

Historically, Bangladesh has earned the reputation of being at the crossroads of many cultures. The ruins of magnificent cities and monuments left behind in many parts of the country by the vanishing dynasties of rulers still bear testimony to the richness of its cultural heritage.

Bangladesh has always been known as a land full of nature's bounties as evident from the vast expanses of its lush crop fields, borderland hills thickly covered with virgin forests and innumerable rivers and their tributaries, making it the world's largest delta. Ancient chroniclers have described it as "a land of emerald and silver", "a garden fit for kings", or as "a paradise among countries". It is no wonder then that this country has always attracted settlers, traders, and conquerors who turned the land into a vast melting pot of diverse races and cultures.

Despite destruction caused by natural calamities, ever-changing courses of turbulent rivers, heavy high humidity, fast growing vegetation and expanding population, scattered throughout the country are countless ancient monuments and antiquities. Excavations at Paharpur, Vasu-Bihar, Mahasthan, Sitakot, Mainamati, and other ancient sites together with research have greatly helped enrich knowledge about the country's early history.

In the absence of stone in the region, most of the ancient monuments and buildings were built with highly perishable mud, bamboo, reed or timber or with durable burnt bricks and mudmortar. It is, however, no small irony that whatever of these monuments that were spared by nature were vandalized by waves of conquerors and treasure-hunters.

Festivals

Anniversaries, Fairs and Festivals form a vital part in the social life of ordinary Bangladeshis. The biggest religious festival is Eid-ul-Fitr. Other Muslim Festivals include Eid-ul-Azha, Eid-e-Mi'adunnabi, Muharram and shab-e-Barat. Widely celebrated festivals of other communities include Durga Puja of the Hindus, Christmas of the Christians and Buddha Purnima of the Buddhists. Among the non-religious anniversaries, Bengali New Year (Pahela Baishakh, on 14 April), the great Shaheed Day or Language Martyrs' Day (on 21 February, the International Mother Language Day), Independence and National Day (26 March), and Victory Day (16 December) are celebrated nationwide.

Art

Bangladesh has a rich tradition of art. Great Painter Zainul Abedin enriched the nation's heritage followed by Quamrul Hasan and S.M. Sultan. Well-known painters such as Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, Shafiuddin Ahmed and Quamrul Hasan provided early inspiration to the younger generation to go for fine arts. This was given institutional shape in the form of a full-fledged Institute of Fine Art within Dhaka University, originally established in 1848. The institute has since trained large groups of painters, sculptors, and commercial artists. Some of the country's painters have earned considerable fame abroad.

Dance & Music

Classical forms of Indo-Iranian and South Indian origin have been adopted in Bangladeshi dance as an art form. In ballets, folk forms and themes also abound. Limited practice of folk, tribal and social dances are also in vogue. Among the tribal dances, the Monipuri and Santal are best-known. Institutions like the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts and the Shilpakal Academy have helped popularize dance dramas and other forms of Performing Arts. Music in Bangladesh can be divided into three distinct categories – classical, folk and modern. Classical music, both vocal and instrumental, is rooted in the subcontinental tradition refined during early Turkish rule in the sub-Himalayan region. Folk music, nurtured through the ages by village poets and mendicants, are rich in devotional mysticism and love-lore. The best known forms are Bhatiali, Baul, Marfati, Murshidi and Bhawaiya. Modern Bengali Music has blended Western traits with traditional forms. Bangla songs are particularly rich in lyrics, with famous poets contributing to their subtlety both in words and tunes. Contemporary music and orchestration has a marked influence of the West. Welcoming the spring with music and dance. Bangladesh poets, essayists, short story writers, playwrights, and novelists have contributed significantly to enriching the Bangla language and literature. Their works are gradually becoming known to the wider world through translations into various languages.