences; we were not funded, we were doing it voluntarily, we were on morally high ground. But they were doing it purposefully; heavily funded, to save their war criminal leaders, they were morally very weak. (Personal communication, March 10, 2016, Dhaka).

The "About page" of the site of cyberwar@Shahbag explains the why and how of Slogan 71 as stated below.

The warriors of Slogan 71 are working from the field and from home. As our fellow bloggers and online activists are busy in the field, Jamaat- Shibir are spreading propaganda. To resist this propaganda, we are using cyberwar and we will continue to work. To get the latest update on Prajanma Chattar (the new name of Shahbag square

after the movement) please follow us on Facebook, Twitter.

Figure 80. Pro-Shahbag, pro-liberation war volunteers and activists in the physical locality of Shahbag square engaged in cyber war against the anti-liberation war, anti-Shahbag propaganda, 9th February 2013.

The online war continued even after the Shahbag movement was formally called off in the physical locality.

6.2 Transformativity of Connective Leadership: Cyberwar@ Shahbag vs. Basher Kella

The main focus of cyberwar@shahbag was to counter Jamaati propaganda online. At the same time, it was very important for them to provide minute by minute updates of the protest to the wider audience both locally and in the global digital sociality. To get the attention of international news media, it was very important to provide authentic and reliable protest information, because by this time, Jamaati bloggers and online activists were already spreading news worldwide that an unfair trial was underway and war criminals were the

"victims" of Awami power politics. They were using different social media platforms to make a formidable impact both locally and globally.

Though Facebook was the most popular social media during the Shahbag movement, Jamaati online activists started to also use Twitter and other social media platforms to reach a wider audience. In the physical locality of Shahbag, free internet service was provided for the digital activists to counter Jamaati propaganda. One internet radio service was also launched to provide updated information of the Shahbag movement in order to reach a wider

Table 5

Pro and Anti-Shahbag Digital Sociality

Pro-Shahbag Digital Sociality	Social Media Platforms	Anti-Shahbag Digital Sociality
Gonojagoron Moncho	Facebook	Basher Kella
Dr.Imran H Sarker		Bokhtiarer Ghora
BOAN		Ditio alo
Cyberwar @Shahbag		BD Nationalist
Shahbag e		Bangladesh Islami Chatro
Cyberjuddho		Shibir
		Hefazat-e-Islam
Cyberwar @Shahbag	Twitter	Bangladesh Jamaat-e-
Shahbag Square LIVE		Islami

Shahbag Update		Basher Kella
Projonmo square		Bidrohi Alo
		Hefazat-e-Islam
somewhereinblog	Blog	sonarbanglablog
Amar Blog		Al-Ihsan Forum
Jonmojuddho		Alor Nishan Forum
MuktoMona Blog		Breaking Atharo Dolio Jot
Projanmo blog		Savebangaldesh
Sachalayatanblog		icsforum
Shanthroblog		
Live news from Shahbag Movement		
Shahbag movement 2013	YouTube	Trun projonmo
		Hefazat-e-Islam
shahbag.org	Website	Shownews
		Londonbangla news
		newsatbd

audience. During the Shahbag movement and online war between cyberwar@shahbag and Basher Kella, the number of twits reached millions, with numerous comments and replies shared in the digital locality. For both pro-Shahbag activists and Jamaati activists, social media platforms became the protest sites operating in the digital locality.

In the digital protest sites, activists were engaged in constant debate and discussions; replying through comments and counter-comments. To share or like posts, provide evidence, continue debates, and explain what is true or false became the mode of digital resistance for both groups. Volunteers who wanted to join in this online war were trained to use new platforms. Digital protest sites were getting immense attention and engagement. As most of the general social media audience were neither Shahbag protesters nor Jammati activists, they became the target of the propaganda and counter propaganda. Shahbag activists were busy explaining about various protest programmes while at the same time debunking propaganda spread by Jamaati activist pages.

After the mass assembly on 8th February 2013, the Shahbag movement began gaining immense popularity. On 10th February, a photo from the anti-Shahbag site Basher Kella went viral as news spread that a Shahbag protester hanged himself (See Figure 81, top photos) while demanding capital punishment for Quader Mollah. It was meant to reduce support for the Shahbag movement. On the same day, Cyberwar@Shahbag took a counter measure to expose the propaganda and posted on a pro-Shahbag site the original image that was doctored. The same measure was taken on 17th February 2013 (Figure 81, 2 left) by Cyberwar@Shahbag to counter the Basher Kella propaganda which was trying to stymie the whole Shahbag support.

Figure 81. Online contestation and negotiation between pro and anti-liberation war digital resistance during the Shahbag movement.

Through the Shahbag movement, Imran H. Sarker became very important in the political landscape of Bangladesh. He became the target of anti-Shahbag propaganda. Basher Kella tried to spread the news that he was having an illicit sexual relationship (see Figure 81). At that time, Cyberwar@Shahbag was not yet operative, so the propaganda against Imran H. Sarker is one example of what triggered the start of Cyberwar@Shahbag.

17th February 2013 was the thirteenth day of the protest of the Shahbag movement. The movement, which started demanding capital punishment for the war criminal JIB leader Quader Mollah on 5th February 2013, got its first significant victory. With the immense pressure coming from the masses and Gonojagoron Moncho, the parliament of Bangladesh passed an amendment (2013) to the International Crimes Tribunal Act of 1973 to allow the State to appeal the inadequate verdict, and to limit the timeframe to resolve such appeal within 60 days inclusive of a 15-day grace period. Additionally, this amendment includes a provision accusing organizations of the planning and execution of war crimes. This was a stepping stone ensuring capital punishment of Quader Mollah. On 28th February 2013, ICT handed down the verdict on Delawar Hossain Sayedee, one of the famous JIB leaders. He was sentenced to death by hanging for the murder, abduction, rape, torture and persecution of his countrymen in the 1971 liberation war. After this verdict came out, a doctored picture of Delawar Hossain Sayedee was posted on the JIB Facebook page Basher Kella, with a message saying that true devotees are honoured in miraculous ways. In trying to establish that Delawar Hossain Sayedee is a "holy man" and the verdict by ICT is erroneous, they claimed that Allah was showing signs – a vision of Delawar Hossain Sayedee's face on the moon.

 শুক্রবার গভীর রাত থেকে শনিবার সূর্যোদয়ের সময় পর্যন্ত অনেকেই চাঁদের মাঝে সাঈদীর
প্রতিচ্ছবি দেখতে পেয়েছেন। বাংলাদেশ, সৌদিআরবসহ বিভিন্ন স্থানে বিষয়টি মানুষ প্রথমে
গুজব মনে করলেও সত্যতা যাচাই করার জন্য অনেকে রাতে চাঁদ দেখার জন্য ঘর থেকে
বের হয়ে পড়েন। অবিশ্বাস্য হলেও সত্য অনেকই সাঈদীর চিরাচরিত টুপি, চশমা ও দাঁড়িসহ
তার মুখাবয়বটি স্পষ্ট দেখতে পান। চন্দ্রমাস অনুসারে চাঁদটি পূর্ণাঙ্গভাবে আকাশে উদিত না
হলেও একতৃতীয়াংশ চাঁদের মধ্যে সাঈদীর মুখাবয়ব বা প্রতিচ্ছবিটি স্পষ্ট দেখা যায়।
মহান সৃষ্টিকর্তা আল্লাহ রাব্বুল আলামীন পৃথিবীর পথভ্রষ্ট মানুষদের তার গায়েবী শক্তি ও
কেরামতি দেখানোর জন্য যুগে যুগে এমন অনেক নিদর্শন মানুষকে দেখিয়েছেন। এছাড়া
তার পথের অনুসারী অনেক নেকবান্দাকেও তিনি অলৌকিক ভাবে সহযোগিতা করেছেন।
আল্লাহ রাব্বুল আলামীন আমাদের তার আরশের ছায়াতলে স্থান দান করুন–আমিন।

Figure 82. Superimposed picture of Sayedee on the moon, posted in Basher Kella page, 2nd March 2013.

From the middle of the night of Friday (1st March) until sunrise of the next day, many claimed to have seen the reflection of Delawar Hossain Sayedee Sayeed (JIB leader, convicted war criminal) on the moon. People from Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia thought that the news was a hoax so they stepped outside to check. It seemed impossible but they claim they saw Sayeed wearing his cap, spectacles and his bearded face on the moon. In a lunar month, the moon did not rise fully but they claim they saw the face of Sayeed on one third of the moon. The Great creator Allah used his supernatural power to show his divine miracle and guide the people who deviated or are lost. Allah also supported his devoted followers in miraculous ways. "May Allah Rabbul Al Amin take us under his forgiveness and support," they prayed.

In the digital space, for many, this picture proved to be a holy sign, which would besmirch the verdict of ICT as a crime against an "innocent" person. On the online space,

pro-JIB digital activists posted Sayedee's image on the national flag, propagating the narrative that he could not be a Razakar. To draw the attention of people who do not use the Internet, announcements were made through loudspeakers at mosques about the picture. JIB activists circulated this picture using mobile phones and computers. This superimposed image of Sayedee actually convinced many people in different parts of Bangladesh who believed it was an omen from Allah and they joined the JIB campaigners in the streets to fight against the government's decision in order to free Sayedee. In that protest, around 375 people died (Dailystar, 2013).

Figure 83. Yes! Sayedee is on the moon with other astronauts. Facebook page of Cyberwar@Shahbag, 4th March 2013.

In the online space, the pro-liberation war bloggers and online activists realized that it was a strategic move by anti-liberation war activists to save Sayedee. In response, they posted and commented and reposted about the rumour created by Basher Kella and used pro-Shahbag digital sociality to counter the online rumour. Though successful in containing the online propaganda by Basher Kella, the efforts in the offline space did not bring much success since many people have already died in street clashes.
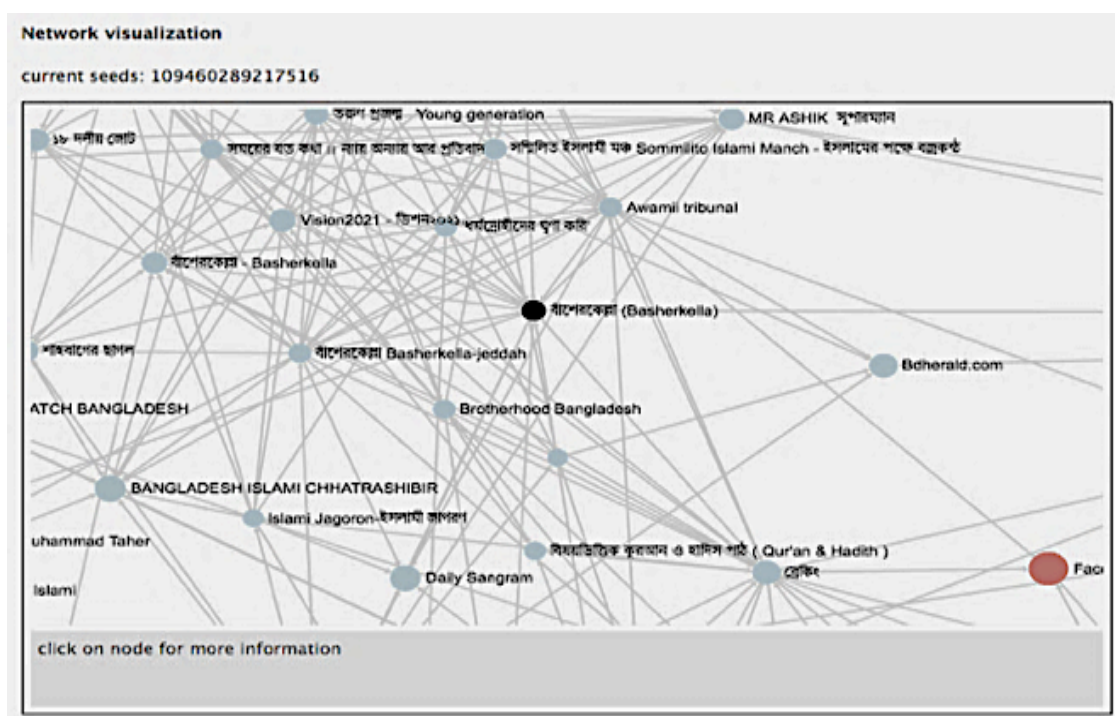
Figure 84. The anti-liberation war multi-modality digital protest network in the digital localities.

Using the open source network software Netvizz[70] and analysing the network connection of Facebook page Basher Kella[71], it was observed that it is multimodal within the digital locality of Facebook. As can be seen in Figure 84, the Basher Kella page is connected to the Bangladeshi Islami Chatra Shibir, Daily Songram, Mr Ashik and so on. Thus, the online digital resistance by anti-Shahbag, anti-liberation war forces can be said to be also multimodal. The digital locality of pro and anti-Shahbag camps helped in creating the digital resistance; at the same time, they used cyber-attack, group report to Facebook, ID hacking.

[70] https://tools.digitalmethods.net/netvizz/facebook/netvizz/index.php?module=search
[71] https://www.facebook.com/basherkellapage/

During that time, such online activities not only created the digital identity of who was supporting and not supporting the Shahbag movement but also created rivalry in the physical sociality.

Figure 85. Facebook ID block and mission to suspend Basher Kella, through mass reporting to Facebook, cyber-attack, ID hack.

Remembering the online war during the Shahbag movement, blogger Fatema (2015) explained,

I am a modern girl and I have my faith in Allah and Muhammad. I also support the cause to bring war criminals to justice. One day, I was browsing through Facebook and found a post about an atheist blogger who was killed during the movement. I read it carefully and found that the writing of the blogger was dreadful. I condemned it and wrote in a Facebook status, "In the name of freedom of speech, no one should write such a thing against my faith," and shared the post. After sharing the post, many of my Facebook friends criticised me quite badly. I was shocked. They were attacking me for no reason and calling me a rajakar, chagu and so on. Later, I have realised that I shared a post from the Basher Kella page and that was the main reason for this severe criticism and online bashing I had faced. Many of my friends misunderstood me, tagging me as Jamaat, Shibir activist. However, I had never been involved in any politics, ever. (Online, Personal communication, June 17, 2015, Dhaka).

The online war between anti and pro-Shahbag activists resulted in severe disputes both in the digital and physical locality, such as the killing and arrests of bloggers based on their digital activities, and the banning of blogs and social media pages such as sonarbanglablog, amaarblog, Basher Kella page and so on.

6.3 Digital Resistance Through Tagging: Reincarnation of "Chagu" vs "Vada", "Atheist" Tagging, and Pro and Anti-Liberation War Discourse in Bangla Blogosphere

As discussed in Chapter 3, the pro-liberation war digital resistance tagging became the tool for resisting blog opponents. One key term that surfaced in the disputes between pro and anti-liberation was "CHAGU." The online forces of the anti-liberation war were tagged "CHAGU," a derogatory term meaning the "goat." The pro-liberation war bloggers claimed that the pro-JIB bloggers tried to occupy a new online space in the blogosphere. They tried to demean the liberation war heroes, propagated lies against the liberation war, and created confusion by disseminating misinformation. They also used religion to create legitimacy and foster favourable opinion for JIB. The anti-liberation war bloggers continued posting and coming up with misinformation and propaganda. Among them, one blogger was *Trivuj (means triangle)* who had a soft spot for religion and took the side of the small number of anti-liberation war bloggers. The dispute regarding the issue of "Liberation war vs Jamaat" was getting bigger and bigger. During this time, text and visuals were the primary tools of the online war. Posting and reposting, commenting and re-commenting were the core activities among the bloggers in the online war.

Figure 86. Tagging Chagu: a visual representation of the icon of Chagu, which re-emerged through the online war of the Shahbag movement.

One pro-liberation blogger came up with an idea. The profile picture of *Trivuj* was a triangle and he put a photo of a goat in the triangle and started to call Trivuj, *Chaguram.* It was a symbolic criticism of Trivuj and his political position, likening him to a goat which is meaninglessly stubborn. This representation became a trend which carried with it a deep derogatory meaning in the Bangla blogosphere.

What does CHAGU mean? It is the persistent denial of logic in a debate by sticking to one's own point. It also includes providing a new and arbitrary explanation about every topic, such as Darwinism, theology, science, politics and so on. Who calls whom CHAGU? Pro-liberation war bloggers call anti-liberation war bloggers CHAGU.

Eventually, CHAGU began to be associated with the anti-liberation war forces, JIB bloggers who manipulate historical data to establish their legitimacy. The tagging of CHAGU was reincarnated through the Shahbag movement and was used as a serious tool of resistance in the digital locality of the Shahbag movement.

*Figure 87.*Chagu tagging emerged in the digital resistance sociality of Shahbag, BOAN Facebook page.

In its webpage, BOAN explained how to identify a CHAGU in online contestation

and gave the following examples:

- I want justice for the war criminals but...

- You are left, you are Atheist.

- How do you know Quader was a war criminal? Did you see him killing?

- Sheikh Mujib, forgive them.

- I do not like Shibir but I like their ideology.

- You are collaborating with Awami league and India.

- Even Hasina (Prime Minister) has rajakar as her relative.

- I do not know if Sayedee is a war criminal or not, but he is a very good alem
  (religious orator).

- Did they rape your mother or sister?

While proving to be a handy tool against an online opponent, tagging also has its darker side. Behind the comfort of anonymity, many bloggers started to falsely tag other bloggers. This led to a sharp decline in critical debate and discussion, which blogsites were originally meant for. In the default setting of social media, anyone and everyone can tag each other which may also lead to the practice of intruding in someone's private space and use it for different purposes. Later, similar trends came into existence, now known as "Trolls."

6.3.1 Counter Tagging "Bhada", "Nastik" by Anti-Liberation War Digital Resistance

In response to the act of tagging CHAGU (the goat) by pro-liberation war bloggers and activists, the pro-Jamaat bloggers came up with their counter tags, Bharoter Dalal: Bhada (Agent of India), Nastik (Atheist) and so on.

Figure 88. Anti-Shahbag page Basher Kella circulating images, showing photos with names of the Shahbag activists, and claiming that they made blasphemous statements and deserve the death penalty.

In the online contestation and negotiation between pro and anti-liberation war digital resistance, the anti-liberation war site Basher Kella was spreading propaganda (Figure 88) stating, "We want the death penalty for the 'atheist' bloggers who are criticising the Quran and Prophet Muhammad." After the killing of blogger Rajib Haider (as discussed in Chapter 5) by Islamic extremists, this kind of counter-tagging using "Nastik" or "Atheist" became very harmful for the pro-Shahbag bloggers and online activists. Tagging in the online space can result in a deadly attack on the bloggers and online activists.

The transcending (online to offline) nature of social media though social movements had been reconfigured according to the context and localization process. The bloggers who are tagged as atheists became the target of brutal attacks. Many bloggers were arrested for their posts in the social media sites. Tagging became a violent form of attack which transcended from the digital to the physical locality.

Summary

The pro and anti-liberation war online contestation created their digital resistance spaces such a Basher Kella and Cyberwar@Shahbag, respectively. The connective action among digital activists in both camps generated pro-Shahbag and anti-Shahbag digital sociality which became the digital protest sites. Using digital resistance tools (i.e. online propaganda, cyber-attack, group reporting in the social media platform, tagging, hacking) and strategizing, the forms of attack and counter attack (when, where to whom) in relation to the dynamics of the Shahbag movement, the online contestation and negotiation opened doors to a digital war which proved very influential and crucial in influencing the protest in the streets. This form of digital war between rival online groups provides a new understanding of digital resistance which is shaping the dynamics of the social media movement.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

In recent years, the phenomenon of social media movements has emerged significantly across the globe. Activists have erupted in protests in different regions and countries, occupying urban spaces, demanding participatory democracy, human rights equality, gender equality, reducing disparity based on socio-economic class, colour of skin, religious faith and so on. Some of these movements spread across the region and some across the globe. Some resulted in regime change, policy change, socio-economic reformation and some continued as a form of global activism, spreading into different localities.

In these movements, social media played a vital role not only as a communication medium or tool of protest but also as a site for protest, a space for digital sociality. Social media helped in creating digital localities and socialities which are transcending boundaries of spaces such as physical-digital, public-private, global-local. It is also reconfiguring socialities both in the online space as well as in the physical space. While sociality through social media became technical, sometimes automated, and introduced new norms and practices, it also changed the dynamics of the physical sociality. This process stemmed into hybrid socialities, a complex outcome of the digital and physical socialities, which is malleable, context dependent, dynamic and consists of multiple layers of actions and performativity. Social media movements are the cases where resistance-socialities can best be observed. Resistance that has emerged through social media creates a digital sociality turned into digital activism and, in a historical socio- political context, translates into the physical locality in the form of rejection, opposition, obstruction, counteraction, protest or movement. It is notable how social media is always in conversation with physical locality and sociality.

Through the expansion of the Internet and invention of Web 2.0 technology, social media emerged as a communication platform which is horizontal in nature and has the potential to reach the global population. This expansion and innovation are coherent to neoliberal market economy which encourages privatization, entrepreneurship, deregulation of policy and flow of capital investment in information and communication technology. The induced technological advantages of social media – such as increased user interactivity, easy production of content, opportunity for immediate communication and sharing – makes it distinct from traditional mass media. Although social media did not expand homogenously in the world but was rather localised in accordance with the local socio-economic, political and technological conditions, social media in Bangladesh localised through the emergence of a Bangla blogosphere. The Bangla blogosphere provided the platform which enabled users to communicate in the local language (Bengali) and introduced community blogging which is very much in sync with local Bengali culture, such as Blog Adda, Bloggers meet, Bangla blog day, Blogger rally and so on.

In line with the Bengali traditional form of gathering known as Adda, which is a democratic space for the middle class to gather and discuss about any topic, the Bangla blogosphere has correspondingly provided the online space for such gathering, debate and discussion. Interestingly, Blog Adda did not only remain in the online space but, through the localisation process, translated into physical spaces in the forms of Bloggers meet, Blogger rally and so on. Among these open democratic spaces, Chobir Hut became one of the meeting places where online space and offline space coincides and crated hybrid translocal space, where open debate and discussion can flourish.

In the traditional media environment and political discourses, the Bangla blogosphere provided the relatively "open," "free" and "autonomous" space and opportunity for the urban youth to communicate and discuss about diverse topics. It worked well especially for debate

and discussion on various topics which are more sensitive and otherwise cannot be discussed freely because the blogs not only provided the space but also the opportunity to remain "anonymous" and create a "digital identity" in the online community. These technologically encouraging, localised communication opportunity generated a collective digital sociality in the Bangla blogosphere. As the digital sociality is always connected with the socio-economic and political atmosphere, it further created discussion, debate, interaction and the space in digital localities which helped to eventually generate digital resistance.

In Bangladeshi society, the demand for the punishment of war criminals of the 1971 liberation war had remained unfulfilled. The intense debate, discussion and engagement regarding this issue grew into the two-sided digital activism of "pro vs. anti-liberation war." Like with any political, economic and social arena, the anti-liberation war forces tried to occupy the emerging digital space in Bangladesh. Digital resistance, in the Bangla blogosphere, began to oppose this process of occupation. It is worthy to note how the inclination among certain bloggers to favour the liberation war helped the issue become vibrant and alive in the digital locality. At the same time, the intense debate and discussion in the digital locality helped to influence and disseminate information to the online audience of the Bangla blogosphere. Thus, the digital activities of the pro-liberation war bloggers influenced, sensitized and informed the tech savvy urban youth and online users, a generation of bloggers who spend their time in online Adda through the Bangla blogsites. Hence, the digital resistance by the pro-liberation war bloggers and the counter discourse of "pro and anti-liberation" helped to keep the issue dominant in the Bangla blogosphere.

As earlier mentioned, the digital resistance did not remain in the digital locality but often translated into the physical locality. The digital activism created localised online based protest platforms such as BOANI, which helped in organising protest activities by the bloggers and online activists. Unlike traditional modes of protest by political parties,

BOANI introduced a fluid organizational structure, ephemeral network of protesters with less or no restriction in membership, horizontal participation, inclusiveness, non-partisanship, democratic decision-making, and issue-based approach. The digital activism also introduced a unique set of skills to digital resistance, such as understanding social media's potential as a change maker and for mass mobilization, creating online based protest networks, creating engagement through content and online activities, understanding different tools of social media with the knowledge of when and how to use them (banner, profile, content, timing, like, comment, re-comment, share, networking, role of admin and so on), learning skills in using traditional media, and knowing how to create online and offline connections. If properly used, the set above of skills also helped in generating "authenticity" and "trust" in the digital space. Through proper content creation, engagement with other bloggers, maintaining dependable and accountable online and offline activities, critical stand in different issues, developing a robust online relationship and overall long engagement with Bangla blogosphere created the validity and conviction of the online activists.

BOAN emerged as another online based protest platform, adhering to the qualities of BOANI which entailed a focus on pro-liberation war activism. The process of instigating resistance in the digital locality depends on the "intensities" of issue or events a digital activist is able to generate in social media. On one hand, some issues or events have the innate capacity to create engagement in the digital sociality; on the other hand, issues or events can be deliberately generated by the actors in order to create "intensities." This is possible because of the polymorphic transformativity of spaces that social media offers. Historical and societal conditions play simultaneously important roles in creating these intensities in digital localities.

BOAN members used digital resistance tools and protest networks to create the digital "intensities" against the unwelcome verdict handed down on a war criminal, which translated

into a physical protest. Using digital resistance tools and techniques, BOAN was able to create connective action among other users in the digital space. With connective leadership, it guided online users to focus and act on the topic of bringing war criminals to justice, and arranged frontline activism through street protests that eventually resulted into the Shahbag movement.

The dialogical relationship between digital and physical localities in a social media movement is a continuation of conversation between society and technology. Social media, on one hand, colonised the digital space but, on the other hand, encouraged automated connectivity, which contributed in creating digital sociality. This digital sociality in turn generated different influential roles such as bloggers and online activists, blog admins, page admins, influencers and so on. Along with the socio-political environment of the physical locality, the environment and role of digital locality actors helped in creating the Shahbag sociality and locality. Before the Shahbag movement, the safety and security of bloggers as opinion leaders and activists was threatened, and the anger and dissatisfaction towards dominant political practices was visible. Nonetheless, bloggers continued to emerge as a protest entity transcending boundaries of physical and local. The role of influential actors in digital locality was crucial because they helped in generating the intensity which translated into resistance in the physical locality. Bloggers and online activists followed the legacy of digital activism in Bangladesh by building a protest network in the physical locality through inclusion of pro-liberation war veteran bloggers and online activists. At the same time, they expanded that network in the digital locality through creating a Facebook page, event and so on. The integrated sociality of Shahbag protesters was possible due to social media's capacity to offer fluid, transcending, polymorphic spaces which went beyond geographical boundaries, created a connective sociality of rage and disappointment about the verdict on a war criminal. The Shahbag digital sociality also enabled protest participation, which was immediate,

connected and transformative to physical protest sociality. The plural participation of individuals became collective in both digital and physical localities.

As a result, this connective participation in digital localities then created fluid, sporadic as well as integrated resistance. As the movement evolved, the actions, incidents and interaction again fueled the digital locality into further intensification. The Shahbag digital locality, now being fluid, spread across the web and social media platforms. The very nature of this digital locality is that it is locally global, dynamic, contextual, socio-temporal, spatiotemporal and transcending boundaries of online and offline spheres. This created an energised circle of resistance connection between digital and physical localities facilitated by social media.

The resistance socialities emerged through digital resistance that translated into physical locality and helped in generating participation for a mass protest. Thus, it can be said that the resistance socialities can be diverse in digital and physical localities. In challenging the dominant political practices, resistance socialities in Shahbag introduced the politics of the "non-partisan." On one hand, it was challenging the dominant back door politics and political practices of a violent protest programme by ensuring a protest organisation which remains horizontal and ensured mass support and participation. On the other hand, it remained broad, accommodating a different bloc of support from different organisations. It also generated a new protest entity in the physical locality in the form of the Gonojagoron Moncho, and created a non-hierarchical decision-making process unprecedented in traditional political practices of Bangladesh. The environment of the protest mostly remained festive and inclusive, which ensured the spontaneous participation of diverse groups of society. Therefore, Shahbag's key achievement is the encouragement of non-partisan first-time protesters, which is a rare feat in Bangladeshi political culture.

The non-commoditized labour such as art, song, and street play became the most popular form of protest, most unlikely in traditional political culture. While rejecting dominant partisan politics and the culture of violence, the resistance sociality of Shahbag introduced the politics of the "non-partisan." The legacy of the "non-partisan" digital activism helped Shahbag to introduce practices which seemed "apolitical" from outside but were, if one scratched the surface, deeply political. The popular support for the Shahbag movement was aroused due its "non-partisan" face: a protest entity which is merely demanding the "just cause" of "bringing war criminals to justice." It should be noted that the popular perception is that Al, BNP and JIB all are suspected of having helped the "war criminals" for their own political gain in electoral politics. Al promised to bring war criminals to justice in a previous election but delayed its actions; and questions were raised against the standard of ICT, since BNP and JIB being old companions, BNP is viewed as having assisted JIB to get closer to power. The popular mass support towards bloggers and online activists gave the latter the power to challenge and negotiate with other political entities. During the peak of the movement, it can be surmised that had the Al government used force to contain the movement, then the whole nation would have gone against Al, and it would have lost popular support. Similarly, if JIB or BNP took violent measures against the Shahbag movement, then the whole nation would have gone against them. The popular mass support to the "non-partisan" bloggers and online activists put them in an advantageous position where they were able to mobilize student leaders of political parties to act and remain "non-partisan." In the frontline activism, Gonojagoron Moncho emerged as the protest entity tasked to accommodate possibly divergent participation which are to be guided in ways different from traditional political parties. Thus, a spokesperson was nominated, not a "leader" in the traditional sense.

The digital sociality of the Shahbag movement helped to integrate a collective identity known as *Shahbagi* which is inclusive, diverse and context specific but at the same time autonomous and fluid. In accordance with the context in digital and physical locality, it created connective action, not only in the physical but also in the digital locality. The counter movement and activities against Shahbag also used digital resistance as an important encounter instrument. The Shahbag movement was able to enjoy mass support due its "non-partisan," "non-violent," "inclusive" identity. It could also take the moral high ground, a protest collective demanding "justice" for a past "unjust" that has happened to the people.

Notably, it was this "moral high ground" that opened the movement to the counter attack. The killing of an "atheist" blogger, while the movement was unfolding, led to the use by the opposition of his social media activities and writing to create the identity of "Bloggers are anti-Islamic atheists." This information was further translated into the idea that anti-Islamic atheist bloggers are leading the Shahbag movement. This was propagated online and, in collaboration with traditional media, in offline spaces. During the Shahbag movement, this controversial identity not only attacked the movement's so-called moral high ground, but it also worked to divide the popular support and instigate protests by Hefazat. The counter demand for capital punishment for the "anti-Islamic atheist bloggers" was born.

Connective leadership appeared through the frontline activism of Gonojagoron Moncho. With Cyberwar@Shahbag, the operation to counter anti-Shahbag digital activities commenced. The "online war" also instigated social media political efficacy, when individuals believe that his or her online actions will have impact (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015) as well as slacktivism (Denisova, 2016; Hong & Huang, 2017; Lee & Chan, 2016) where one's online political action is characterized by a small degree of participation but may receive a certain degree of reward. These helped expand the movement in the digital locality, further contributing to the frontline activism. Significant digital localities related to the

Shahbag movement became sites of resistance as seen in the case of Basher Kella and Cyberwar@Shahbag. Social media created the socio and spatio-temporality which not only created different discourses and identities in physical sociality but re-enforced the socio and spatio-temporality through connectivity, portraying the fluidity of bloggers, online and offline activists, and their actions in the digital and physical localities.

As a part of a transformative process operating in social reality and technology, social media not only changes the communication practices but significantly affecting the co-operation mechanism. This transformative power of technology in dialogue with society help to create a pocket of "open", "autonomous" spaces not only in online spheres but also in the offline setting. The transcending power of social media enabled users to simultaneously co-present, and co-active in different spaces (e.g. local-global, online-offline, private-public) and users using the power of fluidity in social media generates different forms of sociality, multiple roles (e.g. entrepreneur, viewer, activist, influencer) action or non-action. Resistance through social media is one of the components of this transformative power. In one hand, the online space has its specific characteristics; on the other hand, it is continually influencing and influenced by the offline spaces. Thus a dynamic complex relationship is in operation, which contributed to the ambiguity of the concept of resistance. In one hand it is daily, an individual effort at the same time it is collective, sometimes mass protest in the street. Due to its fluid characteristics, it constantly re-configuring the plane of domination and resistance, which is a sign of the generative process of power. Generating "affective" publics and spaces, also breeding "risk" and "negotiation" in digital and physical spaces, whether through action or no-action, voluntary or involuntary participation. Resistance also became very creative and generative.

In the end, it can be argued that "resistance-sociality" has been developed in this research as an analytical tool to better understand the complex dynamics and forces of spaces and socialities, where subjective actions are defined as "non-partisan" or the self-proclaimed identification by the subject is "non-partisan," notwithstanding the fact that, as found in this research, the actions of the subject can be deemed "political." The connective action which generated the intensities in digital localities translated into frontline activism, which challenged and ignited both the activists and participant's social media political efficacy. When frontline activism operated in the physical locality, it produced connective leadership in the physical locality. In the digital locality, this connective leadership could generate the socio-temporality which is multi-layered, multi-vocal and context specific, transformative, and polymorphic. Re-enforcement of the socio and spatio-temporality through connectivity, portraying the fluidity of bloggers, online and offline activists and their actions in digital and physical localities. Therefore, through this extensive and meticulous understanding of space, connectivity, resistance and sociality, the theoretical platform of "resistance-sociality" is generated.

Index

Awami League (Al) / Bangladesh Awami League (BAL)

Bangladesh Awami League (Bangladesh People's League), often simply called the Awami League or AL, is one of the two major political parties of Bangladesh. It was founded in 1949 by Bengali nationalists under the name of All Pakistan Awami Muslim League.

It is the country's current governing party, after winning a majority in the 2014 parliamentary election. This party has been in power since 2008. The party, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, led the struggle for independence, first through massive populist and civil disobedience movements, such as the 6-point movement, and 1971 Non-Cooperation Movement, and then during the liberation war in 1971. This party claims to promote Bengali secular nationalism and Bengali identity, though it had collaborated with Islamic party Jammat-e-Islami on several occasions.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

Bangladesh Nationalist Party is one of the two major contemporary political parties of Bangladesh. It was founded on 1 September 1978 by former Bangladesh President Ziur Rahman (Military Regime) in the Presidential election of 1978, with a view to uniting the people with nationalist ideology in the country. Since then, the BNP had won the second, fifth, sixth and eighth national elections and two Presidential elections in 1978 and 1981. The party also holds the record of being the largest opposition in the history of parliamentary elections of the country. It does not currently have representation in parliament after its boycotting the
2014 election. BNP overtly promotes Bangladeshi Nationalism, emphasizing Muslim Bangladeshi identity. It maintains close alliance with the Islamic party Jammat-e-Islami.

Bangla Blogosphere (BB)

The blogosphere is made up of all blogs and their interconnections. The term implies that blogs exist together as a connected community (or as a collection of connected communities) or as a social networking service in which everyday authors can publish their opinions.

Bangla blogosphere refers to the localized blogosphere that has developed during 2005 to 2013 (8 years) where Bengali speaking bloggers interact. This is where the digital activism against anti-liberation war forces emerged, which led to the protest in Shahbag and later became the Shahbag movement. During the Shahbag movement, 50+ blogsites were operating, among them Somewhereinblog, Muktomonablog, Schalayatanblog and Amarblog were most prominant. The members of BOAN were bloggers from these blogsites.

Basher Kella

Basjer Kella is the anti-Shahbag, anti-liberation war digital protest site in Facebook and other social media platform. Funded and operated by Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, Basher Kella

and similar digital protest platforms were very active during the Shahbag movement and currently continue to operate in digital locality of Bangladeshi social media.

Bloggers and Online Activists Network (BOAN)

Following the announcement by the ICT of the verdict of war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah, on 5th February 2013, Blogger and Online Activist Network initiated forming a human chain followed by occupying Shahbag intersection in Dhaka metropolis, Bangladesh through a sit-in protest at Shahbag.

Until 5th February 2013, BOAN was a 3-month old Facebook group (founded in November 2012) with 1000+ members. They are composed of bloggers and online activists who are members of the Bangla blogosphere (such as Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Mahmudul Haq Munshi, Imran H. Sarker). Imran H. Sarker was one of the main organizers of BOAN. Before Shahbag, BOAN was a group of 1000+ bloggers and online activists. About 25 bloggers of the group actively participated in the Shahbag movement.

Bloggers and Online Activists Network for National Interest (BOANI)

Prior to BOAN, BOANI operated as the online based protest platform. Since its inception in Bangla blogosphere in 2011, it has organized many actions for digital activism both online and offline.

Chatraya Shibir / Shibir

This is the student wing of Jamaate-e-Islami Bangladesh. During the Shahbag movement, they were very active in social media as well as in the streets (not in Shahbag).

Chatraya League

Chatraya League is the student wing of the Awami League and was very active during the Shahbag movement.

Gonojagoron Moncho (GM) (Stage of Mass Uprising)

Gonojagoron Mancha is the central platform of the Shahbag protesters created on 8th February 2013 by the bloggers and online activists and representatives of student and cultural organizations who supported Shahbag movement from the beginning. It was not a formal (registered) organization as such, like a political party or a cultural organization, but it was the central platform of Shahbag.

GM: Membership Pattern

The membership of the Gonojagoron Mancha platform was fluid; members can be an organization or individual who supports the Shahbag movement. Although the membership was fluid, getting into the core group of Gonojagoron Mancha was difficult. While every supporter of Shhabag movement can be a Shahbag protester, not all can join the core group of Gonojagoron Mancha. During different phases of the development of the movement, the core membership of the Gonojagoron Mancha was also changed, but not radically. Some core

members have remained. Every member of the Mancha is a member of the Shahbag movement, but not all members of the Shahbag movement is a member of the Mancha.

GM: Spokesperson/Spokesman of Gonojagoron Mancha

Imran H. Sarker, one of organizers of BOAN and the first human chain and sit-in protest, was selected by the representatives of the students and cultural organizations who joined the Shahbag movement. It was the combined decision of BOAN and other student organizations present during the movement that they will not have one leader or group of leaders, and that Imran will be the spokesperson on their behalf. He was selected as the spokesperson of Gonojagoron Mancha. Till today, he is recognized as a spokesperson of Gonojagoron Mancha. Later in many occasions, he was considered as the "leader" of Gonojagoron Mancha by media but his identity as a spokesperson of Gonojagoron Mancha remains prominent.

GM: Decision Making Core Group (DMCG)

This the core group of Gonojagoron Mancha which consists of 20-25 members. The members include bloggers and online activists Imran H. Sarker (also spokesperson of Gonojagoron Moncho), Badhon, Arif Jebtik, Maruf Rasul, Ibrahim Khalil Sobak, Omi Rahman Pial (also with political affiliation to Al and BCl), Baki Billah (also leader of a left-leaning student political party CPB), and activists Lucky Akhter (also member CPB), H.M. Bodiujjaman Shohag (student leader BCl), and Nasir uddin yousuf bachchu (freedom fighter).

GM: Decision Making Process

Decision making in Mancha was inclusive. Representatives of different organizations collectively made decisions and the day-to-day plan of action. Though inclusive in decision making, there are many instances of conflict among the organizers of the Mancha. The role of Imran H. Sarker did not remain limited as a spokesperson, rather he also became an organizer and decision maker in Gonojagoron Mancha, thus in the Shahbag movement. During the movement, there were many instances when political leaders (including leaders of political party, ministers of the government and many more) have tried to influence Imran H. Sarker and the Mancha.

GM, Shahbag Movement: Funding

The movement does not collect or pay cash to the protesters. There was no credible evidence found in the research that demonstrated that cash was being distributed by Gonojagoron Mancha to the protesters.

Funding for Shahbag was organized by Gonojagoron Mancha. Donations came from the Shahbag supporters and private donations from the Shahbag activists, general supporters (local and abroad), supporting organizations (including private companies, media houses, NGOs), and influential individuals (mostly not visible). It may be assumed that the cost of the movement was mainly accounted for by Gonojagoron Mancha and handled by Imran. H. Sarker.

GM: No claim of representing all voices of Shahbag

While the basic premise of bringing war criminals to justice is the same, the Gonojagoron Mancha cannot fairly reflect or represent the opinion of "every protester" in their actions – nor do they claim that, especially since it is formed mostly by organizations like BOAN, BCL, Rumi Squad, Chilekotha, Projonmo 71, etc.

Hafazat-e-Islam (Saviors of Islam) (HI)

In 2010, Hefazat-e-Islam was formed, comprising the teachers and students of more than one hundred Qawmi madrasas at Chittagong, the second largest city in Bangladesh. This Islamic group is based in the widespread Qawmi Madrasas in Bangladesh. Its formation was triggered by the 2009 Women Development Policy draft (giving wom¥en equal rights of inheritance). They were protesting against a secular education policy and demanded the presence of religion-based politics which grabbed little attention of the masses. In 2013, they re-emerged as an Islamic coalition and came into prominence after organizing the counter protest against the Shahbag movement. They labelled all the Shahbag protesters as 'atheists' and arranged a rally on 5th May 2013, towards the capital city Dhaka, demanding execution of the so called 'atheist-bloggers'. On the same day, thousands of activists of Hefazat-e-Islam gathered in Dhaka and chanted "Hang the atheist bloggers!" followed by their extensive protests in both Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong. They also put forward an ultraconservative 13-point charter. The demands included a ban on the mixing of men and women in public places, the removal of sculptures, and a demand that the former wording of the constitution be reinstated, affirming "Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah" as one of the fundamental principles of state policy.

Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh 13-point Demand

1. Reinstatement of 'Absolute trust and faith in Allah' in the constitution of Bangladesh and abolishment of all laws which are in conflict with the values of the Quran and Sunnah

2. Enactment of (anti-defamation) law in parliament, keeping death penalty as the highest form of punishment to prevent defamation of Allah, Muhammad (S.A.W) and Islam, and prevent spreading hate against Muslims (most stringent penalty prevailing for defamation is 10 years).

3. Immediate end to the negative propaganda made by all atheist bloggers in a leading role in the so-called Shahbag movement who have defamed Allah, Mohammad (S.A.W), and Islam and their exemplary punishment.

4. Make an end to all alien cultural practices like immodesty, lewdness, misconduct, culture of free mixing of the sexes, candle lighting in the name of personal freedom and free speech.

6. Declare Ahmadias as non-Muslims by the government and put a stop to their negative and conspiratorial activities.

7. Stop installing more statues in the name of "sculpture" at road intersections and educational institutions to save Dhaka, the city of mosques, from becoming the city of statues.

8. Remove all the hassles and obstructions at Baitul Mokarram and all mosques in Bangladesh which prevent Musallis from offering prayers. Also stop creating obstructions that keep people from attending religious sermons and other religious gatherings.

9. Stop the spread of Islam phobia among the youth through the depiction of negative characters on TV plays & movies in religious attires and painting negative stereotypes of the beard, cap and Islamic practices on various media.

10. Stop anti-Islamic activities at Chittagong propagated by several NGOs and Christian missionaries under the guise of religious conversion.

11. End the massacre, indiscriminate firing and attacks on the prophet loving Muslim scholars, madrassa students and the general public.

12. End to all threats against Islamic scholars, madrassa students and Imams and Muslim clerics of mosques throughout the country.

13. Immediate and unconditional release of all detained Islamic scholars, madrassa students and members of the general public and withdrawal of all false cases filed against them. Compensation to families of all injured and deceased and exemplary punishment to all those responsible.

HI, Qawmi madrasa

Qawmi madrasa is one of the madrasa educational systems in Bangladesh. The Qawmi madrasahs are not regulated by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board. As private charitable organizations, Qawmi madrasahs are supported almost exclusively by donations (local and mostly from the Middle East). There are approximately 50,000 to 60,000 Qawmi madrasas operating in Bangladesh.

They are based on the Deobandi tradition in India. Deoband is a revivalist movement within Sunni (Hanafi) tradition of Islam. The Deobandi movement developed as a reaction to British colonialism. The term "Qawmi" emerged from the word "qom" (meaning "the public")—stemming from the fact that Qawmi madrasahs reject state funding and instead rely on donations from the public.

The movement was inspired by scholar Shah Waliullah Dehlawi and was founded in 1866. It had central operations in India, Pakistan, Afganistan, Bangladesh and recently spread in the UK.

International Crimes Tribunal, Bangladesh (ICT)

The International Crimes Tribunal (Bangladesh) (ICT of Bangladesh) is a domestic war crimes tribunal in Bangladesh set up in 2009 to investigate and prosecute suspects of the

genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistani Army and their local collaborators, Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams during the Bangladesh liberation war.

These tribunals are a domestic judicial mechanism established through national legislation, intended to try internationally-recognized crimes, hence their description as 'international crimes tribunals'.

Jammat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB)

JIB is the main Islamic party in Bangladesh which opposed the birth of Bangladesh. During the war of 1971, Jammat-e-Islami, collaborated with the Pakistani military. They were against the liberation of Bangladesh.

The world witnessed unprecedented crimes against humanity, perpetrated by the Pakistani Army and their local accomplices (such as the Rajakars, Al Badar and Al Shams). They are called the collaborators. Jammat-e-Islami was against the liberation of Bangladesh.

Razakar

The Razakar was a paramilitary force organized by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 who were found responsible for mass murder, rape and crimes against humanity by the International War Crime Tribunal (ICT) initiated by the Awami League Government.

Senior blogger

In the localization process of social media in Bangladesh, senior bloggers refer to those who have been with the social media boom since 2005. They know the inside story of different online and offline events in the blogosphere; they also know the different twists and turns in digital activism that occurred over the years.

Shahbag Movement: The place called Shahbag and its many names

Before Shahbag Movement

Commonly known as Shahbag, Shahbag intersection

During the Shahbag Movement

Referred to as Shahbag Square, in comparison with Tahrir Square

After the Shahbag movement

Became known as the Projonmo Chottor (Generation Square)

The Shahbag Movement was interchangeably referred to as Shahbag Square, Projonmo Chottor, Shahbag.

Shahbag Movement: How it all started

Badhan Shopnokothok and Imran Sarkar (blogger and online activists) posted the first Facebook post to call everyone to come to Shahbag. They started a Facebook event on behalf of Bloggers and Online Activists Network. Later, others from BOAN, members of Bangla blogosphere, social media users joined in the online protest. They also organized the first protest in the street through human chain. Around 120+ people and later, along with other Shahbag supporters, occupied the Shahbag intersection, closed off all transportation routes and started the sit-in protest in the streets.

Shahbag Movement: Narrative

The movement was demanding capital punishment (death by hanging) for war criminals of 1971. It was aimed at reclaiming the 'spirit of liberation war' a secular, participatory, democratic country and a fair society with a **'proper'** culture of **'justice'**. The demands (Shahbag Demands/G.M. Demands) have indicated a process of reclaiming the nation by getting rid of anti-liberation war forces not only from politics but also from other sectors. These forces had grown, spread and internalized in many sectors (e.g. banking, media, education, health) of Bangladesh society. The movement was also promoting the secular identity of Bengali nationalism, which was the main theme of the declaration of independence of 1971. Its objective was to rekindle the Bangalee identity.

Ami ke? tumi ke? Bangalee, Bangalee. (Who are you? Who am I? Bangalee Bangalee.) was the cry of the Shahbag protesters.

The Shahbag movement began first through online activism and then extended to offline activism on the same day, 5th February 2013. What started as a human chain of around 120 people (mainly urban youth), in 3 days, had turned into a living, breathing, shouting mass of 100,000 Shahbag protesters. The protest continued for a month, which was unprecedented in Bangladesh's history. It is considered as one of the largest social movements after the 1990s (mass movement for democracy).

Shahbag Movement: Number of Participants

Participants in the initial Shahbag protests reportedly numbered between 100,000 to 500,000 (The Guardian 13 Feb. 2013) or "hundreds of thousands" (Human Rights Watch 2013, 11) although the number varied during different phases of the movement.

Shahbag Movement: Against Government (AL) entente with Jaamat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB)

The movement was up against the ruling party's backdoor politics and the politics of Jaamat-e-Islami.

First, for decades, Bangladeshis have been demanding a fair trial for the 1971 war crimes; yet, the recent trials clearly showed Awami League's tendency to retain power through

backdoor politics, particularly with JI support. Many Bangladeshis felt that the tribunal fell far below the required international standards. The jury lacked qualifications and most reputed Bengali lawyers did not participate during the trials.

Secondly, the tribunal revised the International War Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973 to avoid retrial through the 5th Amendment. The Act originally permitted citizens to appeal the outcome of any war crimes trials. However, under the 5th Amendment, retrials are possible only in cases of acquittal. Quader Mollah received a 15-year sentence for five crimes, and an acquittal in one case. Hence, a retrial for the remaining case would put the tribunal in a dilemma – the death penalty for a crime that he had previously been acquitted of would call into question the nature of the tribunal. The 5th Amendment thus protected Mollah, and other Jamaat leaders.

Shahbag Movement Demands

The six-point charter given on behalf of the Gonojagoron Mancha (the only 'formal' platform representing the movement) to the speaker on 10th February 2013:

D1. Capital punishment (death by hanging) as the maximum punishment for all war criminals, including Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah must be ensured.

D2. An amendment must be made to the International Crimes Tribunal Act, allowing the prosecution to appeal, similar to defense, an inadequate verdict; dismissal of appeals from both the defense and the prosecution within three months of their filing must be ensured; any clemency or state pardon in a war crime case must be made impermissible; parties like Jamaat-Shibir engaged in politics in the name of religion must be banned.

D3. Ensure banning all political activities of Jamaat and Shibir; ensure stern punishment for treason to these parties for threatening civil war.

D4. Any political party, force, individual or organization hindering the trial of war-criminals must also be brought to justice.

D 5. The war-criminals, Razakars and Al-Badars, who were either convicted or under trial but set free after 1975 must be recaptured and brought to justice.

D 6. All businesses and socio-cultural organizations owned by war criminals like Islami Bank, Ibne Sina, Focus and Retina Coaching Centres and others must be banned and their source of income must be investigated. Their media outlets – Diganta TV, Naya Diganta, Amar Desh, Sangram and Sonar Bangla Blogs must be banned.

Shahbag Movement Timeline

February 5	Quader Mollah is sentenced to life imprisonment. Initial gathering of protesters in Shahbag.
February 6–7	Protests intensify, crowds grow bigger, other cities and towns pick up on the protest. Bangladeshi diaspora and student communities abroad also begin to express solidarity with the protest.
February 8	Hundreds of thousands attend afternoon rally in Shahbag and nationwide.

	Dr. Zafar Iqbal and others address the crowds.
February 9–10	Protest continues countrywide.
February 12	3-minute silence observed in Shahbag and all across the country. Shibir attempts to disrupt with mid-day rally which quickly turns violent as they use guns and bombs against the police.
February 17	Different schools in Dhaka hoisted the national flag and sang the national anthem to express solidarity with Shahbag protesters. Shahbag announced a grand rally to be held on February 21 and reiterated their demand of death penalty for war criminals.
February 18	Shahbag protest continues for the 14th day. Some pro-Islamic groups under the banner of Khelafat Andolon and Islami Oikkya Jote demanded the death penalty for top bloggers (Omi Rahman Pial, Ibrahim Khalil, Arif Jebtik and Asif Mohiuddin) of the ongoing Shahbag movement.
February 19	British foreign office minister Baroness Sayeeda Warsi praised the Shahbagh Square protest, describing it as peaceful and productive. Shahbag protesters vowed to spread their movement to the grassroots level by making 'Ganojagorn Mancha' (mass-upsurge stage) like Shahbagh square in every corner of the country.
February 21	After the movement ran for two weeks, with huge participation from masses of people, a grand rally at Shahbagh was held on 21st February 2013 in the afternoon. Dr. Imran H Sarker presented six demands before the people. An intelligence agency releases a message to the news media and law enforcement agencies which states that some "anti-state elements" will try to carry out destructive activities including suicide bomb attacks on places like Shahbag, Shaheed Minar and Baitul Mukarram. Law enforcement agencies arrest several Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and Shibir activists carrying explosives and planning to attack Shaheed Minar.
February 22	Shahbagh Ganajagaran Mancha calls for nationwide protest just 1 day after calling off their demonstration at Shahbagh. This happens after Jamaat activists went on a rampage in Dhaka city, clashing with police and attacking them with bombs and stones. Jamaat activists destroy the Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar, setting on fire the national flag of Bangladesh and flowers. Thousands of students and people angered by this vandalism attacked and set fire to some institutions owned by and linked to Jamaat-e-Islami in Sylhet city.
March 5	The Shahbag protest has completed one month. What was started by the bloggers and online activists had turned into a mass uprising, spread across the country to people from all walks of life, and among the expatriate Bangladeshis.

Social media (SM)

The globally local computer mediated communication (CMC) system through internet, also known as Social Networking Site (SNS), such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogsites.

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