

## **‘Ignorance’ of Rights: Politics of Religious Sentiments vs Human Rights in Bangladeshi School Textbooks**

Farhana Islam\*

### ***Abstract***

*School textbooks are assumed correct and unbiased in their narrative, and most often prescribed to the young minds without questioning. However, due to the increasing interference of political parties in the government funded public education sector, the school textbooks must be critically analyzed before being considered as rightful sources of knowledge. Hence, this study posed two questions: i) how politics influences the narrative of the textbooks in Bangladesh, and ii) how these books play roles in managing ‘ignorance’ about Constitutional Laws and Human Rights among the learners by excluding crucial knowledge and information. To seek the answers, the research evaluated NCTB (National Curriculum and Textbook Board) authorized books in Bangladesh, Social Science (Choudhury et al.) and Bangladesh and Global Studies (Patwari et al.), followed in class 6 and 7 from 1996-2017, and observed how the issue of Human Rights was dealt differently by governments over this time period. The findings of this paper call for teachers and general people alike to recognize ‘ignorance’ as an active tool of political agenda embedded in the school textbooks.*

Religious values are often in conflict with Human Rights in Bangladesh, though the country is constitutionally secular. Especially, the demands of the country’s religious political parties are frequently seen to threaten the principles of Human Rights and Fundamental Rights of its women, children and religious minority groups. Human Rights are universally declared equal rights for every human being by United Nations in 1948, and Fundamental Rights are the number of human rights accepted by the Bangladesh’s Constitution for its citizens. Hence, this chapter examine show school books are used by political parties to fulfill their need of appearing ‘religious’ or ‘secular’ to satisfy the fundamentalist groups and gain their votes. The main focus of the study

---

\* Lecturer, Department of English, East West University.

remains to identify ‘ignorance’ regarding Human Rights and laws in Bangladesh’s school textbooks, and how ‘ignorance’ as an “strategic ploy” (Proctor 8) is affecting the society.

There is no doubt, there is an immense ‘ignorance’ regarding Human Rights and Fundamental Rights existing among the people in Bangladesh. In a survey titled “Perceptions, Attitudes and Understanding” conducted by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Bangladesh, in 2011, among 3952 household, which consisted 5 members on average, the ignorance of Human Rights is traced and documented. The report revealed that “half of the respondents to the quantitative survey (50.2%) had never heard of the term ‘human rights’ . . . and those who had heard of it were much more likely to be from an urban area, male, educated or among the least poor” (10). In fact, it was found out that “68% [of the interviewed individuals] had not heard of the NHRC before participating in the survey” (11), and among those who were aware that their rights are protected, only 6.1% knew they are protected by the Constitution. Most shockingly, “58.4% had not heard of the Constitution” (10-11) in the first place. Such ignorance regarding human rights among the population is not expected, considering the country’s increased literacy rate. If people are receiving the basic education, they ought to be at least educated or informed about their most basic human rights. A report of literacy rate among the population by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in the year 2008 is shown in table 1.

Table 1 : Literacy rate among population of Bangladesh, 2008.

	National			Rural			Urban		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
<b>6. Adult Literacy Rates by Age Groups</b>									
11 to 14	56.7	60.8	58.7	51.5	53.7	52.6	64.7	70.6	67.8
15-19	49.8	47.3	48.6	43.5	45.1	44.3	58.8	50.7	55.0
20-24	50.8	49.9	50.3	46.7	44.4	45.5	56.4	57.1	56.8
25-29	50.1	49.7	49.9	48.2	46.8	47.4	52.8	54.3	53.6
30-34	52.2	53.9	53.1	48.8	48.0	48.4	56.9	62.5	59.8
35-39	50.7	52.0	51.4	47.9	46.2	47.1	54.8	60.8	57.8
40-44	52.1	51.5	51.8	47.4	49.3	48.4	58.4	54.6	56.6
45-49	51.2	51.8	51.5	45.7	48.0	46.8	60.0	57.6	58.8
50-54	48.0	53.8	50.4	42.4	45.8	43.8	55.6	64.5	59.4
55-59	45.2	46.8	45.7	48.9	45.3	47.0	54.1	50.0	52.5
60-64	45.3	43.0	44.0	40.7	53.2	46.4	53.0	52.8	52.9
65-69	44.6	42.0	43.0	43.3	48.8	45.9	52.9	64.2	58.7
70-74	42.0	41.0	41.4	47.1	34.0	41.5	61.9	60.0	61.0
76 and above	40.9	40.5	40.6	43.9	53.5	48.4	65.3	67.4	66.3
<b>7. Literacy rate by wealth-level</b>									
Poorest	28	28	29	25	26	26	32	30	36
Poor	39	38	40	34	34	34	47	46	48
Middle	51	51	51	48	47	49	57	59	55
Rich	64	64	64	58	58	58	71	71	70
Richest	76	76	75	69	68	70	83	83	84

**Source:** Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2008, table 1.

The report shows a significant literacy rate among children to adults of age range from 11 years to 76 years and above on national level.

Undoubtedly, government and non-government organizations alike have worked rigorously in last decades to assure education for both adults and children, males and females in the rural and urban areas of country during the last decade. Nevertheless, as harp difference between literacy among the poorest (29%) and the richest groups (75%) is evident. Moreover, the Literacy Assessment Survey, 2011, found overall literacy rate 53.7% for population of age 11 to 44 years. Then the question remains why the literates are not educated about their basic rights as humans and citizens? Where is ‘the lack’, or ‘ignorance’ being perpetuated in the education sector? Because “ignorance is not something simple: it is not a simple lack, absence or emptiness, and it is not a passive state” (Fyre 118). Ignorance is almost always there for a reason, placed or engineered by someone at a particular time. To understand ‘ignorance’ more elaborately, this research utilizes the theory of ignorance, from *Agnology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Proctor and Schiebinger), where Robert Proctor urges us to “think of ignorance generated by failures of the body, or failures to fund education, or free access to bogus information, or practices and policies that enlarge secrecy or prevarication or compartmentalization” (26). Proctor emphasizes on understanding of ‘ignorance’ as an element of politics, he “recognizes that ignorance, like knowledge, has a political geography, prompting us to ask: Who knows not? And why not? Where is there ignorance and why?” (Proctor 13) Therefore, ignorance regarding human rights, constitutional rights and law existing in a society must be scrutinized. Anna-Marie Marshall explains that "in order to realize their rights, people need to take the initiative to articulate them" (83) and in order to realize their rights, people first need to know their rights. Rights that in many cases already exist. Imparting basic knowledge of human rights, constitutional rights and law, hence, should be a part of school education and its textbooks. Indeed, the textbooks of Bangladesh consisted ignorance concerning citizens’ rights between 1996-2011, which resulted into such ignorant citizens, who were found to be unaware of their most basic rights reported by NHRC in 2011. It is extremely essential to investigate this ignorance regarding human rights and constitutional rights, because at times “low literacy may block people’s access to justice” (Council of Canadian Administrative Tribunals 2).

To briefly discuss the International Law on Human Rights adopted in 1948, on the First Declaration of Universal Human Rights, a milestone document in human history, which universally recognizes that basic rights and fundamental freedoms are inherent to all human beings, inalienable and equally applicable to everyone, and “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (Article 1). Regardless of one’s nationality, place of birth, gender, national or ethnic origin, color, religious belief, sexual orientation, language, or any other status, human

rights entitle a human to freedom, equality and protection of life and property. In total, 48 countries voted in favor of this declaration. Nevertheless, many countries are regularly violating these articles, including those who signed it and those who did not. Many countries have argued against this document’s enshrined ‘equality’ on the basis of religious and cultural values. For example, clashes between human rights and religious nations are common on the issue of providing equal rights to women, children, homosexuals and religious minorities. In UN’s Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, traditional Muslim interpreters argued against equal rights of women. They emphasized on so-called “equity” (Gerle 15) for women, which would essentially never really liberate them, but keep them under men’s authority under the Sharia law. On the contentious relationship between human rights and religious and cultural values, James Devereaux notes, “those sympathetic to liberty should then veer away from identity politics, it works against freedom and equality” (“Identity Politics Will Not Lead to Freedom” n.p). Religious nationalist leaders are always exploitative of identity politics based on gender and religion.

On the other hand, as a state, Bangladesh considers itself moderately Muslim in practice due to its overwhelming 90.4% Muslim majority, when it constitutionally remains secular in its core principles. The country has several religious minorities of Hindus (8.2%), Christians (0.6%) and Buddhists (0.7%) and some others represent the rest (census mentioned are according to World Population Review 2014). The Constitution of Bangladesh states in Article 41(b), “every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions,” which ensures the lawful practice and development of every religion in the country. Also, equal rights of employment, owning property and taking part in politics are protected by Bangladesh’s constitution, in line with Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Bangladesh, the female population ratio stood at 49.516% in 2015 (World Population Review 2015), and there were 51.3 million children (ages 0-14 years) living in Bangladesh, of which 24.9 million were girls and 26.4 million are boys (Source: 2008 estimate of CIA World Fact Book). Though “both the Constitution of Bangladesh and the country’s premier child rights statute, the Children Act 1974, date back to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC), the Magna Carta for children” (Hoque n.p.), and the constitutional article 10 promises that “the State Shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity and participation of women in all spheres of national life” (Part II, article 19(3), the number of daily violence reported in Bangladesh against women are shocking.

However, despite the recent increase in numbers of violation of human rights, both in the first Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972, article 8, and in

today's constitution, article 8, part-II, after the fifteenth amendment (which reestablished the old principles of 1972's original constitution, in 2011), there are four fundamental principles enshrined by the state: 1) Secularism, 2) Nationalism, 3) Democracy, and 4) Socialism. In the preamble, the first Constitution of Bangladesh declared its goal: "... it shall be a fundamental aim of the state to realize through the democratic process a socialist society, free from exploitation – a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and free, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens" (qtd. in Halim 54).

Nevertheless, it is astonishing how Bangladesh signed UNICEF treaty in 1993 to protect its citizens' equal rights (including minorities, children, senior citizens and women's rights), but Bangladesh's commitment to enshrine human rights became part of the national education curriculum only in 2012. For twenty-two years, through the school textbooks, both AL and BNP have never made any attempt to educate people regarding their rights; rights that both the state and the International law promise them. Even Awami League who advocates for women's empowerment at present, between 1996 to 2001, did not make the subject a part of the education curriculum. It is only in 2012, Awami league made the constitutional education a part of the NCTB textbooks to reflect their newly formed, pro-secular, digital Bangladesh narrative. Nevertheless, the constitutional education promoted in the new book, *Bangladesh and Global Studies* (Patwari, et al.), which contrasts starkly with the previously created ignorance in textbooks, which will create a public awareness and a more informed future generation. Hence, the best hope for protecting Human rights in Bangladesh always remains with its constitution, which promotes modernity, equality and secularity above everything. Despite losing sight of its original goals, Bangladesh can improve its condition by educating its people about constitutional rights and its nation's four fundamental principles, which are 1) Secularism, 2) Nationalism 3) Socialism, 4) Democracy, and counter the 'ignorance' regarding the citizens equal rights through the previous school textbooks.

However, the condition of secularism in Bangladesh remains problematic, as Awami League government is recently again moving to a questionable position in its narration by incorporating Islamic biases in Home Economics, and Bangla Literature school textbooks, which aim to curtail freedom of women according to the demands of Islamic groups. For instance, "this year [2017], the authorities introduced religious content even in disciplines that have nothing to do with religious studies" (Choudhury qtd. in [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com)) to appease the Islamist parties to secure their votes in the country's upcoming election in 2018. In fact, reportedly, as Bangladesh's Education Ministry was preparing to print the 2017 edition of its standard Bangla textbooks, a group of conservative

Islamic religious scholars demanded the removal of 17 Bangla poems and stories which they deemed atheistic and “by the time the books were distributed to schools on January 1, the 17 poems and stories were gone, with no explanation from the government” (Barry and Manik A1). Indeed, the present government has secular aims and is trying to promote constitutional rights through education, especially, the special rights for women and children. However, Awami League is also allowing changes in Bangla Literature book to fulfill the demands of the Islamists, such as “first graders studying the alphabet were taught that “o” stands for “orna,” a scarf worn by devout Muslim girls starting at puberty, not for “ol,” a type of yam” (Barry and Manik A1) in order to encourage girls to dress modestly. Therefore, the party’s attempt to make the Muslim fundamentalists of the country happy is often in contradiction with women’s freedom to choose to dress freely.

Social Science (Choudhury et al.) of class 6, edited in 2000 under AL government and followed in the class from 1996-2011, has a total of fourteen chapters in the book, and only one chapter is dedicated to introduce “Civics and its Subjects”(Choudhury et al. 54). It has no chapter dedicated to discuss the rights of children, women and the minority groups, who are vulnerable to violence and discrimination most frequently in society. In fact, chapter 5, “Civics and Its Subjects” (Choudhury et al. 54) consists of three pages only, and it describes the Latin origin of the word ‘civics’, but nothing regarding its history and development in Bangladesh or South Asian geography. In page 55, the book only theoretically elaborates “Subjects of Civics”: a) Citizenship and State, b) Analyzing past, present and future, c) Political and local institutionalization, d) International issues. It ends the section with three short paragraphs, describing “The Necessities of Learning Civics”, and it mentions Bangladesh for the first time in the last two lines, in relation to the subject of Civics. The book notes: “Bangladesh is an independent and sovereign state. To protect the country’s freedom and to make the country strong and renowned, Bangladeshi citizens must study civics” (Choudhury et al. 56). It does not include any practical knowledge, the law system of Bangladesh, its constitution, or any existing law that can enlighten and benefit the learners in their need. The book makes no attempt to equip the learners with any contextual knowledge about their rights protected by the state law, nor teaches them any of their duties as citizens. The book creates a visible ‘ignorance’ which hides the rights of Bangladeshi people; especially, the rights of women, children, and minorities, which are protected in the constitution. The old book delivers no lesson on child’s protection, freedom of women, or equal status of the religious minorities in the eyes of the state. In fact, as the book stops from educating the learners about their rights and duties, but it dedicates an entire chapter to explain “Election” (Choudhury et al. 58) and makes its

political intention apparent. The book does not aim to create better citizens, but citizens who can only cast votes. After all, being educated about the rights and laws enables the citizens to be aware, self-sufficient and strong; whereas, ignorant and wrongfully indoctrinated citizens are easily manipulated and less likely to hold the government accountable for their due rights.

However, the new book *Bangladesh and Global Studies* (Patwari et al.), which replaced *Social Science* (Choudhury et al.), from 2012-2017 in the NCTB curriculum, consists of twelve chapters in total, three of them are dedicated to create awareness regarding the basics of civics duties and human rights of a citizen. The chapters are-- chapter-8: “Bangladesh and Citizens of Bangladesh” (65-73), chapter-10: “Children’s Rights in Bangladesh” (79-83), and chapter-11: “Children Growing up in Bangladesh and their obstacles” (84-91). The three chapters are examined to show how they counter the ignorance of the previous textbook. Firstly, in chapter-8, some basics concepts, such as what is a state, what are the elements that constitutes a state, are answered. It notes, there are four elements needed to establish a state: 1) Population, 2) Territory, 3) A state government and 4) Sovereignty (65). Then, from page 66-67, more importantly, it contextualizes the definitions according to Bangladesh’s context and defines Bangladesh’s territory, population, government and what is sovereignty for Bangladesh. Such contextualized knowledge certainly makes it easily for the students to comprehend these concepts. The chapter finishes with the fair concept of “Citizen's' Role in the Country’s Development” (Patwari et al. 71), but it does not forget to mention that “as citizens of Bangladesh, we [the citizens] enjoy certain rights from our state” (Patwari et al. 71). Between the state and its citizens, it is always a give and take relationship. The book elaborates both side of the statehood. It emphasizes how the state must protect its citizens by providing them with basic rights, such as food, shelter, education and security, and in return, the people shall work for the country. Also, the state must treat all the citizens equally; including children, women and minority groups.

In the chapter-10, the book directly imparts knowledge about the protection of Child Rights under the title “UNICEF Approved Child Rights”. The book mentions, there are total 54 articles announced by UNICEF, on 20th November, 1989. It also recalls that in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that all children are entitled to special care and assistance. The book elaborates UNICEF’s aims to protect every child against hunger, diseases, violence and more. The book further describes 14 important Child Right’s articles. In the first article, it declares, “All children are below 18 years old, though the age limit may vary in other nations” (80), which is extremely

necessary, because a baseline survey by Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh shows that “only 0.8% of all respondents believed a boy was a child until age 18, and only 0.9% believed this about girls” (“Perceptions, Attitudes and Understanding” 25). An overwhelming number of Bangladeshis still do not see children age above 6-9 years as children, which might help us understand why the number of child rape has increased so greatly. The second listed article in the book, in particular is mentionable: “All children are equal. Meaning, no discrimination shall be made against a child, based on the child is a boy or a girl, rich or poor, the child’s nationality, religion, or physical ability” (qtd. in Patwari et al. 80). In fact, the book talks about Bangladesh’s agreement with UNICEF, on 3rd August, 1990, which makes it clear to the learners that Bangladesh’s government is bound to protect their rights. The country has made a promise to work to ensure a safe childhood for all the children. The book also mentions that education is a right of every child.

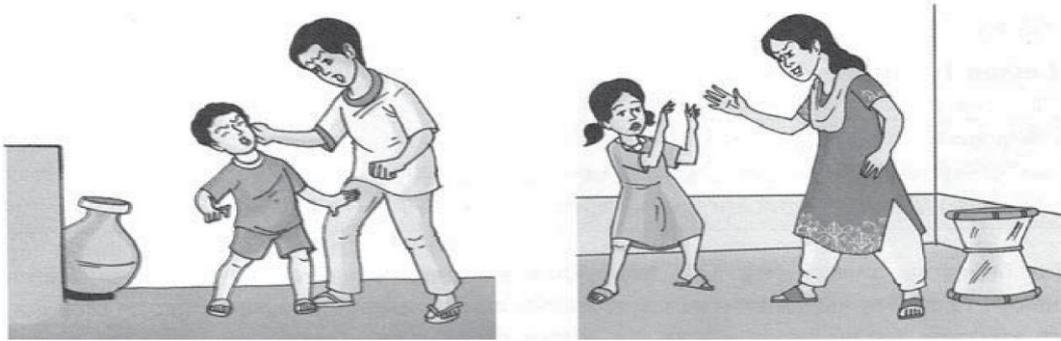


**Figure 1:** Deprived children are receiving education.

The picture shows Bangladesh’s struggle as a poor country to provide education to all its children. In the picture, we see, the classroom has no benches, the children sit on the floor, but they are studying with joy and curiosity in eyes. Assuring education for all children remains a global challenge, especially for countries such as Bangladesh. A total of 59 million children are out of school worldwide, according to a UNICEF report of 2016. And, while child marriage rates are decreasing, each year about 15 million girls are married before the age of 18 (“United Nations Children’s Fund, Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects” 6).

In fact, the book takes a step more to make the children aware of the possible nature of violence against them, where they can expect to be protected by the law. Chapter 11 discusses “different types of child

Labor” (86) and states that under the age of 18, any type of child labor is illegal. Child labor is an issue Bangladesh is still fighting to overcome. Despite the laws prohibiting such abuse of children, it is reported that approximately 13.4% (4.7 million) of total children (aged from 5 to 14 years) engage in laborious work in Bangladesh, while 7.3% work and do not go to school (Human Rights Commission Report, 27). The book provides visual illustrations of both physical and verbal abuse of children (see fig. 2).



**Figure 2:** Children, both a boy and a girl, being physically abused.

These pictures can educate children that physical violence against children is illegal. Being subjected to any abuse, children can inform other adults or report it to a nearby police. Lessons of law at such early age will surely make these learners better citizens of the country. If the previous books have also made such efforts to teach children about laws and rights of individuals, Bangladesh would not have such number of criminalities. It is worth mentioning that in 2009 the International Labor Organization (ILO) and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) held a survey on commercial sexual exploitation of children. According to the report, among “18,902 child victims of sexual exploitation, 83 percent were girls, nine percent were transgender children, and eight percent were boys” (qtd in “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012” 28). So, in consideration of the amount of child abuses and exploitations taking place in Bangladesh, the book makes a significant effort to enlighten young learners and make their families aware of Child Rights protected by both UNICEF, and the Constitution of Bangladesh.

Furthermore, *Bangladesh and Global Studies* (Patwari et al.) has twelve chapters and three of them are focused on different issues of statehood, citizenships, Bangladesh’s voting system, and citizen’s rights. The book specially prioritizes the rights of women and senior citizens in chapter 5: “Bangladesh and Bangladesh’s citizens” (Patwari et al. 42) and chapter 9: “Bangladesh’s Senior Citizens and Women Rights” (Patwari et al.). In chapter 5, the relationship between the state and its citizens has been discussed; it describes that “for a country’s true development, good citizens are essential” (43). It acknowledges the practical problems faced

by the state’s citizens and provides a list of duties for the young learners to follow to help eradicate the problems. There are six possible steps enlisted that can be adapted by the citizens, and among them number four is “Learn to sympathize with every human being, regardless of one’s religion, sect and ethnicity” (45). Such message vastly deviates from the discriminating approach of the previous book.

In fact, the book *Bangladesh and Global Studies* enlists total 16 Fundamental Rights protected by the Constitution of Bangladesh for all its citizens:

- a. Right to live,
- b. Right to own property,
- c. Right to free movement,
- d. Right to practice religion,
- e. Right to make agreements,
- f. Right to think freely,
- g. Right of free media and newspapers,
- h. Rights to assemble,
- i. Right to establish family,
- j. Right to practice language and culture,
- k. Right to employment,
- l. Right health and education,
- m. Right abide by the law of state,
- n. Right of social and economic justice,
- o. Right to freedom of speech,
- p. Right to participate in the election (Patwari et al. 46).

The book makes an outstanding effort to educate the learners about their own rights and everyone else’s rights around them, who are entitled to the same rights as them as citizens of Bangladesh, regardless of the class, religious, and gender. The book functions as a significant step for Bangladesh’s future toward a tolerant society, because these learners ought to be more tolerant, active, and conscious as citizens based on their current education.

*Bangladesh and Global Studies* (Patwari et al.) also educates its learners on the issue of women's rights, in chapter 9. The issue of women’s right is important in Bangladesh, because despite the laws to protect women against all forms of violence, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) presented a report on *Violence Against Women Survey 2015*, which found out that “80.2 percent of women were abused by a husband or male partner at least once in their lifetime” (qtd. in “Bangladesh 2016 Human Rights Report” 33). In addition, the media reported total 22,386 women and children were treated for rape and other violence at the government-run One Stop Crisis Centers between 2001 to 2015. A Total of 5,003 cases were filed, for which there were total 820 verdicts, and only 101

perpetrators were punished (“Bangladesh 2016 Human Rights Report” 34). The book acknowledges the socio-economic barriers faced by the women in society, as well as conservative cultural values that frequently hinder women’s rights to education, freedom and employment, and it states that the Constitution of Bangladesh aims to protect women against those odds. It provided an illustration of women working in garments factory, acknowledging women’s contribution in society.

Moreover, the book mentions United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which entitled women as equal as men in every aspect of life, freedom, education and property (Patwari et al. 84). It must be mentioned, the notion of ‘equity’ instead of ‘equality’ was upheld by many Muslim states at the UN Women Conference in Beijing 1995. The Vatican and conservative Muslim states were in agreement there (Gerle 15). They oppose equal human rights to women in the name of so-called equity, when they only want to subjugate women. However, Bangladesh as a state has always been in support for ‘equality’ for women since its first constitution in 1972. The book provides illustrations of women under the umbrella of development (see fig. 3).



**Figure 3:** All women regardless of age, religion and ethnicity under one umbrella of development (Patwari et al. 84)

The book also presents an illustration of an adult education class where women, regardless of age and gender, can receive education side by side with men (see fig. 4).



**Figure 4:** Equal rights of education for men and women. (Patwari et al. 85)

The above illustrations, certainly, works to inspire women. The pictures assure women of their equal rights provided by the law. In fact, the constitution of Bangladesh has enshrined secular Human Rights for its both male and female citizens in every aspect of society. The book also features an illustration (see fig. 5) of women working in an official environment.



Figure 5: Equal participation of women in workplace. (Patwari et al. 86)

In the picture (figure-5), two young women are seen at an office, promoting social norm, where men and women work side by side. The Islamist parties frequently oppose such freedom for women. There are also several laws that aim to protect women in the society. The book makes ample attempts to promote this secular stance of the Constitution of Bangladesh. It mentions the law passed in 1980 against the social curse of dowry. It also documents, “According to the law to protect women and children, 1983, the punishment for physically abusing women, or attempting to murder is punishable by life time imprisonment or even death sentence” (91). The book counters ignorance produced by the previous books and replaces the lack with new knowledge of empowerment.

The book tries to spread awareness against child marriage and its causes, “because the law recognizes every female below 18 years old and every boy below 21 years old as underaged, according to the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929. Act no XIX of 1929 and Bangladesh officials approve child marriage prevention Act of 2014” (qtd. in Patwari et al. 92). The book promotes the law which sets child marriage as illegal, and attempts to ensure a secure childhood for girls. Nevertheless, the law is poorly enforced, and early forced marriages remain a serious problem in Bangladesh today. According to UNICEF data, 2016, 52 percent of girls were married by the age of 18, and another 18 percent were married by the age of 15. The new book handles this issue elaborately, it identifies the cultural reasons behind child marriage of girls such as the superstitions of old grandparents, then parents sense insecurity for having a young daughter at home due to fear of losing honor by eve-teasers and

other predatorily men in society. Girls are mostly married off in poor families for financial securities (Patwari et al. 93). The book establishes women as equal to men in every aspect to fight a harsh reality where women do not enjoy the same legal status and rights as men in family, property, and inheritance law. The book, undoubtedly, educates its learners about these existing laws as necessary civic lessons, because when the citizens know that an act is a crime punishable by law, they may not do it. The book attempts to educate its learners for a future, where men and women both will know about women's equal rights in society and work actively to provide and achieve them.

Hence, despite the regular violence of Human Rights of women, children and minority groups in Bangladesh, the problems can be solved, and a big step for it can be proper education of our constitution and Human Right laws. The more people will know about their equal rights as human beings, the more they will feel deprived of their unachieved rights and raise voices for them. In 2004, a bill was signed in America that made it a law to teach the US Constitution in federally funded schools, which made it a legal obligation of those schools to provide students with programs that "open their eyes to the importance of the Constitution in their everyday lives" ("Why We Must Teach the US Constitution in Schools"). In fact, the law requires every school that receives government funds -- including universities -- to show students a program on the Constitution (Strauss). Such initiative of making Civics education mandatory at school levels should be followed by every country, because they would make people aware and open up new dialogues to bring in the necessary changes in society. After all, ignorance is a problem that must be treated with non-politicized education, which upholds Human Rights above everything in the modern world.

### Reference

- Alam, Ashraful. "Fifth Amendment of the Constitution of Bangladesh." *Academia*,  
[https://www.academia.edu/7033013/Fifth\\_amendment\\_of\\_Bangladesh\\_Constitution](https://www.academia.edu/7033013/Fifth_amendment_of_Bangladesh_Constitution).  
 Accessed 27 Jul. 2017.
- Alcoff, Linda. "Epistemologies of ignorance: Three types." Sullivan and Tuana, 2007, pp. 39-69.
- "Bangladesh 2012 Human Rights Report." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012*, United States Department of State, 2012,  
<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204607.pdf>.  
 Accessed 10 Sep. 2017.

## 'Ignorance' of Rights: Politics of Religious Sentiments

- “Bangladesh 2014 Human Rights Report.” *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016*, United States Department of State, 2014. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/236846.pdf>. Accessed 10 Sep. 2017.
- “Bangladesh 2016 Human Rights Report.” *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016*, United States Department of State, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265744.pdf>. Accessed 10 Sep. 2017.
- Choudhury, Moajjem Hossain. et al. *Social Science*, Class 6, National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2000.
- Gat, Azar. “Pre Modern Nations, National Identities, National Sentiments and National Solidarity.” *The Roots of Nationalism National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, Edited by Lotte Jensen, pp. 31-47.
- Gerle, Elisabeth. “Religious Diversity and Human Rights-Clashes and Convergences in Asian-European Dialogues.” *Asia and Europe in Globalization: Contents, Regions and Nations*, Brill Academic Publishers, 2006, pp 1-25
- Halim, Abdul Md. *Constitution, Constitutional Law and Politics: Bangladesh Perspective*.  
CCB Foundation, edition 4, 2008.
- Haque, Ridwanul. “Rights and Protection of Our Children: Where Do We Stand?” *The Daily Star*, Dec. 2011. <http://archive.thedailystar.net/forum/2011/December/rights.htm>  
Accessed 15 Sep. 2017.
- Islam, Arafatul. “Bangladesh's secular activists concerned about textbook changes”, *Deutsche Welle (DW)*, 2 Feb 2017. [www.dw.com/en/bangladeshs-secular-activists-concerned-about-textbook-changes](http://www.dw.com/en/bangladeshs-secular-activists-concerned-about-textbook-changes). Accessed 2 Aug. 2017.
- Marshall, Anna-Marie. “Idle Rights: Employees’ Rights Consciousness and the Construction of Sexual Harassment Policies.” *Law and Society Review*, 2005, pp. 83–124.
- Patwari, Mamtazuddin, et al. *Bangladesh and Global Studies*, Class 6, National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2017.
- Bangladesh and Global Studies*, Class 7, National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2017.
- Perceptions, Attitudes and Understanding: A Baseline Summary Report*.  
National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh, 2011.
- Proctor, Robert N., Schiebinger, Londa, editors. *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance*, Stanford University Press, 2008.
- Proctor, Robert N. “Agnotology: A Missing Term to Describe the Cultural Production of Ignorance (and Its Study)”, Proctor and Schiebinger, 2008, pp. 1-36.

Strauss, Valerie and Aratani, Lori. "Law Requires Lessons on Constitution." *Washington Post*, 2005.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/07/18/AR2005071801585.html> Accessed 1 Sep. 2017.

"Why We Must Teach the US Constitution in Schools.", *In Search of Liberty*, Jun. 22, 2015.

<http://www.insearchofliberty.com/why-we-must-teach-the-us-constitution-in-schools>. Accessed 22 Sep. 2017.