Chapter - V

Conclusion

The emergence of Islam as a political force in Indonesian polity was almost inevitable. Although, Sukarno as a leader of nationalist secular wing successfully tried to lay the foundation of nascent Indonesian State along modern secular principles. While postulating ‘Pancasila’ as the secular basis for the country’s constitution he tried to mould the multiethnic culture of Indonesia in a single organic unity. Thus during initial years a general consensus on the nature of Indonesian state and to some extent a common post independence euphoria had prevented the Islamic forces from taking any significant lead towards fulfilling their Islamic aspirations. Secondly, in order to fight the bigger enemy i.e. the Dutch colonial powers they had assembled under a single umbrella ignoring their internal differences. In such a condition there was hardly any space for communal and sectarian political agenda as the national movement was fought largely under nationalist banner. Although the presence of right wing Islamist forces was never in doubt.

However, post independence euphoria could not last longer and a sizeable portion of population soon got disillusioned. Nationalists’ capability to deliver good for the country came under serious criticism in the wake of government’s inability to fulfill the public aspirations. This disenchantment was instrumental in invoking the Islamic forces to turn towards medieval theocratic panacea for both as a viable alternative political model as well as a common code of conduct for the general masses. The hitherto dormant fundamentalist forces found Islam as a lucrative rallying banner for the masses in a primordial society like Indonesia. Ulamas proclaimed Islam as a special doctrine that can be fitted into all walks of life. Nothing can be beyond the Islam and Islam has solution for all the phenomenal and non-phenomenal problems. The recent worldwide resurgence of Islamic forces also has a profound bearing on the new upsurge of fundamentalism in the archipelago.

In the 1960s, an exaggerated optimistic view of government-Muslim relations was advocated by a number of Muslim intellectuals, including Usep Fathudin and Utomo
Danadjaja from the Pelajar Islam, Ahmad Wahib, Dawam Rahardjo, and Djohan Effendi from the "Limited Group" discussion circle in Yogya, and Nurcholish Madjid from the Jakarta headquarters of the Islamic Students' Organization (HMI, Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam). As alumni of Islamic student's movements of 1965-1966, these men were neither dependent on or committed to the party organization of the 1960. Hence in the face of continuing government restrictions on political parties in the late 1960s, they distanced themselves from mass politics in favor of a new strategy of revitalization of Islam. At its heart lay the conviction that a long term "cultural" approach to Islamic revitalization had to be formulated, one capable of neutralizing military concerns while slowly deepening the roots of Islam in the nation as a whole.

In the Pan-Islamic world, Islam as an assertive political force began to be recognized in the late 1970s and early 1980s when its universal popularity as a source of social, ethical and spiritual power began to surface on the political horizon. A section of Muslims felt that Islamic revolution in Iran was an important development and the same mode in which Ayatollah Khomenie captured the power can be applied to their own country. The impact of happenings in Afghanistan, which resulted in the installation of Taliban regime, together with the rise of Osama Bin Laden as the champion of the Islamic cause, has been pervasive for the Islam worldwide and Indonesia was not an exception. People began to think Islam in terms of a potential soteriology for spiritual as well as mundane predicaments. In the beginning of 1970s a general consciousness towards the revivalism of political Islam started surfacing.

The Ulamas who were being segregated by the elite privileged section of the society who did not have time to involve in religious chorus. Being religious and adopting Pan-Islamic ethos were considered to be rural and conservative earlier as the Dutch ruled urban population in Indonesia were still shrouded themselves in western values which have been quite conspicuous among urban population till recent days. Thus the role of Ulamas or religious preacher in the politics was not significant though they had a good support in the rural areas.
During and after the late 70s the revivalism of Islam has been so fast and forceful throughout the Islamic world that privileged class could not be left entirely untouched by its resounding impacts. Islam became a dominant factor in day to day business of Indonesian people. The increased facilities of communication invited a mass exodus as people from rural areas flocked to the urban areas in order to get better livelihood. Facing the challenge of direct social segregation from the urban people the rural workers started attending the general religious gathering which provided them a feeling of unity and also a part of the town.

By late 1980s Indonesian political leadership now no longer could afford to ignore the growing demands for incorporating Islamic principles in the constitution. After two decades of pushing modernists Muslim into the political wilderness, Suharto suddenly became more responsive to the Islamic demands. Without relaxing the strict curbs on Muslim political activity — such as letting the United Development Party (PPP) return to its Islamic roots — he began to provide space of communal demands and tried in many ways to exalt his own Muslim credentials. The government relaxed restriction on the use of jilbab headscarf at public schools, introduced more Islamic elements into national school curriculum, and gave more authority to Islamic courts. Suharto went on Mecca pilgrimage with his family, and his eldest daughter Tutu gave speech at a public place wearing jilbab, attracting more media attention.

During late 1990s Suharto recognized potential threat from the growing Islamic consciousness among the general masses. He started taking interest by establishing a religio-political association called ICMI and spared huge fund for the welfare of the Muslims i.e. special arrangements for the Haj pilgrims and allowed for the establishment of an Islamic bank. He generously allowed for the reconstructing mosques and revitalizing the hierarchical status of ulama and the caretakers of mosques and fixing their salary. All these developments also gave a promising career prospect for the lower middle class youth to go for the study of theology. At the same times he also maintained his silence on the series of inter-religious violence particularly committed by the Islamic zealots in the late 90s.
Foundation of Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) by Habibie was the last bet given by Suharto to win the intellectual class of Muslims. The tumultuous events of the past years made Islam, more than ever, a farce to be reckoned with in Southeast Asian politics. Yet far from being a rigid, monolithic force, its manifestations in the region are richly varied, and more often characterized by tolerance and notions of social justice than by the quest for an Islamic state. In Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population, reformasi has led to flowering of 30 Islam-inspired parties.

The aspirations of Muslims reflected in the 1999 general election when a large number of newly established Islamic groups participated, however, they could not muster the support of the majority. The reasons were primarily the Golkar's strong base. Suharto's Golkar still was very well established and financially sound even after his messy fall and ignominious opposition from youths of the country. Golkar also got the second position because they had earlier showed that they are equally interested in the welfare of Muslims by establishing ICMI. The secondary reason was relatively disorganized Islamic groups and parties.

Soon after the fall of Suharto's long autocratic reign there was rapid proliferation of religious political parties. Most of the parties adopted Islam as their basic guiding principle. However, sharp differences over ideologies also existed among them. The chaotic atmosphere among the new Islamic parties was also because of the lack of a mass leader among the hard-liners Muslims. So when the schedule for the General Election was announced hard-liners hardly got enough time to produce a mass leader as a substitute for the soft Muslim leaders like Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Rais.

The New Order government's efforts to de-politicize Indonesia have driven many to look to Islam as an alternative political arena. Islam's growing attraction is not just reflected in higher attendance at mosque, Islamic study groups have blossomed on the university campuses and more women students have taken to wearing the jilbab headscarf. It is hard to know how far this rising Islamic consciousness has percolated in the society.

\footnote{For a discussion of university-based Islamic study student groups and their views on Islam, see 'Pembaruan', Tempo, 3 April 1993, pp.13-21. (in Bahasa Indonesia)}
Certainly, it has made inroads into the educated elite, the class known as priyai. Some, in fact, have described the changes taking place as the santri-fication of the priyai. Undoubtedly, the Islamic revival also has extended well into the category of nominal Muslims, abangan, but modernist Muslims claim of a thoroughgoing; santri-fication' of abangan Indonesian are probably exaggerated.

It has become clear, after the General Election in November 1999, that the Islamic elements are in rise and it has been less influential in enhancing the democracy and promoting positive social change. The stakes seems to be very high. The role of religion in power politics is gradually increasing, which may not complement the secular framework in due course. The recent Pan-Islamic insurgence in the country and their direct role in various subversive activities inside the country and trans-borders indicate the growth the hard-liners. Recent Kuta beach (Bali) attack, which took a huge toll, suggests that Indonesia is not beyond the Pan-Islam rather it has showed its integral relationship with the later. However, present government's active role in surfacing the culprits and the associates related to the above event has shown that the country still could mend its ways from the theocratic to democratic one. By enhancing democracy and promoting social justice, Indonesia's Muslim politicians could influence other Muslims in Asia and alter perceptions of Islam globally.

There always existed a clash between the two forces with "liberal" Islam on the one hand and "literal" Islam on the other. Islamic Scholars like Nurcholish Madjid and Azyurmadi Azra the Dean of the leading Indonesian seminary, IAIN (State Academy of Islamic Sciences) Syarif Hidayatullah are among the leading moderates. The two men are known for their willingness to address the challenges of modernity, their tolerance of other faiths as well as their sensitivity to gender rights. There are also a number of young generation figures - such as the Nahdlatul Ulama's irrepressible head of human resource development Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, and the academician Lutfi Assyaukanie. On the other hand there are ultra-conservative leaders such as Hidayat Nur Wahid of the Justice Party and Ja'afar Umar Thalib of Laskar Jihad who wish to see the imposition of shari'ah.
Recently, the Laskar Jihad leader was quoted in the Indonesian news weekly Gatra as saying: "The difference between us and them (the liberals) is the same as between the followers of Islam and non-believers." However, the two largest organizations of Muslims NU and Muhammadiyah have more commonality than the differences and they cover most of the Javanese Muslims. The NU, with its roots in the privately owned pesantrens (religious schools) of East Java has had a long history of autonomy, both organizations with an estimated membership of thirty million members apiece have managed to retain their credibility in the eyes of the people. The NU also directed a great deal of their energies towards education. Unencumbered by political ambition NU kiyai (or scholars) such as Abdurrahman Wahid (or Gus Dur) focused on the pursuit of knowledge. They spent time in striking a balance between western enlightenment ideas with traditional Islamic precepts. Having been on the receiving end of the Suharto government the NU developed a passionate and enduring commitment to human rights. As Ulil says of the thirty million strong association: "Whilst the NU is committed to tradition, it has demonstrated a surprising readiness to embrace new ideas. This is due in part to the benign leadership of Gus Dur." In this respect Indonesia is extremely unusual.

In most of the Islamic countries the religious organizations have formed a kind of solidarity with the government authorities and the liberal Muslims are isolated for example in Egypt, Naguib Mahfouz, a Nobel laureate was even the subject of a brutal assassination attempt in 1994. Indonesia's liberals are free they have freedom and so far they are very much abreast with the happenings in the Islamic world and their own countries. These liberals are very strong, western-educated secularists. Most of them have emerged from pesantrens. They are fluent in Arabic and trained in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Their background gives them the confidence to debate substantive religious issues. They do not retreat from confrontation and this kind of discussions related to Islamic jurisprudence shown on the local televisions have left a strong impact on the liberal minds as well those who tend to go as hard-liners.

However, the liberals also agree with the demand of the hard-liners for example, there are three essential factors on which they can pursue their demands:
1. Affirmative action in favor of indigenous Islamic entrepreneurs, against the Chinese who dominate the economy. Malaysia’s New Economic Program could be the model.


3. More emphasis on Islamic symbols in public life, including disapproval of gambling, abortion, and western consumerism.

No government can afford to ignore these demands the way Suharto did. Islam is no longer seen as the opiate of the uneducated and economically deprived. Professionals and the middle class increasingly are seeing it as a religion, which can provide for their spiritual needs in the context of contemporary society. There is a new sense of pride in being a Muslim among Indonesian Muslim now. Islamic values are not out of fashion now rather it has become a fashion. A woman with veiled face is considered to be a civilized one rather in general jeans or skirts in the small towns. Ulamas who found Islam as a very powerful tool founded various association i.e. Dakwah or any Islamic intellectual association etc started getting fund from Arab countries or various International Islamic organizations. This was basically caused by the rapid dissemination of the religious knowledge as well as available funding from the Arab world. The unprivileged mass who were not able to afford the expensive higher education in the country they are helpless to send their children into Islamic school where they get Islamic education gratis as a sole substitute for all core disciplines.

The present thesis “Islamisation of Indonesian Polity: A Study of Perspectives and Problems’ concludes that the distinct ethnic composition of Indonesia with influential number of non-Islamic groups comprising ethnic Chinese, Christians, Hindus and Budhists would well serve as a retarding agent in the Islamization of the polity. Although, the pressure from Islamization is mainly from below, and the upper echelons of Indonesian Muslim cleric play merely as a facilitator in order to secure their own interests.
One prominent reason of masses who are getting more attentive towards Islamic values in recent years is perceived economic gains rather than growing fundamentalization. The *madrasahs* and *pesantrens* are not merely serving as a recruitment base for future theologians but also providing a lucrative opportunity for a large number of unemployed Muslim youth.