

#FYI



Fatherhood beyond biology

In Bangladesh, adoption has slowly emerged from the shadows of stigma, embraced by some as an act of love while remaining a hesitant choice for others. Through the stories of two fathers, this article explores how families today are redefining what it means to be a parent beyond biology.



For Riad Ahmed Khan, 44, a businessman, the journey to parenthood was long and exhausting. "My wife and I got married when we were a bit over 37 years old, and trying to have our child was a very painstaking and long process, especially for my wife," he recalled.

"We had to keep attempting the process of IVF over a period of more than five years. The whole experience was hopeful and frustrating in almost equal measure. During this process, adoption was something that we had to think about, in case the IVF process did not work out for us."

Eventually, the IVF process did succeed. "As the IVF process worked out for us in the end, we are not planning to have a second child as it is."

Still, adoption had been a serious topic within his family.

"We received a lot of support from family and friends when discussing adoption, and at one point, the topic was brought up quite often, especially by my father-in-law, who encouraged us to consider the process. But we wanted to continue the fertility treatment process a bit longer before making that decision."

Riad believes the stigma around adoption is fading. "I think social stigma was probably more of an issue for earlier generations in this country. I believe it is more readily accepted in general and probably lauded nowadays in our society. However, it does depend on the demographic in which it takes place."

Yet, even when the idea of adoption had been seriously considered, personal fears lingered. "We did have anxieties about the matter of bonding emotionally with an

adopted child. However, we also looked at it in a positive light and did feel that it would not matter eventually."

Muntasir Shahrear, 44, who works in the private sector, carries a narrative rooted in grief and hesitation.

"Losing a child leaves a scar that never truly heals. And my wife has been mourning the death of our infant daughter for years. Samia still finds it difficult to talk about her without breaking down."

However, while his wife's pain makes her reluctant to consider adoption, Muntasir quietly holds onto the thought.

"My wife is still not open to adoption, perhaps because of the trauma that she went through. But am seriously considering the idea of bringing a baby girl into our family."

For Shahrear, the challenge is not society's gaze but the internal questions. "I am confident we can go beyond the social stigma. However, what worries me is whether we are truly ready to go through the long legal process."

These accounts show that while adoption is becoming more socially accepted, it is still often considered only after other options are exhausted, and many families remain cautious. Greater awareness, simplified processes, and supportive policies could play a crucial role in helping more families view adoption not as a last resort, but as a valid and meaningful path to parenthood.

By Pothbola
Photo: Collected