



## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

### Marriage and Education in Bangladesh

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- ❖ South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) has the second-highest rate of child marriage in the world, followed by West Africa. One-half of all girls affected by child marriage live in South Asia. Marriage of children under 18 years of age is illegal globally.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ The minimum legal age of marriage for women in Bangladesh is 18 years for women and 21 years for men.<sup>2</sup> The percentage of women married at age 15 is 29% and 65% at age 18.<sup>3-4</sup>
- ❖ In the early 1990's, Bangladesh made primary education compulsory and joined a global initiative to eradicate illiteracy. Through programs like the Female Stipend Program girls remain in school longer and continue on to vocational school. The Bangladeshi government's scholarship program stipulates that parents sign a bond for girls who receive scholarships stating that they will not be married before 18.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ In Bangladesh there are two types of marriage contracts: the nikah and the nikahnama. The nikah is necessary for a marriage to be considered legal and does not allow for a divorce to be initiated by a woman. The nikahnama is now the standard and widely used version of the contract. It allows for both parties to have equal access to divorce proceedings and alimony if necessary. The bride must give her consent before two male witnesses before either marriage contract can valid.<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ The number of women who marry in their early teens has declined as a result of education, employment and social awareness. In 1994, 52% of women were married by the age of 15; this number decreased to 17% in 2014.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ In rural areas of Bangladesh 71% of women marry before 18 years of age, compared to 54% in urban areas.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ In a 2010 study by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, female enrollment in education showed a 15% increase in enrollment from 1980 to 2010. The number of girls attending.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/PLAN%20ASIA%20Child%20Marriage-3%20Country%20Study.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://plan-international.org/where-we-work/asia/bangladesh/about/publications/national-survey-on-child-marriage-by-plan-bangladesh-and-icddr-b/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.prb.org/DataFinder/Topic/Rankings.aspx?ind=303>

<sup>4</sup> [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-women-and-islamic-cultures/demography-COM\\_00006](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-women-and-islamic-cultures/demography-COM_00006)

<sup>5</sup> Sajeda Amin, personal communication, May 22 2014

<sup>6</sup> Fazalbhoy, Nasreen. "Marriage Practices: South Asia." Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures. General Editor Suad Joseph. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. University of California UC Davis CDL. 12 April 2014

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.gulf-times.com/bangladesh/245/details/401230/steep-decline-in-bangladesh-child-marriages>

primary school rose to 50% versus 35% in 1980. The percentage of women attending vocational schools in 2010 was at 40%, up from 20% in 1980.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.aacu.org/ocww/volume39\\_2/global.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/ocww/volume39_2/global.cfm)