

Kaiputra: The untold story of a discriminated and excluded community



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The government term for the community that rears pigs in the open field in Bangladesh is Kawara. The public, in general, also uses the same word but Kawara, in Bangla, is used in a derogatory way implying the community that lives with pigs. Lately, the Kawara people have adopted the term “Kaiputra,” a more respectable term to identify themselves.

If you are travelling through the southwestern districts, especially Satkhira, Jashore, Khulna, Kushtia, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Barishal and Narail, you are likely to see a herd of pigs grazing along the roadside or in a *beef*. Generally, a flock has 200 to 500 black pigs, almost similar to wild boar in looks. Pigs are considered unholly and therefore unwanted in a Muslim majority country.

However, the pork that comes from the southwestern districts of Bangladesh has high demand among non-Muslims and the big hotels, particularly in Dhaka. The Christians in Dhaka cannot think of celebrating their festivals without pork from the southwestern districts of the country. In fact, black pigs, fed and reared in the open field in these low-lying districts, are routinely slaughtered in Nagori in Kaliganj close to Dhaka and brought to shops in Farmgate. The meat is also supplied to hotels.

We have been following the herds of pigs in a few districts since 2016 for our research interest on the Kaiputra, one of the most miserable and impoverished people of Bangladesh. They leave their families in villages in Satkhira, Jashore and Khulna districts and live with the pigs throughout the year. A herd of 500 pigs require a dozen strong men who are known as *rakhals*. What I admire most about the *rakhals* is that they treat the pigs like their siblings. They have particular skills to communicate with the

pigs, an intelligent animal. The *rakhals* indeed feed the pigs, live with them day and night and talk to them. The pigs also listen to them and follow their instructions. The *rakhals* and pigs in the depth of our beels have an amazing life that we hardly notice. We normally see them when they come on the road to move from one place to another or feed along the roadside.

The rakhals and their origin
 The Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) has thoroughly mapped the Kaiputra community and published a book, “Kaiputra: Pig Rearing Community” in 2019. SEHD found this community in 46 villages in Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna districts. In 41 of these villages, the Kaiputra community is active in their traditional business of pig rearing in the open. Kaiputras in five of the villages do not send their men as *rakhals* in the field. In addition to these 46 villages, there are another 29 villages in these three districts, where the Kaiputra communities have taken up fishing. They are no more interested in traditional pig rearing and in identifying themselves as Kaiputra.

The guesstimated Kaiputra population is 12,000. In 2018, the number of herds of pigs reported by the community members was 102 and the number of pigs, 16,296. Some members of the Kaiputra communities also raise pigs in their homes.

Although all Kaiputra people are followers of Hinduism, they are not considered to be within the four *Varnas* of the caste system and are therefore untouchables. There is no other community in the southwest of Bangladesh so isolated, ostracised, broken, impoverished and socially excluded.

On April 7 and 8, I visited a Kaiputra para in Dakshin Alipur (No. 2 Ward) in Alipur Union of Satkhira Sadar Upazila. The condition of

47 Kaiputra households—39 on the western side and 8 on the eastern side—of the Satkhira-Shyamnagar highway is worse than appalling. Many of the houses are *jhupris*. The community reported that the 47 families have been living there on *khas* land for many decades.

Around 50 men (*rakhals*) from this Kaiputra para go out in the field with their herds. Their monthly salary ranges between

pigs, our neighbours look down on us,” says Shafali Mondol (35), who also begs and sometimes works as a daily labourer. “In tea stalls and hotels in *bazar* areas, our cups and plates are separate. We are not socially equal to other humans.”

The government reportedly has plans to expand the Satkhira-Shyamnagar Highway into four lanes and has been asking the Kaiputra community to vacate the land they

of Bangladesh. These families will remain grateful to the prime minister if she resettles each of them on a piece of land.

Living the life of pig graziers in a fast-changing Bangladesh is really challenging. Maintaining a herd of around 500 pigs requires a large sum of money. The owners of the herds do not have access to bank loans. They take loans from moneylenders at a very high interest rate. They also take loans from NGOs, which are inadequate. There are also high risks of swine flu and other unknown diseases that kill pigs in masses.

In January 2022, an unknown disease killed many herds of pigs. Dilip Mondol, owner of a big herd of pigs in Vayana village in Jashore, helplessly watched all of his 700 animals die when an unknown disease struck. His net loss was Tk 50 lakh. His debt to different parties was Tk 30 lakh. He is completely broke now. He is not sure if and when he can come back to business. There are many others who witnessed their pigs' death after the attack of the unknown disease. Many do not report these diseases in fear of hostility from the locals.

The Kaiputra people want change and a respectful life. Bangladesh has indeed made significant progress in many sectors including health, education, economy, employment generation and fisheries. Many from the Kaiputra community have also changed their occupation. Those who have given up their pig grazer profession and moved to fishing feel they are doing better socially and economically. Many have also been changing their Kaiputra title, Mondol, to Taraldar, Biswas, Sarkar, etc. Their children are getting admitted to schools in greater numbers. Yet, the Kaiputra like those in Dakshin Alipur are left far behind than any other community in the southwest, where they are concentrated.

As long as they keep taking their pigs for grazing in the open field, a practice they have inherited from their forefathers, they need support and protection from state and non-state parties. Their urgent needs include but are not limited to: the ability to take their pigs for grazing without fear, license, insurance, access to bank loans, social protection, access to *khas* land with ownership, medical treatment for pigs when they are struck by diseases, and recognition of pigs as domestic animals.



Rakhals with their herd of pigs in Gopalganj in 2016.

PHOTO: PHILIP GAIN

Tk 3,000 and Tk 9,000 plus a daily allowance for food.

The most appalling thing about the Kaiputra community of Dakshin Alipur is 25 of its female members, all widows and abandoned, beg in neighbouring areas. One of them is Kalyani Mondol (60 and above), who has been begging since her husband, a *rakhal*, died many years ago. She has a daughter, who has been married off. Kalyani lives in a *jhupri*, about 6 feet by 6 feet, made of nipa palm leaves, polythene and rusted tins. During rain, she has to sit up and stay awake. She is physically handicapped and walks with the help of a stick. What she gets in widow allowance is hardly enough. She cannot survive without begging.

“Because we beg and our men work with

inhabit. The Kaiputra people are completely landless and have nowhere to go.

They, however, have a suggestion for their relocation. “We are landless and our houses are so flimsy that we consider ourselves homeless,” says China Mondol, a mother of two *rakhals*. China occasionally begs for a living. “There is plenty of *khas* land on the western side of our current location. We are repeatedly appealing for pucca houses under Ashrayan scheme to resettle us there.”

It is to be noted that in August the prime minister announced Satkhira Sadar Upazila free of landless and homeless people. The 47 Kaiputra families of Dakshin Alipur in Satkhira Sadar clearly show that the upazila is not free of the landless and homeless, if Kaiputra people are considered citizens

Earth: Our only home, our responsibility



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The fragile beauty of Earth is a poetic reminder of the intricate balance that sustains all life on our planet. From the expansive oceans to the verdant forests and majestic mountains, every facet of our natural world contributes harmoniously to the symphony of existence. The intricate ecosystems brimming with a diverse array of flora and fauna underscore the resilience and interconnectedness of all living organisms.

However, the swift pace of human activities, which are causing deforestation, pollution, and climate change, poses a severe threat to Earth's delicate beauty. It is crucial for us to acknowledge that our actions have profound consequences on this planet, and to assume responsibility for preserving and safeguarding this irreplaceable home for future generations.

Environmental conservation transcends mere moral obligation; it is an essential prerequisite for the survival of our planet and its inhabitants. The well-being of humanity is directly linked to the health of our ecosystems, encompassing clean air, water, and fertile soil for agriculture. Through the preservation of biodiversity and protection of natural habitats, we ensure that the delicate balance within our ecosystem remains undisturbed, enhancing resilience against environmental perils such as climate change.

Moreover, environmental conservation plays a pivotal role in securing the ability of future generations to flourish on Earth. By taking proactive measures to curb pollution, conserve resources, and mitigate habitat destruction now, we are investing in a sustainable future for all life forms on this planet. Each individual endeavour towards environmental conservation contributes significantly towards fostering a more symbiotic relationship between humankind and the natural world—one that prioritises reverence for the

environment and ensures enduring prosperity for all living entities.

Amid mounting evidence showcasing the undeniable impacts of climate change, we must acknowledge the urgency surrounding this global crisis. Rising sea levels, extreme weather phenomena, and ecological shifts are no longer distant anticipations but tangible realities confronting us today. The accelerated pace at which environmental degradation is unfolding necessitates immediate action from individuals, communities, and nations alike.

Of particular concern are the ramifications of climate change on biodiversity. Species worldwide face extinction as their habitats vanish or become inhospitable due to fluctuating temperatures and environmental circumstances. Moreover, the issue of climate change is exacerbating prevalent social disparities by disproportionately affecting marginalised communities that lack the means to adapt or recover from environmental crises. With rising temperatures and an increase in natural disasters, vulnerable populations face heightened risks to their health, livelihoods, and overall welfare. A comprehensive approach to addressing climate change is imperative, one that places equity and justice at the forefront. Preserving biodiversity and the health of ecosystems is not merely an environmental concern but a critical matter for human survival. Each species within an ecosystem plays a vital role in maintaining its equilibrium, and the loss of even one can trigger ripple effects throughout the entire system.

By safeguarding biodiversity, we are also ensuring our own well-being, as diverse ecosystems provide essential resources such as clean air, water, food, and medicine. Additionally, protecting ecosystems is crucial for combating climate change. Healthy forests act as carbon sinks by absorbing

significant amounts of CO2 from the atmosphere and helping regulate global temperatures. Safeguarding these natural habitats is essential for addressing climate change and securing a sustainable future for the upcoming generations.

Sustainable living practices are key to securing a flourishing future for our planet. From reducing waste and embracing renewable energy sources to supporting local businesses and promoting ethical consumption practices, each small step we take can have a substantial impact on the environment. By making mindful choices in our daily lives, we can contribute to a more sustainable and harmonious world for upcoming generations.

The adoption of minimalism is another pivotal aspect of sustainable living that often goes unnoticed. Instead of constantly pursuing material possessions and consumerism, embracing a minimalist lifestyle helps decrease our carbon footprint and shift our focus towards experiences over material goods. By simplifying our lives and reducing excess clutter, we not only benefit the environment but also enhance our overall well-being in the process.

Dissemination of information and the education of others on environmental concerns can also serve as a catalyst for collective efforts towards a more sustainable future. Simple gestures such as engaging in community clean-up initiatives or backing local conservation projects have the potential to trigger a cascade of positive outcomes. Ultimately, it falls upon each individual to acknowledge his or her role in shaping the planet's well-being and to strive towards a harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

Government policies and global initiatives hold significant sway in determining the course of our planet's future. International agreements on climate change, like the Paris Agreement, and sustainability targets set by various nations are pivotal in addressing environmental issues on a global scale. It is heartening to witness governments uniting to combat challenges such as deforestation, pollution, and resource depletion through collaborative endeavours and shared commitments. Nonetheless, there remains substantial work ahead in terms

of effectively implementing and enforcing these policies. Without robust enforcement mechanisms and accountability measures, many initiatives risk falling short of their intended impact.

Our obligation to safeguard our habitat culminates in recognising that

the destiny of Earth lies within our grasp. Each person has a responsibility to safeguard and nurture this planet for generations to come. By curbing our ecological footprint and advocating for sustainable methods, we collectively hold the power to instigate change. Moreover,

acknowledging the interdependence among all living creatures underscores the urgency for immediate action. By understanding that every decision we make impacts not only ourselves but also the intricate balance of nature, we can start fostering a sense of duty towards this beautiful planet.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Executive Engineer

Pirojpur.
www.lged.gov.bd

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 গ্রাম শাসনের উন্নতি

Memo No.46.02.7900.000.07.001.2024-721

Date-30.05.2024

e-Tender Notice No-64/2023-2024 (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works office of the under signed.

Sl no.	Tender ID No.	Package No and Name of works	Last selling date & time	Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	993524	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-285) Construction of 21.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on ikree ishaque master house-jhawtala road at ch.2650.00m road [Road ID: 5791454002] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
2	993525	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-286) Construction of 18.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on sreepur uzr to katakhali bopdrer via 104 no gps road at ch.400.00m, road [Road ID: 579145256] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
3	993526	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-287) Construction of 10.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on senerhat-bhitbaria up office. at ch.1870.00m. road [Road ID: 579143001] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
4	993527	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-288) Construction of 14.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on bhitbaria up office to eneyet khan hat. at ch.2070.00m. road [Road ID: 579143004] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
5	993528	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-289) Construction of 11.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on matibhanga amir ali khan house bridge to uttar charail poler hat uzr road at ch. 1200.00m. road [Road ID: 579145203] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
6	993529	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-290) Construction of 10.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on bhandaria-kawkhali rhd road to basher pul to enayet hat via h/o siddik mollabari road at ch.600.00m. road [Road ID: 579144091] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
7	993530	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-291) Construction of 14.00m. Long RCC bridge on bhitbaria up office to eneyet khan hat. at ch.1620.00m. road [Road ID: 579143004] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
8	993531	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-292) Construction of 20.00m. Long RCC bridge on bhandaria chairkhali rhd road to md. toyabali shop via md. jabber howlader house, at ch. 120.00m. road [Road ID: 579145122] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
9	993532	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-293) Construction of 12.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on hetalia ns high school to pasharbunia high school via hosen boyati house At ch. 10.00m. road [Road ID: 579145127] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the national e-GP system portal have to be deposited through on line at any branches of registered Banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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