AGING IN BANGLADESH AND LOCAL TRADITIONAL CULTURE

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The article examines the influence of dynamic socio-cultural transformations in Bangladesh on the position and perception of older people. It analyzes the contradiction between the traditional paradigm of deep respect for the older generation and the challenges posed by urbanization, the nuclearization of the family, and technological progress. Based on the authors' personal observations and cultural analysis, the strategies of adaptation of older people are identified, and ways of integrating traditional values into the modern social context to ensure dignified aging are proposed.

Keywords: aging, traditional culture, respect for elders, urbanization, intergenerational relations, social isolation, adaptation of the elderly.

СТАРЕНИЕ В БАНГЛАДЕШ И МЕСТНАЯ ТРАДИЦИОННАЯ КУЛЬТУРА

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В статье рассматривается влияние динамичных социокультурных трансформаций в Бангладеш на положение и восприятие пожилых людей. Анализируется противоречие между традиционной парадигмой глубокого уважения к старшему поколению и вызовами, порождаемыми урбанизацией, нуклеаризацией семьи и технологическим прогрессом. На основе личных наблюдений авторов и культурологического анализа выявляются стратегии адаптации пожилых людей и предлагаются пути интеграции традиционных ценностей в современный социальный контекст для обеспечения достойного старения.

Ключевые слова: старение, традиционная культура, уважение к старшим, урбанизация, межпоколенческие отношения, социальная изоляция, адаптация пожилых.

Introduction. The processes of globalization and rapid modernization have a profound impact on traditional societies, transforming centuries-old ways of life. Bangladesh, as a country with a rich cultural heritage based on the principles of collectivism, hierarchy, and respect for elders, is currently experiencing a period of intense socio-demographic changes [1]. Urbanization, youth migration, shrinking family size, and the adoption of new technologies create unprecedented challenges for the system of support for older people, historically embedded in the extended family structure. This study aims to analyze the cultural paradox where the rhetoric of respect for age coexists with growing social isolation and marginalization of elderly citizens, as well as to identify their adaptation strategies in new conditions.

The traditional paradigm: age as a source of authority and sacred status. In the traditional culture of Bangladesh, respect for elders (under the general terms buro or buddho) is the cornerstone of the social order and is internalized from childhood through a system of

practices and linguistic norms [2]. This complex includes linguistic reverence: the use of special respectful forms of address ("dada" – older brother/uncle, "nanu" – maternal grandfather, "chacha" – paternal uncle, "khalu" – maternal uncle), emphasizing status and distance. Also key are behavioral codes: strictly regulated etiquette according to which elders are served food first, given the best seats in the house, and their entrance requires younger people to stand up as a sign of respect. As the authors note, in their families the rule is: "until grandfather sits at the table and starts eating, no child begins the meal." No less important are socio-religious functions: elders act as custodians of traditions, arbitrators in local conflicts (at the community or mahalla level), and their blessing (dua) is considered particularly valuable and a sacred act. Their advice is a mandatory element in making important family decisions concerning marriage, education, or career [3]. This system provided older people not only with material support within the framework of joint multi-generational living but also, crucially, with a sense of social usefulness, inclusion, and unquestionable authority.

Challenges of modernization: erosion of traditional support and growth of isolation. Intensive socio-economic development in Bangladesh has led to the emergence of a number of factors undermining the traditional model [4]. Firstly, demographic shifts and migration: growing urbanization and the search for economic opportunities by young people lead to the breakdown of extended families. Elderly parents are increasingly left alone in rural areas ("solo-living"), while their children migrate to cities (such as Dhaka, Chittagong) or abroad. Financial remittances solve the problem of material support but do not compensate for the lack of live communication and daily care. Secondly, changing family structure and urban lifestyle: the move of older people to the city to live with their children often results in a new form of isolation. Compact city apartments, the busy work schedules of younger family members, and the lack of a familiar social environment (neighborly networks, familiar places) lead to feelings of loneliness and loss of social role. Experience relevant in a rural context (e.g., knowledge of agriculture or community dispute resolution) may be devalued in an urban environment where different competencies are in demand. Thirdly, a shift in values and the technological gap: in a market economy and digitalization, qualities such as technological literacy, speed of response, and adaptability come to the fore. The traditional equation "age = wisdom = authority" loses its clarity. Older people may face indirect devaluation of their experience, as in the example given by the authors: advice from an experienced banker to his son working in an IT company was perceived as irrelevant to the "modern office style."

Adaptation strategies and coping mechanisms of older people. Despite objective difficulties, the elderly population of Bangladesh demonstrates significant resilience, actively developing strategies to adapt to changing conditions [5]. One of the key strategies is religiosity and community integration: religious institutions (mosques, temples) become key centers of social life, providing routine, a sense of belonging, and emotional support. Regular prayer attendance and participation in religious communities (jamaat) compensate for the weakening of family ties. Another important strategy is the redefinition of the family role: many older people find a new purpose in active participation in the lives of younger generations: caring for grandchildren, passing on cultural knowledge through stories, performing household duties (cooking, handicrafts). This allows them to maintain a sense of being needed and contributing to family well-being. Furthermore, there is limited but purposeful digital adaptation: overcoming anxiety and technical barriers, some older people master the basic functions of smartphones, primarily video calling (e.g., via WhatsApp or Messenger), to maintain visual contact with distant children and grandchildren. This process often requires support from younger relatives (e.g., creating paper instructions with large icons).

Integration prospects: from a conflict paradigm to a synthesis of traditions and innovations. Preserving the dignity and social inclusion of older people in Bangladesh requires a comprehensive approach beyond solely family responsibility [1, 4]. At the micro-level (family), it is critically important to maintain regular communication (even remote), consciously involve elders in the discussion of family matters, ceremonially seek their advice, and gently and patiently promote their digital literacy to bridge the gap. At the meso-level (local community), it is necessary to develop infrastructure for social services and leisure for the elderly: creating interest clubs at mosques or community centers, organizing mutual aid groups, conducting informal training courses (health basics, using gadgets). At the macro-level (state policy), pressing tasks include developing a system of accessible geriatric healthcare, improving pension schemes (taking into account the large share of informal employment), and creating an age-friendly urban environment (adapting public transport, parks, clinics).

Conclusion. Bangladesh is at a crossroads of cultural continuity and social transformation. The deeply ingrained respect for old age as a cultural value is confronted with the objective processes of modernization, giving rise to new forms of vulnerability for the elderly population. However, as the analysis shows, this challenge is not fatal. The strength of traditional family ties, the adaptive potential of older people themselves, and opportunities for developing public infrastructure pave the way not for the abandonment of tradition but for its

creative evolution. The future of dignified aging in Bangladesh depends on society's ability to develop a hybrid model that integrates the emotional and symbolic value of traditional respect for age with practical mechanisms of social support adequate to the realities of the 21st century. This will transform old age from a period of passive dependence into a stage of continued significance, respect, and meaningful life.

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