



Nature and process of aging in patra community: A sociological analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the nature and process of aging in Patra Community. Aging is a widely known twentieth century phenomenon. Though many people regard aging as a biological process, in fact, it is created by different cultures. It is observed not only in developed countries but also in developing countries. In Bangladesh, like other developed and developing countries, population aging is also considered natural outcome of demographic transition and here aged population is growing remarkably. In our country, the elderly people face multi-faceted problems. Another thing is that many minority groups, have been living in Bangladesh, are socially excluded from mainstream society. Patra community is one of minority communities. However, the situation of the elderly in Patra community is yet to fully understand. By taking this problem into consideration, The author is interested to explore the nature and process of aging relating it to various aspects of class, gender, income, family structure and age structure of Patra community.

Aging is a widely known concept as it is one of the mostly discussed worldwide concepts. It is also a twentieth century phenomenon. It was first observed in developed countries because of declining trend in fertility which raised many questions regarding social and economic implications of aging, questions like the physical and psychological care of the elderly, institutional arrangements for the aged and private and public finance implications of aging (Messkou, 1997:1). Though many people regard aging as biological process, in fact it is created by different culture. As a result of development of medical science, life expectancy of people has increased and this is responsible for the growing number of elderly people in a country. Elderly people are the notable part of industrially developed societies where they are treated as differently such as senior citizen, golden-ager, senescent etc. (Rahman and Parveen, 1993-94:33). Aged people are treated differently in different culture and societies. In some societies they are respected highly but in other societies they are regarded as burden/liability, unproductive, difficult, dependent (Schaefer and Lamm, 1995: 357, Hossain, 1998: 198, Rahman and Parveen,

1993-94: 33). From the third decades of twentieth century, sociological thinking has been started about the problems of the elderly and as a result 'Social Gerontology' was established as a distinct discipline in 1970s. In Bangladesh, population aging is also considered natural outcome of demographic transition and here aged population is growing impressively. The number of older people in Bangladesh is expected to increase 173 per cent by 2025 (HelpAge International Report, 1999-2000:129). This demographic transition has been occurred through the process of development which not only has changed the demographic phenomena but also has changed life style, values and outlook of the family and community (Hossain, 1998: 189). Now-a-days, aging is considered a problem in each and every society. "The situations of the elderly in Bangladesh whether they live in urban or rural areas are pitiable" (Hossen, 2005: 82). The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) reported that many countries have been experiencing changes in family structure that is the previous traditional extended family system was transforming to nuclear family because of declining trend