

A silhouette of a person carrying a large, rounded bundle on their head, set against a dramatic sky with soft, glowing clouds at sunset or sunrise. The person is seen from the side, and the bundle is the central focus of the upper half of the image. The background shows the dark outlines of trees and a horizon line where the sun is setting.

Excluded Groups and Democratization

Philip Gain

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The Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), a non-profit Bangladeshi organization, was founded in 1993 to promote investigative reporting, engage in action-oriented research and assist people to think and speak out. *Excluded Groups and Democratization* is a monograph based on research and long-time association of the author with the excluded communities of Bangladesh.

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PREFACE

Economic progress that Bangladesh has made in recent times is significant. This demonstrates strong will and hard work of the people of Bangladesh. It is astounding that Bangladesh, a country with little over half of India's per capita income, fares better than India and some of its neighboring countries in many social indicators. Reduction in extreme poverty is also impressive in Bangladesh. Yet, there is a significant percentage of population of the country—socially and economically excluded for their identity, captive situation, and various other reasons. Many of these excluded groups live on the fringes of the country deprived of equal opportunities and facing wide-ranging social, economic and political problems.

It has been an opportunity for me to carry out a study of the excluded communities of Bangladesh for years. My frequent contact and interaction with different marginal and excluded communities were also of immense value to understand the social exclusion issues in Bangladesh.

In this paper I have tried to explore links between the socially and economically marginalized and excluded population and political governance in Bangladesh. I have tried to give a map of the excluded groups in Bangladesh [as comprehensive as possible] and examine the factors leading to political and social exclusions. The politics of identity, religious discrimination, economic deprivation, and poverty are indeed the root causes behind the predicaments these groups in Bangladesh face.

Lack of political protection is a common problem that the religious minorities and excluded groups face in Bangladesh where 'Islam' is the state religion and all people are identified as 'Bangalees'. I have tried to explain factual evidences and stressed the actions that the state and other actors may consider for change in the lives of the excluded communities.

This paper was first published by Manohar Publishers and Distributors in Delhi, India in 2015 in 'Political Institutions and Conflict: Essays from Bangladesh and India' edited by Imtiaz Ahmed, D. Suba Chandran and Shahab Enam Khan under the auspices of Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), Sri Lanka and Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the Netherlands. I have further updated the paper and Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) publishes it as a separate monograph.

Philip Gain

Excluded Groups and Democratization

Economic progress that Bangladesh has made in recent times is well appreciated around the world. The extreme poverty has also significantly decreased. Yet there are socially and economically excluded groups of people for their identity, captive situation, and various other reasons. Many of these excluded groups live on the fringes of the country deprived of equal opportunities and facing wide-ranging social, economic and political problems.

Philip Gain, the author, surveys the links between the socially and economically marginalized and excluded population and political governance in Bangladesh. The author provides a map of the excluded groups in Bangladesh and examines the factors leading to political and social exclusions.

Lack of political protection is a common problem that the religious minorities and excluded groups face in Bangladesh where 'Islam' is the state religion and all people are identified as 'Bangalees'. Besides, the ethnic conflicts between the indigenous peoples and the Bengalee settlers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have not been resolved. Explaining factual evidences, the author also stresses the actions that the state and other actors should adopt to explore way forward and opportunities for change.



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