

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF EXCLUSION
OF THE MANTA COMMUNITY IN BANGLADESH:
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY ON DENIAL OF RIGHTS**

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ABSTRACT

The Manta are one of the oldest occupational minority communities living in the southwest costal region of Bangladesh, having their own socio-cultural and occupational status. Their social solidarity, occupational uniqueness, religious beliefs, and traditions as a distinct culture are at stake today. The mainstream Muslim community discriminates against the Manta for two reasons. Firstly, because of women's engagement in fishing and work outside of family, and secondly, because the worship of some non-Muslim natural deities. Because of these two behaviours the Mantas are segregated as lower class Muslims. These prejudices cause powerful social stigmas and taboos against the Manta community. Social stigmas have negative effects on their beliefs, perception of rights, traditions and life styles. This social and cultural stigma also provokes the denial of several economic, political, cultural and other institutional rights of the Manta by forcing them into social exclusion. The social and cultural construction of the Manta's exclusion in the stratified rural Muslim society is the major focal point of the present research. This generation-long collective exclusion of the community also limits their capacity to understand rights, and their ability to claim their rights. This research was conducted by ethnographic interviews with three Manta communities in the Galachipa area of Potuakhali district, and key-informant interviews with non-Manta people who are in contact with the Manta communities. The present research examines the context and the perception of the Manta's view of the rights and the state of overall human rights violations against the community.

**KEY WORDS: SOCIAL EXCLUSION/ OCCUPATIONAL MINORITY/
MANTA COMMUNITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS-BANGLADESH.**

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