

Social Structure Of Bangladesh



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- Bangladesh did not exist as a distinct geographic and ethnic unity until independence.
- The region had been a part of Bangla, বাংলা/বঙ্গ, whose history dates back to four millennia, and during the British period it formed the Bengal province, the eastern part of the British Indian Empire, which was dominated by the British rulers and Hindu professional, commercial, and landed elites.
- After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, present-day Bangladesh came under the hegemony of the non-Bengali Muslim elites of the West Wing of Pakistan.
- The establishment of Bangladesh, therefore, implied the formation of both a new nation and a new social order.

Social History

- Until the partition of **British India in 1947**, Hindus controlled about 80 percent of all large rural holdings, urban real estate, and government jobs in East Bengal and dominated finance, commerce, and the professions.
- Following partition, a massive flight of East Bengali Hindus effectively removed the Hindu economic and political elite Calcutta.
- After the emigration of the Hindus, Muslims moved quickly into the vacated positions, creating for the first time in East Bengal an economy and government predominantly in Muslim hands.
- These vastly increased opportunities, especially in the civil service and the professions, soon came to be dominated by a West Pakistani-based elite whose members were favored by government both directly and indirectly.

- Soon after independence in 1971, an ill-prepared Bangladeshi elite moved into the areas vacated by West Pakistanis.
- Except for members of small non-Bengali caste-like Muslim groups known as "trading communities," (Arrien) Bangladeshi Muslims almost immediately established control over all small- and medium-sized industrial and commercial enterprises.
- The 1972 nationalization of non-Bengali-owned large industries accelerated the establishment of control and influence by the indigenous community.
- The sudden rise of a new managerial class and the expansion of the civil and military bureaucracy upset the balance in both urban and rural sectors.

- Party affiliation, political contacts, and documented revolutionary service became the main prerequisites for admission to the rapidly growing new elite of political and industrial functionaries.
- The established middle class and its values played lesser roles.
- In the countryside, new elites with links to the villages bought property to establish their sociopolitical control.
- Also taking advantage of the situation, the rural political elite amassed fortunes in land and rural-based enterprises.
- The result was the growth of a new, land-based, rural elite that replaced many formerly entrenched wealthy peasants (*jotedars*).

Rural Society

- The basic social unit in a village is the family (*poribar* or *gushti*), generally consisting of a complete or incomplete patrilineally extended household (*chula*) and residing in a homestead (*bari*).
- The individual nuclear family often is submerged in the larger unit and might be known as the house (*ghar*).
- Above the *bari* level, patrilineal kin ties are linked into sequentially larger groups based on real, fictional, or assumed relationships.^[2]
- A significant unit larger than that of close kin is the voluntary religious and mutual benefit association known as "the society" (*shomaj* or *milat*).
- Among the functions of a *shomaj* might be the maintenance of a Mosque and support of a mullah.

- An informal council of *shomaj* elders (*matobbors* or *shordars*) settles village disputes. **Factional competition** between the *matobbors* is a major dynamic of social and political interaction.
- Groups of homes in a village are called **ed Paras**, and each *para* has its own name. **Several paras constitute a mauza**, the basic revenue and census survey unit.
- The traditional character of rural villages was changing in the latter half of the 20th century with the addition of brick structures of one or more stories scattered among the more common thatched bamboo huts.

- Although farming has traditionally ranked among the most desirable occupations, villagers in the 1980s began to encourage their children to leave the increasingly overcrowded countryside to seek more secure employment in the towns.
- Traditional sources of prestige, such as landholding, distinguished lineage, and religious piety were beginning to be replaced by modern education, higher income, and steadier work.
- These changes, however, did not prevent rural poverty from increasing greatly. According to a Survey conducted by the Ministry of Planning's Bureau of Statistics, 47 percent of the rural population was below the poverty line, with about 62 percent of the poor remaining in extreme poverty.

- The number of landless rural laborers also increased substantially, from 25 percent in 1970 to 40 percent in 1987.

Urban society

- In 1988 about 18 percent of the population lived in urban areas, most of which were villages or trade centers in rural areas.
- Urban centers grew in number and population during the 1980s as a result of an administrative decentralization program that featured the creation of upazilas.
- In appearance these small urban areas were generally shabby.
- Most of the urban population merely congregated in ramshackle structures with poor sanitation and an almost total lack of modern amenities.

- Towns were populated mostly by government functionaries, merchants, and other business personnel.
- Most dwellings contained nuclear families and some extended family lodgers.
- A few households or a neighborhood would constitute a *para*, which might develop some cohesiveness but would have no formal leadership structure.
- With the exception of a small number of transients, most town populations consisted of permanent inhabitants who maintained connections with their ancestral villages through property or family ties.
- Most towns had social and sporting clubs and libraries.
- Unlike in the rural areas, kinship ties among the town population were limited and fragile.

Family, household, and kinship

- Family and kinship are the core of social life in Bangladesh.
- A family group residing in a *bari* functions as the basic unit of economic endeavor, landholding, and social identity.
- In the eyes of rural people, the *chula* defined the effective household---an extended family exploiting jointly-held property and being fed from a jointly operated kitchen.
- A *bari* might consist of one or more such functional households, depending on the circumstances of family relationship.
- Married sons generally live in their parents' household during the father's lifetime.

- Although sons usually build separate households for their nuclear families, they remain under their fathers' authority, and wives under their mothers-in-law's authority.
- The death of the father usually precipitates the separation of adult brothers into their own households.
- Such a split generally causes little change in the physical layout of the *bari*.
- Families at different stages of the cycle display different configurations of household membership.

- Patrilineal ties dominate the ideology of family life, but in practice matrilineal ties are almost as important.
- Married women provide especially important links between their husbands' brothers' families.
- Brothers and sisters often visit their brothers' households, which are in fact the households of their deceased fathers.
- By Islamic law, women inherit a share of their fathers' property and thus retain a claim on the often scanty fields worked by their brothers.
- By not exercising this claim, however, they do their brothers the important service of keeping the family lands in the patrilineal line and thus ensure themselves a warm welcome and permanent place in their brothers' homes

- A woman begins to gain respect and security in her husband's or father-in-law's household only after giving birth to a son.
- Mothers therefore cherish and indulge their sons, while daughters are frequently more strictly disciplined and are assigned heavy household chores from an early age.
- In many families the closest, most intimate, and most enduring emotional relationship is that between mother and son.
- The father is a more distant figure, worthy of formal respect, and the son's wife may remain a virtual stranger for a long time after marriage.

Marriage

- Marriage is a civil contract rather than a religious sacrament in Islam.
- The parties to the contract represent the interests of families rather than the direct personal interests of the prospective spouses.
- In Bangladesh, parents ordinarily select spouses for their children, although men frequently exercise some influence over the choice of their spouses.
- In middle-class urban families men negotiate their own marriages.
- Only in the most sophisticated elite class does a woman participate in her own marriage arrangements.
- Marriage generally is made between families of similar social standing.
- Financial standing came to outweigh family background in the late 20th century in any case.

- Often a person with a good job in a Middle Eastern country is preferred over a person of highly regarded lineage.
- Marriages are often preceded by extensive negotiations between the families of the prospective bride and groom.
- One of the functions of the marriage negotiations is to reduce any discrepancy in status through financial arrangements.
- The groom's family ordinarily pledges the traditional cash payment, or bride-price.
- Many families adopt the custom of providing a dowry for the bride.

- The majority of married men had one wife, less than 10 percent of all married men had two or more **e wives**.
- Although the age at marriage appeared to be **rising** in the 1980s, early marriage remained the rule even among the educated, and especially among women.
- The mean age at marriage in 1981 for males **was 23.9, and** for **females 16.7**.
- Women students frequently married in their late teens and can not continue their studies in the households of their fathers-in-law.
- Divorce, especially of young couples without children, was becoming increasingly common in Bangladesh, with approximately one in six marriages ending in this fashion in the 1980s.

- Typical spouses know each other only slightly, if at all, before marriage.
- Although marriages between cousins and other more distant kin occur frequently, segregation of the sexes generally keep young men and women of different households from knowing each other well.
- Marriage functions to ensure the continuity of families rather than to provide companionship to individuals.
- The new bride's relationship with her mother-in-law is probably more important to her well-being than her frequently impersonal relationship with her husband.

Divorce

- In just five months from June to October 2020, the rate of divorce has increased largely.
- During this time there were 39 divorces everyday, one divorce every 37 minutes.
- Divorce rates are highest among working husbands and wives.
- In the five months of this year 5970 divorces have been taken place in Dhaka. There is an average of 1194 divorces per month.
- In 2019, there was an average of 920 divorces per month.
- Divorce has increased by 29.78% in the first 5 months of 2020.
- The incidence of divorce in 2019 has increased by 17% compared to 2018.

- There have been 4773 divorces in Chittagong 2019. In Sylhet there were 2336 divorce applications filed in 10 months of this year.

Reasons for divorce :

1. At present women are too conscious about their position which hastens divorce.
2. In today's mechanical civilization, the conflict of personality between husband and wife accelerates divorce.
3. Mutual respect, trust, and love between husband and wife are disappearing day by day which is the reason for divorce.
4. Lack of tolerance in conjugal life is taking an acute shape.

5. Bad temper, suspicion, self-ego, indifference, impatience are the reasons for breaking up the family.
6. The negative effects of TV serials, Facebook, and social media are considered to be the cause of breaking-up of family.
7. Extramarital affairs, taking drugs and romance also cause divorce.
8. Husbands' addiction to other women is considered to be a vital reason for divorce.
9. Forgetting own culture and tradition and leaning towards western culture.
10. Husband domineering attitude towards wife.
11. Breaking-up of a joint family and living an isolated life.
12. Being too busy at office/work place and not giving time to family.

13. Working women cannot spend much time in the family which is seen by many as the reason for divorce.
 14. Not having the tendency to accept the little mistakes of conjugal life.
 15. Social pressure on continuing conjugal life is vanishing gradually and it is a cause of divorce.
 16. Not giving proper maintenance to the wife.
 17. Torture to wife for dowry.
 18. Drug addiction, impotence and infertility.
- At present, In most of the divorce cases wives are taking initiatives.

Purdah

- As of 1988, the practice of purdah (the traditional seclusion of women) varied widely according to social norms, but even in relatively sophisticated urban circles, the segregation of the sexes, persisted.
- In traditional circles, full purdah required the complete seclusion of women from the onset of puberty.
- Within the home, women inhabited private quarters that only male relatives or servants could enter, and a woman properly avoided or treated with formal respect even her father-in-law or her husband's older brother.
- Outside the home, a woman in purdah wore a veil or an enveloping, concealing outer garment.

- For most rural families the importance of women's labor made full seclusion impossible, although the idea remained.
- In some areas, women went unveiled within the confines of the *para* or village but donned the veil or borka for trips farther from the community.
- In any case, contact with men outside the immediate family was avoided.
- The segregation of the sexes extended into social groups that had rejected full purdah as a result of modern education.
- Although urban women could enjoy more physical freedom than was traditional and the opportunity to pursue a professional career, they moved in a different social world from their husbands and often worked at their professions in a specifically feminine milieu.

Staus of Women in Society

Pre-Independence Era

- Before the 20th century, women in Bengal in general, experienced different levels of autonomy depending on where they lived.
- While women who lived in rural areas were able to roam around in groups and appear in public, those who lived in urban areas would have to observe **purdah by covering up**.
- Prevalent in both Hindu and Muslim families at the time, these **middle-class** and upper-class women were mostly homemakers who barely went outside; any occasional movement outside were done inside cloaked carriages.
- However, purdah was not common among lower-class women.

- Polygamy among men was practiced in this region regardless of religion.
- Nevertheless, the practice was not common among the general populace and was more commonly observed in the aristocratic class; recent eras see a further decline in polygamous relationships.
- Hindu women in 19th century were married off at a very young age.
- Since widow remarriage was usually restricted at that time, once their husbands died, the women was forced to jump into their husband's funeral pyres. This custom was called as sati. The widow had to burn alive with her husband's funeral pyre. It was very common in India.
- Historically, Sati was practiced in this region, mostly among the upper class, until the late 19th century.

Two Indian reformers who helped the Indian widows were:

▶▶ Rammohun Roy

He launched a powerful campaign against sati and helped in bringing about its official ban in 1829.

▶▶ Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

He carried on a long struggle in favour of widow remarriage. It was due to his efforts that the government introduced the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856.

Post-Independence Era

- Available data on health, nutrition, education, and economic performance indicated the status of women in Bangladesh remained considerably inferior to that of men.
- Women, in custom and practice, remained subordinate to men in almost all aspects of their lives; greater autonomy was the privilege of the rich or the necessity of the very poor.
- Most women's lives remained centred on their traditional roles, and they had limited access to markets, productive services, education, health care, and local government.

- This lack of opportunities contributed to high fertility patterns, which diminished family well-being, contributed to the malnourishment and generally poor health of children, and frustrated educational and other national development goals.
- In fact, acute poverty at the margin appeared to be hitting hardest at women.
- As long as women's access to health care, education, and training remained limited, prospects for improved productivity among the female population remained poor.

- About 82 percent of women lived in rural areas in the late 1980s.
- The majority of rural women, perhaps 70 percent, were in small cultivator, tenant, and landless households; many worked as labourers part-time or seasonally, usually in post-harvest activities, and received payment in kind or in meager cash wages.
- Another 20 percent, mostly in poor landless households, depended on casual labour, gleaning, begging, and other irregular sources of income; typically, their income was essential to household survival.
- The remaining 10 percent of women were in households mainly in the professional, trading, or large-scale landowning categories, and they usually did not work outside the home.

- The economic contribution of women was substantial but largely unacknowledged.
- Women in rural areas were responsible for most of the post-harvest work, which was done in the chula, and for keeping livestock, poultry, and small gardens.
- Women in cities **relied** on domestic and traditional jobs, but in the 1980s they **increasingly worked in manufacturing jobs**, especially in the readymade garment industry.
- Those with more education worked in government, health care, and teaching, but their numbers remained very small.

- Continuing high rates of population growth and the declining availability of work based in the chula meant that more women sought employment outside the home.
- Accordingly, the female labour force participation rate doubled between 1974 and 1984, when it reached nearly 8 percent.
- Female wage rates in the 1980s were low, typically ranging between 20 and 30 percent of male wage rates.
- In 2019 Bangladesh's highest court ruled that on marriage registration forms, a word used to describe unmarried women that can also mean "virgin" must be replaced with a word that only means "an unmarried woman".

Women education

- The literacy rate in Bangladesh is lower for females (55.1%) compared to males (62.5%) – 2012 estimates for population aged 15 and over.
- During the past decades, Bangladesh has improved its education policies; and the access of girls to education has increased.
- In the 1990s, girls' enrolment in primary school has increased rapidly.
- Although there is now gender parity in enrolments at the primary and lower secondary school level, the percentage of girls drops in the later secondary school years.

Pioneer of Women education

- Roquiah Khatun, commonly known as **Begum Rokeya**, a pioneer of women's liberation in South Asia was a Bengali **feminist thinker, writer, educator and political activist from British India**.
- Roquiah Khatun was born in **1880** in Pairaband village, Rangpur.
- Five months after Rokeya's husband's death, she established a high school, naming it **Sakhawat Memorial Girls' High School**.
- It started in Bhagalpur, a traditionally Urdu-speaking area, with five students.
- A dispute with her husband's family over property forced her to move the school in **1911 to Calcutta** (Kolkata).
- Rokeya held education to be the central precondition of women's liberation, establishing the first school aimed primarily at Muslim girls in Kolkata.

- She is said to have gone from house to house persuading the parents to send their girls to her school.
- She advocated for both men and women to be treated equally as rational beings, noting that the lack of education for women was responsible for their inferior economic position.
- Bangladesh observes **Rokeya Day on 9 December** every year to commemorate her works and legacy.
- On that day, the Bangladesh government also confers Begum Rokeya Padak on individual women for their exceptional achievement.
- In 2004, Rokeya was ranked number 6 in BBC's poll of the Greatest Bengali of all time.

Workforce participation

- Women in Bangladesh are engaged in many work activities, from domestic work inside the home, to outside paid work.
- Rural women have high contribution in our national economy.
- Women's work is often undervalued and under-reported.
- Now, many women are highly educated and working as doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers etc.

Engagement in public life

- Bangladesh has continuously had a female prime minister for 30 years. This is the longest unbroken tenure for a democratically elected female head of government in the world.
- 21% of MPs in the Jatiya Sangsad are women, the highest proportion in South Asia.
- Many women candidates participate in union parishad election and are elected.

Land and property rights

- Women's inheritance rights are poor: discriminatory laws and patriarchal social norms make it difficult for many women to have access to land.
- Muslim women inherit according to the Sharia Law:
- A woman inherits half than her brother from their parents property.
- A woman inherits one eighth property of her dead husband but a man inherits one fourth property of his dead wife.
- The Hindu women have no inheritance in father's property.

Crimes against women : Rape

- Incidents of rape cases in recent months have raised serious concerns over the safety of women in Bangladesh with the country witnessing an average of three rape cases daily in the first eleven months of 2021.
- At least 1,247 women were raped in the January-November period, while 286 faced attempts at rape (Ain O Salish Kendra).
- Forty-six of them died following rape while nine committed suicides.
- The statistics revealing such horrifying pictures come a day after a woman tourist was allegedly kidnapped and gang-raped by three men when she went to Cox's Bazar with her family on a trip.
- As many as 1,413 women were raped in 2019 while the number was 732 in 2018.

- But the real number would be much higher as the figures only come from selected media reports, while most of the cases go unreported.
- Many victims avoid filing a case in fear of social stigma, and harassment from offenders.
- The perpetrators do this again and again in the absence of exemplary punishment, and they also set themselves free easily from prison by using political power and economic power.
- In this society, people do not throw blame at the rapists; instead they are obsessed with attacking the rape survivors.
- The rights defender called upon the authorities to introduce sex education from an early age as the only way to solve this problem.

- The legislators did not believe at all that rape is a serious crime as well as a violation of human rights.
- Everyone knows how easy it is to rape a woman in this country.
- Rapists are well aware that they will not face any consequences at the end of the day.
- Unfortunately, we still don't have strong legislation that will work as a safeguard against rape.
- Bengali settlers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts have raped indigenous women. Bangladeshi security forces doing little to protect them and instead assisting the rapists and settlers.

Child marriage

- Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world.
- The practice of dowry, although illegal, contributes to this phenomenon.
- 29% of girls get married before age 15 and 65% before the age of 18.
- Government action has had little effect, and has been contradictory: although the government has pledged to end child marriage by 2041 but in 2015 attempted to lower the age of marriage for girls from 18 to 16.
- An exception to the law was instituted so that marriage at 16 is permitted with parental consent.

Domestic violence

- According to a 2015 survey, over 70 percent of married women or girls in Bangladesh have faced some form of intimate partner abuse; about half of whom say their partners have physically assaulted them.
- Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) reported that at least 235 women were murdered by their husband or his family in just the first nine months of 2020.
- Between January 2001 and December 2019, over 3,300 women and girls were murdered over dowry disputes.
- These numbers, however, are based on media reports and are likely only a fraction of the true levels of such violence.
- Violence against women and girls in Bangladesh appears to have further increased during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Domestic violence

- According to BRAC, nearly 70 percent increase in reported incidents of violence against women and girls in March and April 2020 compared 2019.
- In 2010, Bangladesh enacted the *Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010*.
- Domestic violence (DV) is accepted by a significant percentage of the population: in the 2011 DHS survey, 32.5% of women said that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for specific reasons (the most common reason given was if the wife "argues with him" – at 22.4%).
- Violence towards women is a crime. Awareness needs to be raised to uphold women's human rights.

Dowry

- Dowry violence is a problem in Bangladesh. The country has taken action against the practice of dowry through laws such as *Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980*; *Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Ordinance, 1982*; and *Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Ordinance, 1986*.
- However, abuses regarding dowry continue, with the legal enforcement against dowry being weak.

Eve-teasing

- *Eve-teasing* is a euphemism used throughout South Asia, in countries such as Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, for public sexual harassment or molestation (often known as "street harassment") of women by men, where Eve alludes to the very first woman, according to the Biblical and Quranic creation story.
- Sexual harassment affects many women in Bangladesh, especially teenage girls, where the girls are teased.
- Bangladeshi women and girls don't get the rights of freedom of movement everywhere as the men have, the society is based on patriarchal values and socially conservative policies towards women and girl's freedom.

Health

- The maternal mortality rate is 240 deaths/100,000 live births (as of 2010).
- Sexually transmitted infections are relatively common, although the rate of HIV/AIDS is low.
- A 2014 study found that Bangladeshi women' knowledge about different diseases is very poor.
- Bangladesh has recently expanded training programs of midwives to improve reproductive health and outcomes.

Family planning

- In the 1990s, family planning was recognised as very important in Bangladesh.
- The total fertility rate (TFR) is 2.45 children born/woman (2014).

Status of children in Bangladesh

- Children under 14 years are not allowed to work in any establishment.
- The National Child Labor Survey reported that there were 1.3 million child laborers in Bangladesh. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that approximately 5 million children are full-time workers (2020).
- Poverty is widely acknowledged as the primary cause of child labor.
- A large number of children are deprived of their basic human rights due to unacceptable health, nutrition, education as well as social conditions.
- In addition, children are exposed to severe forms of sexual, physical and mental abuses at home, in work place, in institutions and public places.
- The nature and extent of violence against children irrespective of age, sex and class has been increasing day by day.

Status of LGBT in Bangladesh

- **Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)** rights are heavily suppressed in Bangladesh.
- Due to the conservative mentality of Bangladeshi society, negative attitudes towards **homosexuals are very high**.
- Homosexuality is illegal under Bangladeshi law, which is inherited from the British Indian Government's Section 377 of 1860.
- According to the law, the punishment for homosexuals is up to life imprisonment, therefore it is dangerous for those who identify as homosexuals to openly come out in society because of social rejection, hate or assault.

- In April 2016, LGBT activist Xulhaz Mannan, founder and publisher of *Roopbaan*, the only magazine for the LGBT community in Bangladesh, was killed along with Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy, another LGBT activist.
- Ansar-al-Islam, an Al-Qaida-linked group, claimed responsibility for the murders stating as he had himself confirmed his sexuality he needed to be killed according to shariah law.
- In 2013, two lesbian couples were arrested for marrying in secret.
- In July 2015, after a hijra witnessed the murder of a secular blogger, and successfully helped in the arrest the murderers, who were Islamic radicals.
- The UN Population Fund and several NGOs have put pressure on Bangladesh to address issues such as LGBT rights and sexuality education.

- On 11 November 2013, hijras were recognised as a separate gender by the Bangladeshi Government in a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister.
- Along with males and females, hijras will be identified as a separate gender on official documents.
- A survey by the Ministry of Social Welfare showed that as of 2013, there are 10,000 registered hijras in the country.
- Despite this, Bangladesh does not have policies outlining measures individuals must undergo to legally change their gender on their official documents, nor is there clarity about who may qualify as a hijra.
- In December 2014, the Ministry of Social Welfare invited hijras to apply for government employment.

- In January 2015, the Ministry of Health issued a memorandum requesting that "necessary steps are taken to identify hijras by conducting thorough medical check-ups".
- Bangladeshi government announced plans to recruit and enlist hijras as traffic police.
- Bangladesh opened its first religious school for transgender people in Dhaka in 2020.
- In April 2019, it was reported that Bangladesh will allow the "hijra" to vote under their proper gender identity, as officials have introduced "hijra" as a third gender option on voting forms for the first time.
- News presenter, Chairperson Upazilla

Social classes and stratification

- Society in Bangladesh in the 1980s, with the exception of the Hindu caste system, was not rigidly stratified; rather, it was open, fluid, and diffused, without a cohesive social organization and social structure.
- Social class distinctions were mostly functional, however, and there was considerable mobility among classes.
- Even the structure of the Hindu caste system in Bangladesh was relatively loose because most Hindus belonged to the lower castes.
- Egalitarian principles of Islam were the basis of social organization.
- Unlike in other regions of South Asia, the Hindu caste-based social system had a very limited effect on Bangladeshi Muslim social culture.

- Although several hierarchically arranged groups—such as the *syeds* (noble born) and the *sheikhs* or *shaykhs* (also noble born)--were noticeable in Bangladesh Muslim society.
- Traditional Muslim class distinctions had little importance in Bangladesh. Rather, fairly permeable classes based on wealth and political influence existed both in the cities and in the villages.
- The proscription against marriage between individuals of high-born and low-born families, once an indicator of the social gap between the two groups, had long ago disappeared.
- Most matrimonial alliances were based on education, wealth and power and not on the ties of family distinction.

- The urban social stratification is beset with important regional variation.
- While most district towns are still small and backward, a few are relatively advanced.
- Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna, incorporate large industrial and commercial units along with a vibrant service sector.
- Cosmopolitanism has come to shape the nature of social stratification of the community living in those large cities.
- Modern classes like corporate executives, civil bureaucrats, professionals, intellectuals, art workers, industrialists and businessmen emerged in the urban areas.
- A large labour force engaged in both formal and informal sectors also characterise the urban population.

- Wealth and education largely determine urban social status. The traditional factor like lineage background has reduced to a level of minimum significance.
- Urban lifestyles, dresses, etiquette etc vary along class lines as well as the recreational activities.
- The business people significantly control politics.
- However, all politically powerful people do not enjoy social status in the eyes of the common people.
- Educated people enjoy a fair social status despite the fact that they are not always rich.
- The person who can successfully combine wealth and education surpasses others in terms of enjoying social status.

- The Hindu society in Bengal was built along the caste lines although the widely known four-fold classification BRAHMAN, KSATRIYA, vaisya and sudra did not emerge in the classical manner.
- The two middle castes, Ksatriya and Vaisya, were not visible in the way they were in other parts of India.
- In Bengal the main caste division was between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans.
- The Brahmans occupied the highest position of the social ladder.'
- About 75 percent of the Hindus in Bangladesh belonged to the lower castes, notably *namasudras*.
- Some members of higher castes belonged to the middle or professional class, but there was no Hindu upper class.

- Traditionally, the non-Brahman sub-castes were broadly divided into three hierarchical categories: superior admixture, medium admixture and inferior admixture.
- The first category included twenty sub-castes, including kayastha (writer), baidya (traditional physician), TANTI (weavers), ugra (warrior) and others.
- The second category included twelve sub-castes like swarnokar (goldsmith), dhibor (fishermen) etc.
- And the last category included nine sub-castes like CHANDAL (persons cremating corpses), chamar (cobblers), sweeper and others.
- Members of the last category were the untouchables.
- Now, the Hindus have increasing participation in nontraditional professions.

Corruption in Bangladesh

- Corruption in Bangladesh has been a continuing problem.
- It has spread over the whole society and nearly become a way of life.
- According to all major ranking institutions, Bangladesh routinely finds itself among the most corrupt countries in the world.
- Transparency International's (TI) 2020 Corruption Perception Index ranks the country 26th place out of 180 countries.
- The public sectors conducted by the Government are the most corrupted sectors of the country.
- Anti Corruption Commission is formed in 2004, but is considered to be largely ineffective in investigating and preventing corruption because of governmental control over it.

- Bribery, rent-seeking and inappropriate use of government funds, excessive lobbying, long time delays in service performance, pilferage, irresponsible conduct from the government officials, bureaucratic intemperance have made public sector departments the most corrupt sectors of Bangladesh.
- Public sectors include police departments, judiciary, Tax, fire departments, water supply, electricity, gas supply, education, waste disposal, health, transportation, administration etc.
- A 2012 study found that 97% of MPs were involved in illegal activities, 77% abusing their positions on local election boards, 75% abusing development projects for their own benefit, 53% being involved in outright criminal acts, 69% influencing procurement decisions, and 62% influencing local elections.