

**The Dynamics of Interrelations among the Bangalee, Chakma and
Tripura Ethnic Communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts:
Understanding the Nature of Ethnicity and Identity**

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**This dissertation has been prepared for the fulfillment of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences,
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DECLARATION

This Ph.D Dissertation has been prepared to submit to the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh in fulfilling the condition of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) program. All the material embodied in this dissertation is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other Diploma or Degree of this or any other University or Institution at home or abroad.

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CERTIFICATE

It is my immense pleasure to introduce S. M. Arif Mahmud as a Ph.D Scholar of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Dhaka who has prepared and accomplished his Ph.D Dissertation on “**The Dynamics of Interrelations among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura Ethnic Communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts: Understanding the Nature of Ethnicity and Identity**” under my supervision.

This dissertation is submitted in the fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, the University of Dhaka, during the session 2010-2011.

Supervisor

Dr. Zahidul Islam

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Dedicated to....

My Parents, Wife and Children

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Dated: Dhaka
The 30th March 2015

S. M. Arif Mahmud

Abstract

This anthropological study titled ‘The Dynamics of Interrelations among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura Ethnic Communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts: Understanding the Nature of Ethnicity and Identity’ has been conducted to find out the diversified interrelations operating among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities living in *Singinala*, *Paltanjay* and *Beltali paras* under *Perachhara Union* of Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila*, Khagrachari district (bounded by Indian State of Tripura on the north, Rangamati and Chittagong districts on the south, Rangamati district on the east, and Chittagong district and Indian State of Tripura on the west) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. Initially the supreme concern of this study has been to identify their nature of ethnicity and identity through an understanding of their three aspects: i) religious, ritual and cultural festivals, ii) political relations, and iii) economy and market sphere. The ultimate goal has been to take a deep look into the internal and external factors which crystallize their dimensions of interrelations.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) is in the South-eastern Bangladesh (bordering India and Myanmar) and consisting of three districts –Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. Before 1950s this region was inhabited mostly by the ethnic communities (of Sino-Tibetan descent, with Mongolian features, and predominantly Buddhists and small numbers of Hindus) other than the Bangalees. Today at least 12 ethnic communities and the Bangalees are living in the CHTs and giving the area a colorful image where all these communities differ in terms of language, social organization, culture, religious rites, and food and agricultural techniques among others.

Two types of Bangalees are living in the CHTs – naturally migrated (during British period), and settlers (after the independence of Bangladesh). But the Bangalees living in *Singinala para* belong to the first category and have come mostly from the districts of Feni, Noakhali, Comilla, and Chittagong of Bangladesh. Historically, two factors have facilitated their settlement in this *para* (and also in the CHTs) – exchange of commercial materials, and development of Chittagong port (with expansion of the city) to facilitate the exchange. On the other hand the Chakmas of the *Beltali* and *Paltanjay paras* consider themselves as the major ethnic community and identify them to be the indigenous resident of the area. According to their oral history their ancestors had come from the Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal and Assam regions of Eastern India i.e. from Indo-Aryan group. The Tripuras of *Beltali para* consider them to be one of the major and ancient ethnic communities living in Indian subcontinent and CHTs for centuries. They recall their place of origin to the Tripura State of India where they are the dominant group.

The methodology of this study is based on an integrated approach (i.e. combination of qualitative and quantitative methods). Considering the nature of this study qualitative methods have been used both for data collection and in-depth analysis, while quantitative methods have been used wherever needed. These methods include observation and participation, use of key informant to enter the field, contextualization of the locality, triangulation process to test the validity and reliability of data, conversation with a purpose and in-depth discussion, simple survey, open and close ended questionnaires, checklist and guidelines, analysis of life history and case study, narrative analysis, emic and etic perspectives, analysis of structure and function, and an intensive review of existing literatures. The analysis of the data and information followed three steps –

mostly qualitative analysis, interpretation of various aspects of relationships, and presentation through methodology, background information, findings, and conclusions.

The theoretical and conceptual understandings of this study include culture, culture area, cultural climax and intensity, status, role and relationship, economy and market, power relations, ethnicity and identity, and globalization for culture and identity. Culture has been theorized in a multidimensional way. A cognitive view of culture is that of something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, and a knowledge base for sharing of thoughts, understanding, inferences and predictions. According to semiotic theory culture has been seen as a system of signs or communication which further indicates that culture is a complex phenomenon having a close connection with language for people's interpretation, interaction and meaningful behavior. From a diffusional perspective culture area refers to a geographical area occupied by people, whose culture exhibits a significant degree of similarities and dissimilarities among various cultures. To give the concept of culture area a historical depth Kroeber (1939) added the ideas of 'cultural intensity' and 'cultural climax' saying that culture can be observed through 'sensitive indicators' which include art, music, religion, ethos, philosophy and similar aspects. And the term 'cultural climax' has been seen as the dynamic equivalent of the term 'culture center' which indicated the part of the area where the ethnic communities, such as that of the situations in the study *paras*, have a larger contact of culture. For the functionalists status refers to position in a pattern of social relationship and role consists of behavior associated with status. Later interactionists defined the reality of social relationships operating within and among different groups of people. Thus social relationships are generated through exchange. Thus to distinguish between modes and spheres of exchange Polanyi (1945) further related the idea of market economy for social interaction. According to Polanyi where the market predominates, it inverts the relationship between exchange and social relationships associated with other modes. Another way to interpret status, role and relationship is the language of social relations in interaction through an understanding of the perspectives of the structuralists and linguists. However, following this a Marxist anthropological perspective has been taken into consideration which illustrates that interaction always takes place within an existing system generated by cumulative social processes.

Michel Foucault's has elaborated the concept of power relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions from a critical and historical viewpoint. Initially Foucault's analysis of power has given a picture about the way various institutions exert their power on groups and individuals, and how the latter affirm their own identity and resistance to the effects of power. Here his basic idea has been developed around the notions of powerful and powerless to examine how it operates in day to day interactions between people and institutions. For Foucault power is not something that can be owned, but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way; it is more a strategy than a possession: "power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain...Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization...Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (Foucault 1980:98). Foucault further argued that "where there is power there is resistance" – which means that power relations between individuals cannot be reduced to master-slave or oppressor-victim relations, but they are productive relations, because they imply resistance; and the state is not mainly something that owns power, but rather something which builds a system of relations between individuals so that the political system works (Foucault 1978). Regarding political power Foucault

focused on power relations related to government, asking who can and should govern, who is to be governed, and how should we conceive the methods of government, i.e. the methods of shaping others' behavior. Analyzing "governmentality", Foucault stressed that it would be an error to understand institutions such as the state as being essentially oppressive and as being permanent and solid – which they are not, but just the opposite is true: they are fragile and have a great potential of change (Foucault 1991:85-103). These understandings of power relations have broadened the scope of this study to look into the nature and exercise of power in the hill *paras* where every human interaction, peoples' power is subject to negotiation with their hierarchical places.

The theories and concepts on ethnicity and identity have been analyzed from various directions to develop an in-depth understanding of the nature of ethnicity and identity of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. These have helped in illustrating several other concepts such as ethnic identity, ethnic origin, ethnocentrism, and ethnicism. However, Primordialist approaches to ethnicity, first used by Edward Shils (1957), distinguished certain kinds of social bonds such as personal, primordial, shared and civil ties. While the instrumentalist, transactionalist, social psychological and ethno-symbolic approaches to ethnicity treat ethnic groups as units of ascription, and ethnic affiliation (based on kinship myths) where these play vital role in unifying populations and ensuring their continuity. Again Weber (1996) addressed ethnicity in the way that ethnic groups refer to those having a subjective belief in their common descent which helps in understanding ethnic groups who initially take part into ethnic relations. On the other hand Eriksen (1993) argued that ethnic identity is marked by the recognition from others of a group's distinctiveness and ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. Barth (1969) has argued that ethnic groups are categories of ascription, identification by the actors themselves, characteristic of organizing interaction between people, and have specific boundary maintenance strategies. All these refer to the interconnectedness of ethnic identities. In dealing with ethnicity Cohen (1996) argued that contemporary ethnicity is the result of intensive interaction between ethnic groupings and is essentially a political phenomenon. While De Vos' (1975) argued that ethnicity (or ethnic identity) indicates consists of the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people to differentiate themselves from other groups. This refers to an instrumental political approach for ethnic groups, ethnic categories, and ethnicity. Banton (1996) used the actor's model (rational choice) to describe ethnic relations or ethnicity through the processes of socialization and optimization for various social groups. Stuart Hall (1992) has focused on the politics of representation to understand ethnicity engaging history, culture, tradition and similar other issues. Taking religion Enloe (1980) maintained that ethnicity is both objective and subjective where religion sustains ethnic boundaries as well as intermarriage. Taking postmodern revival of ethnicity Melucci (1989) maintained that industrial capitalism and modernization of complex societies have produced dominant (class) and subordinated cultures within productive relations. Ethnicity is seen to be revived as a source of identity. Following these aspects of ethnicity, the ethno-national concept has been brought with a plural meaning: as ethnic identity, as a weapon of revenge, as instrument to apply pressure in the political market, and as a response to needs for personal and collective identity. In this process ethnicity has been clarified taking multidimensional aspects of individuals and groups particularly focusing relationships operating among different ethnic groups. The Eriksonian approach to identity remained in force. This has led to rather restrictive interpretations of the concept following two more or less opposite tendencies: the first favors a primordialist approach which takes the sense of self and belonging to a collective group, defined by objective criteria such as common

ancestry and common biological characteristics; and the second, rooted in social constructionist theory, takes the view that identity is formed by a predominantly political choice of certain characteristics. Barth (1969) has helped to de-essentialize ethnicity and ethnic identity through boundary maintenance. Geertz (1973) argued that group identities assert themselves in opposition to perceived pressures of homogenization. Likewise, identity came to be understood as a potential ideological construct for political mobilization, alongside that of ethnicity and nationalism. The analysis of globalization for culture and identity has been found significant for this study and Heisenberg (2002) maintained that globalization is the process by which the experience of everyday life, marked by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, is becoming standardized around the world. These are making greater cultural interactions among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. The literatures of this study are also associated with these theoretical understandings giving way for a critical analysis. Thus the theoretical and conceptual understandings on ethnicity and identity, and the methodologies have helped to go deeper into various aspects of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras, and to generate the understandings of this study. These aspects show the dynamics of interrelations of these people through cultures, religions, politics, economic well being, and livelihood strategies.

These communities consider religion and culture as the two most significant aspects to determine their ethnicity, identity, peace, happiness, social relations, interaction and building social solidarity. There are both Hindu and Muslim Bangalees in *Singinala para* and the Muslim Bangalees have identified that religious beliefs and rituals have generated their nature of interactions with the Chakmas and Tripuras in the following ways – i) developed a sense of cooperation and enhancement of social relations, ii) showed a path for peaceful living, iii) generated their inter-ethnic relations and social solidarity during their birth, marriage and death rituals through maintaining ethnicity and boundaries, iv) reinforced ethnic differences and cohesions through sharing their sacred myths, languages, and religious orientations, and v) covered their sense of self-consciousness and self-esteem/ belongingness which shows their separate identity and interaction. The Hindu Bangalees indicate that in maintaining social relations and interaction with the people of different ethnic communities they give preference to religious rituals, beliefs and activities as the determinant factors in the processes of ethnicity and identity where – i) it helped shaping their nature of identity, ii) indicated their boundary maintenance (though intermarriages are taking place between the Bangalees and Chakmas, and Bangalees and Tripuras), and iii) helped maintaining good social relations and interactions with others. However, the Chakmas and Tripuras consider their religions and cultures as marked indicators for ethnicity and identity, and maintaining their multidimensional relationships in the hill *paras* where they have identified following changes within their communities – i) forgetting their past incidences of conflict only at the cost of their traditional rights and demands are not harmed, ii) developing a comprehensive relationship with every ethnic community in the *paras*, iii) enabling them to develop an environment of inter-ethnic relations, and iv) determining their identity through differences and pattern of boundary maintenance with the Bangalees and other ethnic communities.

Thus the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras always interact with each other for religious, economic, social, cultural, and political purposes and they place their religious beliefs and rituals over and above everything to demonstrate their ethnic identity. This refers to their feeling of ethnic affinity based on shared religious beliefs and rituals despite differences and mechanism of boundary maintenance.

They consider culture for individual and group relations, origin and identity determination, and establishment of a hill based socio-cultural bondage i.e. 'hill culture' for a peaceful living. These are seen as determining factors to establish an affordable social relation. They also evaluated modernization, globalization, access to modern education, and technological advancement as responsible for continuous cultural contact, differences, and change and they believe that their society is culturally highly exclusive. Color of the hill and its people (Bangalee, Chakma or Tripura) are represented through the cultural event '*Baishabi*' festival (i.e. to observe and celebrate the New Year). The Bangalees recognize this as an opportunity to interact with the Chakmas and Tripuras through sharing of foods, songs, dances and emotions, while the Chakmas and Tripuras keep their doors open during for all with the belief that it brings peace and happiness to the people of the hills irrespective of age, sex and community identity. Thus they recognize this to demonstrate their identity as Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura.

They consider politics as a crucial playmaker (from an instrumentalist perspective) in addressing their ethnicity and identity. With a gain-loss equation they have regarded their amicable and dyadic relationships through socio-political contact including local and national level politics. Here lies the seed of politics of representation for ethnicity and identity taking their history, language, religion and culture. They have differentiated 'political relations' and 'relations of politics' generated through inter-ethnic contacts, communication technologies, exchange of goods and other materials in business and trade, and utilization of growing population for different purposes including politics. Today, they are practicing a process of exclusion and incorporation through the position of individuals in inter-ethnic contacts, power and politics. This is reflected in the fact that the Chakmas and Tripuras do not want to lose their community identity, while the Bangalees are trying to demonstrate their close attachment with the Chakmas and Tripuras and the hills. These symbolize their active participation in politics through forming various political groups, organization of ethnicity, and expression of identity.

Their engagement in both local and national level politics has given them the strength to politicize their ethnic identity and boundary maintenance (it seems political when the Chakmas and Tripuras use the term '*Jumma*' to address their identities, or when the Bangalees use the terms 'minority' or 'settlers'). This is all about giving importance to their situations in the context of threats to their rights, competition for resources, or simply their physical, social and cultural boundary maintenances.

The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are very clearly concerned with their gender participation in their religious, cultural, and political activities and a number of female members belonging to these communities are directly engaged in the activities related to their struggle and fight for ethnic identity. Though female participation is greater among the Chakmas and Tripuras than the Bangalees, but ultimately they are concerned about the situations of the hills.

A major debate from the Chakmas and Tripuras is over the issue of their claim to be the indigenous community of these hill *paras*. This is a conflict of interest between them and the state authorities regarding their right and access to land and resources, and for their identity crisis and recognition. They have taken this politically leading to the formation of political groups (and also armed struggles, violence and conflicts). Through this they have criticized those points of the constitution of Bangladesh which do not recognize them as indigenous communities. They also criticized the perspectives of modern bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies for undermining their practices of close attachment with

their social world. Thus they are against the term like ‘ethnic minority’ or ‘minor ethnic community’ used to determine their identity and do not like the imposition of rules by the state which has violated their customary laws, business and livelihood strategies.

This reflects a contradictory view of the Bangalees, and the Chakmas and Tripuras. The Bangalees have rejected their demands and pointed to the fact that this has created a politics of identity formation in the hills. Thus the political, economic and development policies taken by the state have done two things to these communities – on one hand endangered existence and generated the issue of identity politics for the Chakmas and Tripuras, and on the other created political issues over the settler Bangalees in the hills.

Intervention of Bangalee culture and free flow movement of multidimensional modes of life style have led to the foundation of an open or multiple society in the hills. These have increased competitions for resources and livelihood options, developed a critical inter-ethnic relations and boundary maintenance, and deconstructing identity without losing their ancestral history. Thus the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are attaching themselves with each other’s cultures and traditions, and trying to catch up the emerging leadership elites (or dominant groups) in their *paras*.

The Bangalees have limited access to the resources of the hills and struggle to search for new options such as selling agricultural items, grocery cloths and electronic products in the local and town markets. So they have to explore for chances and create opportunities facing the challenges from different ethnic communities. A market based economic system has been established in the hill *paras* and towns facilitating interactions among production, distribution and consumption practices and also among these communities.

The economic lives of the Chakmas and Tripuras have been based on the traditional practices of *jhum* cultivation, fishing in the river, cultivation of ‘bamboo’ and ‘*shal*’ trees and doing small scale business in the locality. But today they are combining their local, traditional and global exercises and struggling to protect their culture, economic interests, and community identity. Due to these they are against those policies, rules and regulations of the state which have affected their customary rights. Thus an alienation process from their land, forest and resources has been in action causing displacement, loss of traditional rights, and commercial use of forest resources. Accordingly they are depending on a surplus production system connected with market and capitalistic mode of production. Here people from different ethnic communities are coming into contact (cross-cutting inter-ethnic issues) – consumers, and business enterprises.

Therefore, they are creating a social space to capitalize their habitual differentiations for production, distribution and consumption activities associated with market (based on goods, money and market). With this material exchange they are displaying their identities. This is a reflection of their community identity. Thus an exhibition of *Bangaleeness*, *Chakmaness* and *Tripuraness* is in practice. These indicate that they are taking this economic practice as a media for their interactions and interpersonal relationships – through clearly differentiated and identified products and peoples.

Today a materialistic understanding is working among these communities. They have figured out that the basis of this understanding is money-centered livelihood strategy and materialistic worldviews. Therefore, from household to market their processes of interaction are generated by – materialistic view for community philosophy, individuals displaying material cultures, community identity by a market philosophy, profit-loss

mechanism, development of a bondage as consumers and investors, and an inter-ethnic connection as a composite of relationships for their personal and community identity.

Exchanges during different festivals and ceremonies make it possible for them to extend their relationships through the lines of families, kins and neighbors. This displays their social-cultural-political interactions to work on their relationships irrespective of conflict of interests based on ethnic identity and nationality in the hill *paras*. Thus despite critical boundaries, exchanges play momentous roles in their social-economic-political sectors. From their economic activities and inter-ethnic relationships it has become clear that everyone involved here has enlarged their network (irrespective of age, sex, gender and ethnic identity). Thus despite discriminations and competitions the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to enhance their network of relationships for a secured future.

Taking all the religious, cultural, political and economic aspects in terms of ethnicity, identity and interaction, these communities have mentioned about two factors as guiding authority – one is internal factors (i.e. changes from within the communities to adapt to new idioms), and the other is external factors (i.e. through a process of diffusion giving a way to new philosophies). According to their understandings these changes have renewed their relationships. Thus over the last few decades these communities and their *paras* have gone through a deconstructed individual and community relationships through their religions, cultures, traditions, politics, and livelihood strategies.

However, these people have used stereotyped characters to justify the nature of their ethnic identity, division and classification in the society, conditions of power holder and powerlessness, and socio-political and inter-ethnic relations. The Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to protest their external threats, while the Bangalees are trying to be united in their *paras* through developing local political groups. Eventually the historical background to the birth of Bangladesh, growth of Bangladeshi nationalism and its policies regarding CHTs, and conflict of traditions played significant role to build this competitive relation with the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion, internal-external and/or nationalism and counter-nationalism processes in the hills.

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List of Abbreviation

AL	Awami League
ASEN	Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CDRB	Centre for Development Research
CFSD	Centre for Sustainable Development
CIPRAD	Centre for Indigenous Peoples Research and Development
CHTs	Chittagong Hill Tracts
GNP	Gross National Product
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HH	Household Head
HWF	Hill Women's Federation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILSD	International Labour Survey Division
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JSS	<i>Jono Sambati Samiti</i>
JSS-M.N. Larma	<i>Jono Sambati Samiti- M.N. Larma</i>
JSS-R	<i>Jono Sambati Samiti- Reformist</i>
MRG	Migration Research Group
PBCP	<i>Parbatya Bangalee Chattra Parishad</i> (Hill Bangalee Student Union)
PCJS	<i>Parbatya Chattagram Juba Samiti</i>
PCJSS	<i>Parbatya Chattagram Jono Sambati Samiti</i> (Chittagong Hill Tracts Ethnic Peoples' Coordination Association)
PCMS	<i>Parbatya Chattagram Mahila Samiti</i> (Chittagong Hill Tracts Women's Association)
PCP	<i>Pabari Chattra Parishad</i> (Hill Student Council)
PGP	<i>Pabari Gono Parishad</i> (Hill People's Council)
PP	Population
RFs	Reserve Forests
SAA	<i>Somo Adbikar Andolon</i> (Movement for Equal Rights)
SB	<i>Shanti Babini</i> (Peace Force)
SEHD	Society for Environment and Human Development
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNO	United Nations Organization
UPDF	United Peoples Democratic Front
USA	United States of America
USFs	Unclassed State Forests
VCFs	Village Common Forests
WCIP	The World Council of Indigenous Peoples
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Glossary of Local Terms

<i>Abiak Sumnai</i>	Name of a ceremony arranged by the Tripuras when the naval cord of the new born baby dries
<i>Abukathang</i>	The impure condition of a baby just after birth among the Tripuras
<i>Adivasis</i>	A Bangla term used to refer to the indigenous peoples; in case of Bangladesh this term has been labeled with political connotations
<i>Apanikum</i>	A ritual performed by the Chakmas at the bridegroom's house during marriage where there is the offering of a feast for the guests
<i>Tulana Panpada</i>	takes place
<i>Vajey Dena</i>	
<i>Aieng/ Kurmu</i>	It means fair (according to Pangkhua language)
<i>Al Quran</i>	Religious pious Book of the Muslims
<i>Baishabi</i>	This refers to a combination of three festivals <i>Biju</i> , <i>Bwisu</i> and <i>Sangrai</i> in observation and celebration of New Year by the Chakmas, Tripuras, and Marmas respectively in the hill <i>paras</i> , different other ethnic communities as well as the Bangalees also participate in these festivals
<i>Bandarban</i>	District of CHT's (administrative unit)
<i>Bangalee</i>	Name of the community living in <i>Singinala para</i> of Khagrachari and also in other districts (64 districts) of Bangladesh, speak 'Bangla' language, and often addressed as the mainstream population of the country
<i>Bangaleeana</i>	Showing up the Bangalee culture or the notion that we are Bangalee, more or less a nationalist identity
<i>Bangla</i>	This is the name of the language of the Bangalees
<i>Baishak</i>	The first month of Bangla Year Calendar
<i>Bazar Chowdhury</i>	This term refers to the head of local market for the Tripuras
<i>Beltali Para</i>	Name of the <i>para</i> or village where the Chakmas and Tripuras live
<i>Biju</i>	New Year festival observed by the Chakmas
<i>Bishikatal</i>	Tripuras call the first day of the <i>Bangla</i> month <i>Baishak</i> by this term
<i>Bishuma</i>	Tripuras call the 30 th day of the <i>Bangla</i> month <i>Chaitra</i> by this term
<i>Bisut-Vangana</i>	A ceremony of the Chakmas where the bridegroom stays at his father-in-laws house at least for one night
<i>Bojori</i>	This refers to the death anniversary for the Chakmas
<i>Borok/ Boro</i>	Tripura language used to address themselves within their common sharing
<i>Bou-Tulana</i>	A ceremony among the Chakmas to receive the bride at bridegroom's house
<i>Bwisu</i>	New Year festival observed by the Tripuras
<i>Chaitra</i>	The last month of <i>Bangla</i> Year Calendar
<i>Chander Gari</i>	A kind of jeep (motor vehicle) used in the hilly roads and locally known as moon vehicle
<i>Charra</i>	Refers to lake
<i>Chemlai Puja</i>	A Tripura <i>puja</i> arranged inside the house and in the name of God <i>Lakkehi Narayan</i>
<i>Chengi</i>	Name of a river went through the <i>Beltali</i> and <i>Paltanjay paras</i> in Khagrachari (a popular river with which people have close association in the hill <i>paras</i>)
<i>Chep-bor dena</i>	A especial Chakma ritual where they hand over their bride to the bridegroom
<i>Chungulang</i>	A ritual of the Chakmas where the social recognition of the

	marriage is ensured with the presence of a Ojha or Shaman (or religious specialist)
<i>Cita</i>	It means pyre where the dead body of a Hindu male or female is placed or cremated (according to Hindu religion)
<i>Collisba</i>	A religious feast of the Muslims arranged after forty days of the dead man or woman
<i>Cunglang-gorana</i>	A Chakma ritual through which the newly married couple is given a legal status and approval
<i>Dafa</i>	This means 'clan' for the Tripuras
<i>Dhabnaanna</i>	The Chakmas refer to their cases of elopement of boys and girls (who want to get married) with this term
<i>Dhol</i>	The Tripura name for the musical instrument 'drum'
<i>Dhuti</i>	A piece of cloth wore by the Hindu male
<i>Dighinala</i>	Name of administrative unit of Khagrachari district
<i>Upazila</i>	
<i>Din</i>	It refers to the religion 'Islam', its traditions, beliefs and values
<i>Ful-Biju</i>	The last two days of <i>Bangla</i> month <i>Chaitra</i> is termed by the Chakmas as ' <i>Ful-Biju</i> '
<i>Gengulis</i>	Refers to a group of Chakmas who arrange song parties in their <i>paras</i>
<i>Ghila-khara</i>	A game played by the Chakmas on the bank of the <i>Chengi</i> river during <i>Ful-Biju</i>
<i>Ghila-kojoi</i>	A kind of water mixed with wild tamarind and used by the Chakmas during birth practice of their child
<i>Goria Worship</i>	Worshiping for agricultural activities in the hills by the Tripuras
<i>Goriyaporjya</i>	The first day of <i>Bangla</i> month <i>Baishak</i> is termed by the Chakmas as ' <i>Goriyaporjya</i> '
<i>Goza/ Gojha/ Gutthi</i>	All these refer to 'clan' for the Chakmas
<i>Haal-khatas</i>	Businessmen and shop keepers' practices of opening new note books during the first day of <i>Bangla</i> New Year
<i>Halal</i>	Term used among the Muslims and according to the Islamic religious beliefs which refers to those food items, drinks, etc. that are allowed to be eaten or taken
<i>Haram</i>	Term used among the Muslims and according to the Islamic religious beliefs which refers to those food items, drinks, etc. that are prohibited to be eaten or taken
<i>Haribwisu</i>	Tripuras call the 29 th day of the <i>Bangla</i> month <i>Chaitra</i> by this term
<i>Imam</i>	This term refers to the religious leader among the Muslims responsible for conducting prayers and religious activities
<i>Jadan-banana</i>	A ritual of the Chakmas to bless the newly married couple
<i>Jainamaj</i>	A type of cloth (usual size is 4.5' x 2.5') on which the Muslims stand during prayers
<i>Janaja</i>	A prayer of the Muslims for the dead man or woman before burial
<i>Jhum</i>	A cultivation process practiced by the Chakmas and Tripuras known as 'shifting cultivation' or 'slash and burn cultivation'
<i>Jumias/ Jummas/ Jumma/ Joomahs</i>	The Chakmas and Tripuras use this term with the view of politics of identity formation or to express their separate identity in the hills
<i>Jora-Banaana</i>	A ceremony among the Chakmas where the bride and bridegroom sit together in front of all the guests to receive their well wishes

<i>Kajjalai Bochong or Gandharba</i>	The Tripura term for love marriage
<i>Kajjalai Kasur or Asur</i>	The Tripura term for marriage by payment and bride capture
<i>Kajjalai Kwchang or Prajapattya</i>	The Tripura term for arrange marriage
<i>Karbari</i>	This term refers to the village/ <i>para</i> headman of the Chakmas and Tripuras
<i>Katharak/ Katharak Puja</i>	A worshipping festival arranged by the Tripuras outside their house (in the name of the God <i>Kattik-Ganesb</i>) to remove the impure condition and make everything clear after the birth of the baby
<i>Kerenju-dbulon</i>	One kind of rocking cradle made of especially designed bamboos by the Chakmas for birth rituals
<i>Khaban</i>	A Tripura term meaning turban
<i>Khagrachari</i>	District of CHTs (administrative unit)
<i>Khagrachari</i>	An administrative unit of Khagrachari district greater than the union
<i>Sadar Upazila</i>	
<i>Khuma</i>	Chakma language meaning 'taboo'
<i>Khumkamung</i>	This means worshipping for the mercy of the creator by the Tripuras
<i>Worship</i>	
<i>Khyoungtha</i>	This term is used by the Chakmas which means children of the river
<i>Kokborok</i>	This is the name of the language of the Tripuras
<i>Kula</i>	A Chakma term for winnowing fan
<i>Kurta</i>	This means pant for the Chakma male
<i>Langadu Upazila</i>	Name of administrative unit of Khagrachari district
<i>Mahalchhari</i>	Name of administrative unit of Khagrachari district
<i>Upazila</i>	
<i>Mangchowk</i>	Tripura term referring to crematorium
<i>Mangchowk</i>	The name of a crematorium for the Tripura female which consists of seven stages of firewood
<i>Burai</i>	
<i>Mangchowk</i>	The name of a crematorium for the Tripura male which consists of five stages of firewood
<i>Chala</i>	
<i>Matiranga</i>	Name of administrative unit of Khagrachari district
<i>Upazila</i>	
<i>Mela</i>	The Chakma term for marriage
<i>Mela-khana</i>	The offering of a feast among the Chakmas at the bridegroom's house
<i>Mod-pilang</i>	This refers to a ceremony among the Chakmas to fix the date of marriage through offering a liquor drinking party
<i>Mul-Biju</i>	The last day of <i>Bangla</i> month <i>Chaitra</i> is termed by the Chakmas as 'Mul-Biju'
<i>Nalkbagra</i>	Refers to tree grown in the forests of the hills
<i>Nwabjbar</i>	Chakma people address the New Year with term
<i>Pahari</i>	Refers to those ethnic people who live in the CHTs, addressing their identity as 'hill people'
<i>Pabarias</i>	A <i>Bangla</i> term which refers to those people who live in the CHTs
<i>Pabela Baishak</i>	First day of the first month of <i>Bangla</i> Year Calendar
<i>Palagaans</i>	It means narrative operas (usually the Chakmas and Tripuras arrange these <i>palagaans</i> during different festivals in their <i>paras</i>)
<i>Paltanjay Para</i>	Name of the <i>para</i> or village where the Chakmas live
<i>Pana</i>	A Tripura dinner offered by the bridegroom's family after marriage

<i>Panchan Curry</i>	A curry prepared by the Tripuras during <i>Baishabi</i> festival through boiling five different herbs
<i>Panchbari</i>	Name of administrative unit of Khagrachari district
<i>Upazila</i>	
<i>Panchayet</i>	A locally (at the <i>para</i> level) established disciplinary body of authority for the Tripuras
<i>Panta-Ilsh</i>	A food prepared during the New Year festival with wet rice and the fish Hilsha-Ilsha
<i>Para</i>	For the CHTs the term ' <i>para</i> ' refers to 'village' (an administrative unit of Bangladesh)
<i>Perachhara Union</i>	An administrative unit of Khagrachari district greater than the <i>para</i> or village
<i>Pinon-khadi</i>	Specially designed upper and lower cloth for the Chakma and Tripura female
<i>pua:pua</i>	A Chakma term which means blessing the newly married couple
<i>Punjabi</i>	This means long cloth for the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura males
<i>Rangamati</i>	District of CHTs (administrative unit)
<i>Saat Khawa</i>	A feast organized by the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees at the seventh month of the pregnant mother and this program is usually arranged by the family of the pregnant mother
<i>Sabala</i>	This is a Chakma language referring to matchmaker during finding matches of bride and groom for marriage
<i>Salam</i>	Salutation in Islamic way
<i>Salwar Kamiz</i>	Dresses for young girls
<i>Sangrai</i>	New Year festival observed by the Marmas
<i>Shimtung</i>	Tripuras call the lantern as <i>Shimtung</i>
<i>Shimtung</i>	Worshipping to wish peace and happiness to the departed souls by the Tripuras
<i>Worship</i>	
<i>Singinala Para</i>	Name of the <i>para</i> or village where the Bangalees live
<i>Sraddha</i>	It refers to a Hindu Bangalee and Tripura ceremony in honor and for the benefit of the dead person's relatives
<i>Sudom</i>	The Chakma term which means legal relation
<i>Suvo nobo-borsbo</i>	This is a <i>Bangla</i> term which means 'Happy New Year'
<i>Takam</i>	It means yellow color (according to Pangkhua language)
<i>Tal baklai</i>	A worshipping ceremony performed by the Tripuras during the fifth month of pregnancy of their women
<i>Tallang</i>	This is the name of the last month of Tripura era
<i>Tantrasha</i>	Name of Tripura Holly Book
<i>Tantrik</i>	A Tripura way of marriage where a priest conducts the whole marriage procedures
<i>Timpur</i>	A ceremony of the Chakmas where the bridegroom's family visits the bride's family three times with variety of fruits, nuts, betel-leaf, etc.
<i>Toi-Para/ Toi-Brofa</i>	Refers to language of the Tripuras located/ situated at the river bank
<i>Toungtha</i>	This term is used by the Chakmas which means children of the hills
<i>Tripoorardana</i>	A Sanskrit term for the Tripuras which refers to the sun
<i>Union Parishad</i>	Refers to an administrative unit under the district of Bangladesh
<i>Upazila</i>	Refers to an administrative unit under a district of Bangladesh
<i>Vaatmoja-dena</i>	A practice among the Chakmas for serving the pregnant mother with rice and curry on a banana leaf during their birth rituals

Vedic

A Tripura way to conduct marriage

Zamindar

Refers to an administrative position created by the British government at the village level in Bangladesh who looks after almost every matter of the village

Alternatively, ethnicity may refer to a field of study: the classification of peoples and the relations between groups, in a context of 'self-other' distinctions (Eriksen 1993:4)

CHAPTER-1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Proposition

1.2 Objectives

1.3 Methodology

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual understanding

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.6 Experiences in the Field

1.1 Background and Proposition

It takes at least two something to create a difference...Clearly each alone is – for the mind and perception – a non-entity, a non-being. Not different from being, and not different from non-being. An unknowable, a *Ding an sich*, a sound from one hand clapping (Bateson 1979:78).

The concept of ethnicity has been largely discussed by different scholars and the social scientists including anthropologists and sociologists are making more in-depth understanding of the topic. The study of ethnicity has been dominated by debates between ‘primordialism’ and ‘instrumentalism’, and ‘constructivism’ and ‘essentialism’. Scholars have attempted to respond to increasingly politicized forms of self-representation by members of different ethnic groups and nations in the context of debates over multiculturalism. These debates show that the concept of ethnicity has a critical understanding in the world anthropology as it has been used to determine a distinction between the marginalized and the larger group of people in society. Through this study titled “The Dynamics of Interrelations among the Bangalee,¹ Chakma and Tripura Ethnic Communities² of Chittagong Hill Tracts: Understanding the Nature of Ethnicity and Identity’ an attempt has been made to focus on the diversified interrelations among different ethnic communities and Bangalee people living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts³ (CHTs) of Bangladesh. This, in other words, addresses the nature of ethnicity and identity of the people under study.

Unfortunately there is a dearth of purely anthropological information about the ethnic peoples of Bangladesh. Shortage of anthropologists specially trained in ethnic studies, lack of government initiatives, lack of resources for conducting research, and similar other reasons might have been responsible for an inadequate number of studies on the ethnic groups of Bangladesh. Accordingly, the issues of ethnicity and identity, i.e. the interrelations between ethnic and Bangalee people of the CHTs have not been significantly studied earlier. Information available is few and in many instances fails to

¹ By the term Bangalee I have referred to the people with *Bangla* linguistic origin. For many years both the ethnic and Bangalee people are residing in the CHTs where they are in continuous interaction with each other. Throughout this study I have addressed these Bangalee people as linguistically and culturally different from the other non-Bangalee people, i.e. the ethnic people with different origin.

² In the following I have predominantly referred the CHT people, the non-Bangalee, as “ethnic people”. This is not to redress their identity as “hill people”, which derives from its local equivalent “*pahar*”. Although the local people labeled themselves as “tribals”, the notion has a negative connotation, since it refers to their “backwardness”, as in many other parts of South Asia. The term can be actually traced back to the African context, where it implied association with racial supremacism (Bates 1995:103). The notion of “indigenous” which is increasingly used among the CHT people has been introduced and adopted in South Asia in order to demonstrate unity with other ethnic groups struggling for recognition of their rights. It is thus a political concept. At the same time “indigenous” refers to a broad category of people, and is commonly regarded as a more neutral term than “tribal” (Colchester 1995:60). But to avoid all sorts of critiques I have realized to address all other people other than the Bangalee as ethnic.

³ Chittagong Hill Tracts, shortly known as CHTs, comprising of three districts Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. This area is well known for its hilly stature and has been largely occupied by different ethnic communities. Taken together, from the birth of Bangladesh people living in this area, including the Bangalees, have been subject to tension, which has always been integrated with the political situation of the country.

address this issue. It may be noted that after the establishment of political and military control over the areas of CHTs resided by different ethnic communities, the British government have made attempts to find the best possible ways to deal with these communities. But, today, the experiences from the CHTs show the consequences of this type of establishment⁴.

CHTs, comprising the areas Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban districts, have been very often seemed to be a vulnerable area for the people living there. Here the word vulnerable is questionable leaving the field of inquiry to find out the causes of vulnerability. Historically, the ethnic people living there for long have been confronted with the mainstream Bangalee people. This has become more intensive with frequent interaction and communication between different ethnic and Bangalee people (but it has been identified that confrontations did not take place among all the ethnic and Bangalee people and due to this it would be wrong to identify all the people in the CHTs as involved in confronting attitude). Similarly with the intervention of military activities⁵ in the CHTs and with the settlement of Bangalee residence (particularly those who have been brought in this region from various parts of the country for a forceful settlement), the situation sometimes became more volatile.

Regarding the settlement pattern of the Bangalee people it has been figured out two types of practices in the CHTs- *firstly*, a number of Bangalee people have started residing in the CHTs during the British period through natural migration and ethnic people do not consider them as their common enemy, and *secondly*, after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 many Bangalee people have been brought from different districts of the country to reside in the CHTs by the then government and these Bangalees are known as settlers about whom ethnic people have had mixed repercussions.

Considering these, in this study, attempts have been made to understand the internal and external factors to crystallize the different dimensions of interrelations responsible for creating not only such vulnerable situations but also a pleasant as well as interactive (in many occasions friendly) relations. This, in other words, helps to show the nature of ethnicity and identity among these people.

The CHT is inhabited by 12 ethnic communities along with the Bangalee neighbors and these 12 ethnic communities are Chakma, Marma, Pankho, Khumi, Lusai, Murang (Mru), Bonojogi, Tanchanga, Bom, Kheang, Chak and Tripura. But in most cases these people are treated as '*Pahari*' not only by the neighboring Bangalee communities but also by different scholars through their writings. It has been found this debatable in terms of addressing them as *Pahari* and soon after it has been realized that how these people perceive this is important to be noted here. As already mentioned, the contemporary turmoil situation so called '*Pahari-Bangalee*'⁶ conflict is not a sudden outburst of the

⁴ It has been largely believed by the people under study that this type of establishment has created tension among the people of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds which becomes visible in their various activities in many occasions. Accordingly political motives of certain groups of people both among the ethnic and Bangalee people has been identified as one of the major causes for creating such tension.

⁵ This does not mean that only military activities are responsible for all the volatile situations in the CHTs, rather it has been one of the most significant factors as revealed from this study.

⁶ I have used the term *Pahari-Bangalee* intentionally in this study to characterize the nature of interrelations among these groups. This term is very popular for the scholars, journalists and

people. It has its specific historical root. The ethnic groups are now more connected with the outside world and particularly with the so called mainstream population. It is true that in the face of globalization⁷ and through the process of acculturation, conflict of interest may be a common case. The CHT case is not out of this process. But the way things are happening today is questionable. Questions have been raised regarding why the Bangalee people are residing in the CHTs? But the answer to this question cannot be given in a single word. Demanding a separate state has been raised by the ethnic peoples for long and still today many of the ethnic people (but not all) in the study area have been raising their voices for this. But creating a separate state within a state or building a nation-state would not be the solution to the problems seen in the CHTs. Rather, as it has been identified in this study, a quiet common as well as mutual understanding among different people may keep all the people in the CHTs on a single platform for their survival and existence.

If ethnicity is thought to be the interrelations among different groups and identity as how an individual address himself or herself, then the ongoing events of CHTs demand an in-depth understanding. However, few points have been addressed here to conceptualize the notion of dynamics of interrelations among Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura peoples.

Firstly, it is no surprising that all the ethnic communities of Bangladesh are bi-lingual. Even then language is a vital point to create any distinction, discrimination as well as conflict of traditions.

Secondly, the ethnic communities of CHTs have their own traditional religious practices along with the practices of their Bangalee neighborhood though a process of Christianization has been going on in the ethnic areas since the British period. How different groups perceive this makes a difference of common understanding.

Thirdly, the subject of interaction is more intensive in terms of occupation and economy. Traditionally, these ethnic communities have practiced shifting cultivation (*Jhum*)⁸ with some addition of plough cultivation. But with an increase in population and outsider's (Bangalee in most cases) intervention, this practice has been interrupted to some extent. On the other hand, the economy and market play a crucial role. Subsistence economy has been their common practice, but a market economy has emerged in the locality in the process of their integration into the mainstream society. Two factors are thought to be responsible for this shift in economy. The external factors are: outside political control, outsider's settlement, and external market force (grooming with economic determination) among others. And the internal factors are: adopting wet rice cultivation, knowledge of outside world, changes in property relations, modern education, changes in attitude

various other personnel including the ethnic and Bangalee people. I have observed that this type of term show the identity formation of certain communities.

⁷ Often it has been argued that globalization is a social change, an increase in connections among societies and their elements. The term is applied to many social, commercial and economic activities. Depending on the context it can mean closer contact between different parts of the world (globalization of the world), or increasing relations among the members of any industry in different parts of the world (globalization of an industry). It shares a number of characteristics with internationalization and is used interchangeably, although some prefer to use globalization to emphasize the erosion of the nation or national boundaries (Hirst and Thompson 1991).

⁸ In many literatures ethnic peoples have been identified as *Jumias* based on their traditional slash and burn or *Jhum* cultivation. Still they practice this cultivation along with modern agricultural practices.

towards life, importance of money, financial investment, return and profit (Khaleque 1982). During the course of interaction with these people it has been realized that all these factors might be playing significant role in maintaining the interrelations among different groups of people in the area.

Fourthly, politics is thought to be one of the major causes in the ups and downs of relationship among different ethnic and Bangalee people in the CHT. Traditionally, these ethnic communities have an independent political unit but with a dual administrative system (local and national political structure). So this is a matter of investigation as to what extent and in what way politics is making or maintaining the interrelations among different groups.

Fifthly, acculturation is a common aspect of all human society, but conflicts are created. There is no doubt about the fact that a process of acculturation⁹ has long been going on among these ethnic communities through their symbiotic economic relationship with the mainstream Bangalee society and integration into the wider political system. There seems to be differences of opinion about the government policy towards these ethnic communities with complain of an inherent element of discrimination against them and a disintegration of their socio-cultural life. This has been found to be given priority to identify what role these processes play in maintaining ethnicity.

Finally, another important issue is the question of land rights, land use and settlement pattern for the ethnic and Bangalee people. There seems to be a violation of civil rights for the ethnic people with some misleading knowledge about the traditional practices. In any case state has distinctive role to play as it is understandable that land is a vital asset for all human groups and any conflict of traditions and interest may disintegrate the groups.

Taking all these factors into account it is the prime time to try to unfold the internal aspects of the nature of ethnicity and identity of Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic people. Whatever the causes may be it has been seen that a volatile situation existed there for long. From time to time, different steps have been taken on the part of the local communities and the state as well to make a common interest and mutual understanding. 'The Peace Accord of 1997', 'The Rangamati Declaration of 1998', etc. are some of the initiatives to control the volatile circumstances, but in practical how far these have contributed to solve the problem and how much of it is being maintained is in the hand of time. In this regard present study is focused on different issues that are affecting and maintaining the relations of these communities in the hills.

1.2 Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to understand the different dimensions of interrelations among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic people of the Chittagong

⁹ It means the exchange of cultural features that results when groups of people come into continuous firsthand contact; the original cultural pattern of either or both groups may be altered, but the groups remain distinct (Kottak 2004:G1). However, I have observed that in the study area different groups have not been fully acculturated, but they have been going through such process for years.

Hill Tracts with an understanding of ethnicity and identity. However, the specific objectives are:

- i) understanding religious and cultural practices reflected in inter-cultural and inter-ethnic exhibitions;
- ii) analyzing issues related to land, economic and social rights to identify conflict of traditions and interrelations;
- iii) identifying the role of political and market oriented economic factors for discriminations and identity crisis;
- iv) critically analyzing the role of the state and its authorities in the hill *paras*; and
- v) identifying key issues that help to foster their interrelations and maintaining boundaries.

1.3 Methodology

The present anthropological study has been conducted with using anthropological research methods taking the objectives of the study into account. Initially i.e. before starting the fieldwork of this study it has been planned to use both the qualitative¹⁰ and quantitative methods of data collection, the combination of which is known as an integrating approach, maintaining the time frame of the study. In accordance with this strategic goals have been established, using different tools and techniques of data collection to cover the above mentioned objectives. But immediately a situation has been created where there emerged few things that are needed to be made clear to understand the methodological standpoint of this study.

Now-a-days it is very common to use the integrating methodological approach for anthropological study. This is may be due to the fact that the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods would help generate the findings of the study and present them with statistical data. Thus understanding the nature of this study, which is focused on the internal dynamics of relationships among different ethnic communities (or in other words understanding the nature of ethnicity and identity), it has been realized that more qualitative findings would be very sensible to develop an in-depth analysis of the objectives of this study. Therefore, the methodological tools and techniques of this study have been primarily based on the qualitative one, and quantitative methods, on the other hand, have been used wherever needed and this has brought strength to this study¹¹.

However, as an anthropologist and a researcher the long term training in this field has helped to develop an understanding for using or applying anthropological methods. What appears to be most important is that there are few things that helped generating the base of the methodological understanding and these are – mind, behavioral understanding, realizing of facts, understanding peoples' culture and sentiment, and

¹⁰ The fundamental methods relied on by qualitative researchers for gathering information are (1) participation in the setting, (2) direct observation, (3) in-depth interviewing, and (4) document review (Marshall and Rossman 1995).

¹¹ "When we speak of 'quantitative' or 'qualitative' methodologies, we are in the final analysis speaking of an interrelated set of assumptions about the social world which are philosophical, ideological and epistemological. They encompass more than simply data gathering techniques" (Rist 1977:62). This indicates the strength of integrating approach, though most of the methodological task of this research is based on qualitative methods and techniques.

ethical standpoint among others. I have realized before the start of the fieldwork (also during staying in the field) that methodology is something which goes with the natural attachment to the emotion, feelings and behavioral aspects of the people under study. For me one of the major aspects of the methodology for this study has been observation and participation with the people in their daily settings. The field for this study, Khagrachari, is not uncommon or unseen, but being a Bangalee it has been difficult for me, in many cases, to receive easy access for data from the people belonging to Chakma and Tripura community (except the Bangalees).

But at the same time and due to a long term engagement in the socio-cultural settings of these people it has been possible for me to gather information and carry on the study. In course of time people of different ethnic communities have become friendly with me and they continued their discussions on almost every aspects of their day to day life. Sometimes simply listening to their stories has helped to be a good listener. After the fieldwork has been finished it has been realized that the whole mind and body of the researcher is the biggest methodology and their successful attachment with the study people have helped to get fruitful information and data from the field.

The Field Entry

Entry to the field appears to be the most crucial part of a fieldwork. One can say that this is the very beginning of the fieldwork. Who would allow an unknown person and for what reason to enter in his or her house? As an outsider it is always difficult to make entry into a new locality. In this case an intermediary or go-between helps create an avenue to make entry in the study people or subject. As the English proverb goes 'morning shows the day', the first entry to the field also determines as well as indicates the journey (from beginning to the end) of the fieldwork. Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs: includes the districts Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati), known globally mostly for its turmoil situations (tension between the Bangalee and non-Bangalee (Chakma, Marma, Tripura, etc.) people) over the past few decades, have been the most attractive parts of Bangladesh. But this area belongs to my memory from the very childhood because of two reasons – on one hand the area has been considered to be one of the most beautiful tourist spot, and on the other hand with the fear of danger for its chaos situation (as mentioned above). Even though my first journey to the CHTs has been as a tourist for observing different cultures and people of the area during 1995. It belonged to that stage of my life when there has not been any anthropological training and can only be identified as an observer. Later on with the academic training in Anthropology from the University of Dhaka the journey to the area started again in 2004, 2006 and 2008, but from a different perspectives and perceptions towards the people of this area.

With this little background to the CHTs, the real journey to field (Khagrachari) began in 2011 while observing the cultural festival of New Year (locally known as *Baishabi*). This is a colorful event performed mainly by different ethnic communities such as Chakma, Marma and Tripura among others and where people from different countries of the world irrespective of their age, sex, religion, culture and identity assemble together to observe the day. This event has helped at the outset to get very close to the local people of the study area, particularly the Chakma, Tripura and few Bangalee people (who later became very close friends and still remains to be the same). This can be considered to be the first entry to the field which has given the ample opportunity to think on the issues of this study and also to determine from where to start the fieldwork. Thus the previous knowledge and the existing networks together with personal relationships have helped to

trigger the first phase of the fieldwork with slight impact on the local context declaring myself as an outsider's existence.

Making close and continuous contact with the people under study is at the heart of conducting fieldwork and gathering data. Therefore, relationships have been maintained with different personnel of Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura communities and those personnel also belonged to different layers of the society. In this context it can be argued from the notes of Lévi-Strauss (1978) that a researcher can both keep a certain distance and represent his own group's values or he can dedicate him to the field and lose his objectivity. This has different connotations but balancing of both the strategies can become a significant methodological standpoint for conducting fieldwork. Like every other localities the place of this fieldwork has a specific historical background with tensions arising among the people of different ethnic communities. Conflicts between Bangalee and non-Bangalee and between ethnic communities and the state over the issue of rights to land in the CHTs are very old and these have been found to be very sensitive during the first few days of fieldwork. Language has been a barrier and most of the people in the CHTs belong to different languages of origin. But bi-lingualism is operated in the CHTs i.e. people of almost every ethnic community can speak in Bangla language as well. In the case of more remote areas in Khagrachari people of Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities use their own dialect. With this milieu it has been crucial for to make friendship with such peoples who can make my entry to the field an ease. Overall it took time to make myself easily understandable to the local people and after several days people became friendly both with me and with the topics of this study.

Methods Applied

This anthropological study on the proposed theme with a comprehensive understanding and assessment of different issues has required an approach with empiricism, empathy and participatory tools and above all an integrated methodological approach in collecting and analyzing data. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to collect both primary and secondary data from a variety of sources. This methodological standpoint has given strength to the study from the beginning to the end and to accumulate data and information of different types very specifically. Comprehensive and thorough reviews of the relevant scholarly literatures have been one of the important modes of conducting the study. Every conversation, oral history, observation and meeting with the local people has been engaged with different anthropological methods. As it has been already mentioned the body and mind of the researcher is the biggest domain of methods and accordingly the openness of mind and emotion to the local people has provided with insights about the situations of the people in the CHTs. Thus all these helped to come out from any structured way of conducting this study.

The openness of mind and mixing with the local people and also understanding the local peoples' culture and behavior have enabled me to gather a comprehensive knowledge about the context of the locality. It appears that contextualization is very crucial to understand the local aspects and also to implement the qualitative methods. According to the principles of ethical responsibilities for conducting anthropological research respect to the sensitivity of the people has been strictly followed while talking to them. So while conducting fieldwork it is always better not to put the interviewee into an uncomfortable situation. Following this approach it has been found easier to get peoples' respect and access into their daily life, beliefs and thought processes. By attending various meetings with different people irrespective of age, sex, and social position (i.e. their background)

among others it has been possible to collect a variety of information. For this reason interviewees from the three communities have been selected arbitrarily. This has given me the opportunity to receive and triangulate the data and information.

Before going to the field and also in many stages of the study various documents related to the CHT issues have been reviewed to understand about the idea on the beliefs and values of the people in their natural settings. This included written materials¹² such as books, journals, novels, articles, newspapers, and official documents among others. This is a more objectivist method of data collection which helped the systematic examination of communications among different groups (ethnic origins) of people under study.

The fieldwork has been conducted more intensively and keeping close contact with the local people. In the course of collecting information from the people who belong to various structure of the society participation in their daily activities has been the crucial one (but with the care that it would hamper their regular activities). This has helped to observe them very closely and being closed to them they have shared their thoughts, claims, and anger towards the state and those who they think responsible for every miss happenings in their life and living. In anthropology the method of participant observation¹³ has special importance and this has enabled me to deal with various sensitive issues in the CHTs. Developed through cultural anthropology participant observation is both an overall approach to inquiry and a data gathering method (Marshall and Rossman 1995). As it is established, fieldwork is the life of any research work because this gives the chance to work with the study people or subject for long period of time in their natural settings. In this case a long period of time has been spent in the field (notably one year, but with several breaks). It appeared quite natural to me that a close interaction with the study people has helped me to implement the objectives of the study as well as to collect the empirical, authentic and reliable data from the interviewees. Understanding the nature of ethnicity and identity among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities has not been so easy and using these types of anthropological methods has seemed justifiable for this study. First of all it helped me to maintain a first-hand involvement in the subject for study and to see, hear and experience the reality of the people. As days went many things have been learnt about the daily life and activities focusing interaction of the people through participating in their local settings. Eventually it enhanced (through observation as well) the opportunity to note and record the events, behaviors and artifacts of the people and their multi-dimensional situations. It enabled me to understand deeper values, meanings and beliefs of people with different origins along with their complex interaction patterns. Overall these made me confident to discover and understand the patterns of behavior and relationships existing among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic people of the study area.

Access to the field or more specifically to the heart of the people required the help from three key persons who are known as (methodologically) key actors or informants. They are the treasures of information about various aspects of the study as well as avenues to come close to the community. To select them for this study several factors have been considered such as whether they are culturally sensitive or not, can provide crucial (detailed) historical data, and have a knowledge base about various aspects of the

¹² This can be based on any form of communication preserving information that can be helpful for a better understanding of the conditions of people under study.

¹³ It is an immersion in a culture and helps internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study (Fetterman 1989:45).

community and interrelations. There have been so many occasions where the key actors helped to overcome any confusions regarding social, cultural and identity issues. To be fair enough with the data and information provided by the key informants these have been cross-checked with other sources of data. Thus a triangulation process has been followed to test the validity and reliability of data. In other words one source of information has been checked against another to enhance their quality. It has helped me to understand the role of an individual in his or her social settings. So peoples' perspectives have been always systematized and crystallized they pose in their daily livelihood strategies and also in connection with other people of the society.

During the course of my fieldwork it has been learnt that people are willing to discuss on various aspects of interrelations among different ethnic communities. Throughout the fieldwork I have tried to be a good receiver, viewer and listener to what people say and act. I have talked to them whenever and wherever possible and avoided the structural discussions. It has been realized that a close and in-depth discussion (and also informal) has been the strength of collecting information. This is usually known as "a conversation with a purpose" (Kahn and Cannell 1957:149). The strength of this practice in this study lies on several grounds. Following an informal meeting or discussion has turned the study people to be most friendly in providing information. Thus the respondent's perspectives and understandings have been always respected. It means I have welcomed whatever they said during discussions. Eventually this has enabled me to generate personal interaction. It has never been thought that all the people or respondents will always be responsive to the discussions, but following "a particular kind of speech event" (Spradley 1979:18) or ethnographic interviewing it has been possible for me to create interests among the respondents regarding the purpose of meeting. In other words this has helped to gather cultural data and organize the respondent's knowledge in their own languages to determine the underlying meaning. As people of different communities belonged to different strata of the society, therefore, dealings have been different with different respondents who are considered in the study area as respected ones. So focus has been given on particular types of respondents such as community leaders, elders, locally influential and well-informed people, who are also identified as elite in the society. This practice has enabled me in the field to gather information on past histories, socio-political and cultural affairs as well as inter and intra-group relationships from the personnel who have special knowledge about the above mentioned issues.

From the very beginning of the fieldwork conversation has been done with different people of the three communities at any place such as at home, in the courtyard, in the field, at the market place and also at the schools and offices. For this two types of questionnaires have been used: one is open ended and the other is close ended¹⁴. But in most of the cases open ended questionnaire has been followed considering the nature of the study and for an easy discussion. To make it easy for the people three categories of questionnaires (based on the content of the study) have been prepared for three different groups (Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura). This has helped me to sort out things separately and I have never met my respondents with a set of question papers with the belief that this would break the nature of my in-depth and informal discussion. Apart from these a simple survey¹⁵ questionnaire has been used to know the household status of the people

¹⁴ An open ended question allows participants to interpret it, while close ended questions are useful in trying to quantify behavior patterns (Fetterman 1989:54).

¹⁵ To a social scientist, a survey may equally have a purely descriptive purpose, as a way of studying social conditions, relationships and behavior (Moser and Kalton 1979:2).

which helped me to configure out the household composition for further understanding of their local settings, demographic characteristics of a set of people, their social environment, their activities and their opinions and attitudes¹⁶, marital status, age, social and economic factors including occupation and income, behavioral aspects of the people and their arguments on different aspects of the society among others. As this is a community study with an effort to unfold the pattern of interrelations among different ethnic communities, it has been found justifiable using simple social survey¹⁷ to locate the study population.

It has been realized that it is not possible to remember all the questions mentioned in the questionnaire. To solve this problem a checklist¹⁸ has been maintained to guide the development of questionnaires and conduct the fieldwork, organize information and content of the study output (thesis) easily. It has been found very significant to follow a narrative inquiry which is a wonderful tool in telling about the study people's individual life stories (Marshall and Rossman 1995:86). As it has been mentioned earlier people of the CHTs have a long historical background and attempts have been made to learn about their lives historically¹⁹. This approach has been found very influential not only to collect data but also to develop a friendly relationship with the people through a mutual and sincere collaboration towards constructing their reality in more organized fashion.

Particularly useful for giving the reader an insider's view of a culture (Edgerton and Langness 1974) the life history²⁰ of these people have been collected to understand their cultural pattern. They are not without history and every single story has a deep rooted historical facts. Whenever listening to a story a pictured has been created in my mind about a person's bearing up within his or her cultural context and observing changes in culture over time. The context of present study has been to unfold the underlying relationship among the people of different culture and ethnic origin. Eventually this helped me for a successful historical analysis to discover information from various accounts and records of what happened in the past. Two types of sources have been used for a historical analysis of the subject matter of this study: one has been the information collected directly from the field (primary/ oral testimony of eye witnesses), and the other has been different documents found in various places (secondary/ findings or summaries as documented in history books and encyclopedias).

It is not so easy to develop myself as an insider with the study people. Even though it has been possible to develop a friendly relation with the community people, but this could not pull down the boundary between them and me. With this backdrop emic perspective has been employed to understand the native people's perspective of reality from insider's point of view. This has helped me to unfold the reality of what different types of people (in terms of ethnic origin and identity) actually do in their day to day social life. These perceptions of reality has also helped me to find out significant clues to individual's social, political, religious as well as interpersonal relations. At the same time a social scientific perspective (etic) on reality has been followed. This has been blended with the

¹⁶ For more see Moser, C.A., and G. Kalton (1979:4-5).

¹⁷ Sociologists and social anthropologists have carried out many general community studies of urban and rural life. Nevertheless some such studies have made use of social surveys. For more on social survey see Moser, C.A., and G. Kalton (1979:22).

¹⁸ A checklist can be both a reminder and a mechanism to guide the interview and helps to organize and discipline data collection and analysis (Fetterman 1989:63-64).

¹⁹ For more information see Connelly, F. M., and D. J. Clandinin (1990:2-14).

²⁰ It captures an individual's perception of the past (Fetterman 1989:61).

emic perspective to develop meaningful analysis of the data collected from the native people using their own point of view. To understand the multidimensional aspects of interrelations among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities, etc perspective has helped me to create a bridge between the field and the academic or theoretical and conceptual understanding of the reality.

Known as traditional concepts in social sciences, structure and function have two fold meanings: structure refers to social structure or configuration of group (kinship or political structure) and function refers to social relations among members of the group (Fetterman 1989:35). This is the reason to use this approach (concept) in this study. To understand the dynamics of interrelations among different groups of CHT it seemed important to find out the underlying structural pattern of different groups of people (particularly people with different ethnic origins) and also to figure out the nature of interrelations that these people have maintained and developed over the period of time. Moreover, the study people have a long historical background that has helped shaping their long lasting interrelations or ups and downs in the face of various historical events in the locality. With this backdrop these concepts and my understandings have been found identical to organize the analysis of the study findings. From the experiences in the field it has been realized that this is a sensitive research which made the local people to trust me and also refrains from imposing my own perception on the field. The methodology of this study is an open one which enabled the field to expose its socially constructed phenomena and also enabled me to reconstruct these with a convenient degree of objectivity, impartiality as well as open-mindedness.

Data Processing and Analysis

The collected data and information have been compiled with clear and appropriate references and also with a comparative processing strategy with other published data and information. Depending on the nature of the study qualitative analysis of both the primary and secondary data has been done with careful observation and minimum use of statistical inferences. During staying in the field cross-checking and editing have been done of whatever data and information collected which included checking of filled-in questionnaire, reducing detail information to a manageable proportion, and summarizing the materials in tabular (where needed) and other necessary forms to present in the final thesis. This process has helped me to detect and eliminate errors in the filled-in questionnaire. Initially editing has done three things to the data and questionnaire-completeness, accuracy and uniformity. It has been realized that it would have been difficult to complete the editing once leaving the field. It helped me to check my errors and mistakes quickly.

In case of using few statistical tables for presenting the data care has been given not to present these only in numbers. Thus separate strategies have been followed in dealing with quantitative data and their qualitative and quantitative analyses. Most of the analyses have been done qualitatively as the strength of this study relies on bringing up in-depth as well as descriptive understanding of ethnicity and identity of the people under study. In other words these have led to the presentation of the findings comprehensively.

Finally, analysis of the data and information followed three steps- *analysis* (this included both qualitative (mostly) and quantitative analyses), interpreting relationships (i.e. to interpret the existing relationships among different variables and in this case

interpretation has been carried out considering various aspects of relationships of the ethnic communities under study) and presentation (this included study results, detail of methodology, background information and conclusions among others).

Areas and Units/ Sample of Study

Three *Paras*²¹ of Khagrachari District (*Sadar*) of Chittagong Hill Tracts have been selected: *Beltali*, *Paltanjay* and *Singinala paras*. These *Paras* belong to the *Perachhara Union* of *Khagrachari Sadar Upazila*. The *upazila* occupies an area of 297.91 sq. km. including 277.86 sq. km. forest area. It is located between 23°00' and 23°21' north latitudes and between 91°55' and 92°00' east longitudes. The *Upazila* is bounded on the north by *Panchbari upazila*, on the east by *Dighinala* and *Langadu upazilas* of *Rangamati Zila*, on the south by *Mahalchhari upazila* and on the west by *Matiranga upazila* (BBS 2012). In selecting these areas I have considered several factors such as these areas are inhabited by the study people (Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura), the areas are almost adjacent with one another, not far from the Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila* head quarter, and have a close connection with the local and district market where people from these *paras* and also from different part of the country come for shopping as well as business.

As a unit of study my aim has been to take the Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities and the Bangalee people residing there. In order to clarify the actual scenario of the pattern of interrelations I had to explore every aspect of these people. This study belongs to a community study with three different communities having different origins. Therefore, the sample size of the study has been all the people of the three *paras* under study. Accordingly there are 83 households residing in *Beltali Para* including few Chakma and mostly Tripura households, 77 households live in *Paltanjay Para* including Chakma and Tripura, and 53 Bangalee households reside in *Singinala Para* including Hindu and Muslim Bangalees. I have taken all of them into consideration for this study and I have observed that people of these areas have continuous interactions with each other. Moreover, taking all the people of these areas under study has helped me to capture multidimensional aspects of their everyday life.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Understandings

The theoretical and conceptual understandings of this study include culture, culture area, cultural climax and intensity, status, role and relationship, economy and market, power relations, ethnicity and identity, and globalization for culture and identity. All these theoretical understandings have guided the research work during fieldwork with a reflection in the findings of the study to elaborately and critically discuss the nature of interactions as well as interrelations operating among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in their respective *paras*.

Culture

At the beginning the meaning of culture has been examined taking both cognitive and semiotic theories of culture in anthropology. A common view of culture is that of

²¹ For the Chittagong Hill Tracts the word *Para* also refer to village, but the area of the village is either big or small in size. I have observed that people identify themselves in terms of their residence *para* or village.

something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication where languages categorize the natural and cultural world in useful ways²². As Oswalt (1986) described, in anthropology a culture is the learned and shared behavior patterns characteristic of a group of people and you are not born with culture but with the ability to acquire it by such means as observation, imitation, and trial and error. And for Hegel (1967), culture is a process of estrangement from or “getting out of” the “natural” or biological self. In this sense culture has been viewed as distinct from nature. Following this culture has also been clarified as knowledge through sharing thought, understanding, inferences and predictions. This refers to the cognitive view of culture and according to Ward Goodenough (1964 [1957]), “...a society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, culture must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term”. Hence to know a culture is like knowing a language or to describe a culture is like describing a language; the goal of ethnographic descriptions is the writing of “cultural grammars” (Keesing 1972).

Following these and the works by some anthropologists culture has been identified as the socially distributed knowledge, and within anthropology Anthony Wallace’s theoretical writings on culture and personality introduced the view of culture as an organization of diversity²³. Later anthropologists have tried to address culture as communication or as a system of signs and these belong to the semiotic theory of culture. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963), all cultures are sign systems that express deeply held cognitive predispositions to categorize the world in terms of binary oppositions. This view has been identified as the semiotic approach of Lévi-Strauss. Clifford Geertz also viewed culture as communication and maintained that, “the concept of culture I espouse ... is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (Geertz 1973:5). This, in other words, refers to the concept of thick description taking culture as a product of human interaction. Culture has also been seen as a system of mediation and in this regard culture includes both material and ideational objects to mediate relationship with the world. However, criticizing Lévi-Strauss’ ideas of culture as essentialist or metaphysical, poststructuralists viewed culture as a system of practices to overcome the subjectivist/ objectivist dichotomy in the social sciences and that culture exists through routinized action of human actors, and also as a system of participation based on the assumption that any action in the world, including verbal communication, has an inherently social, collective, and participatory quality²⁴. Thus it has been realized that all these theoretical understandings of culture indicate that culture is a complex phenomenon, but have a close connection with language that people use within any social system for interpretation, interaction and meaningful behavior.

Culture Area, Intensity and Climax

The diffusional perspective for the concept of culture area, cultural intensity and cultural climax, as a tool of historical reconstruction, has been taken for this study. Clark

²² For more see Alessandro Duranti (1997:24-26).

²³ For more on culture and personality see Anthony F. C. Wallace (1961).

²⁴ For more see Alessandro Duranti (1997: 39-46).

Wissler used the term culture area as a tool for the first time for historical reconstructions. According to Wissler (1922:218), “the natives of New World could be grouped according to culture traits, this would give us food areas, textile areas, ceramic areas, etc. If, however, we take all traits into simultaneous consideration and shift our point of view to social or tribal units, we are able to form a fairly definite group. This will give us culture areas, or a classification of social groups according to their cultural traits.” A culture area, therefore, is a geographical area occupied by people, whose culture exhibits a significant degree of similarities with culture of each other as well as significant degree of dissimilarity with culture of others. It is like a geographical region. But this does not mean that culture areas do coincide with geographical regions in every detail, for man has control over his environment as its effect is not exclusive. It is also a short hand way of describing the way of life of thousands of people in a whole country or continent (Upadhyay and Pandey 1997:156). In a simple way it follows that the groups who live close together have greater opportunity to borrow from each other than those who are at distance. The area in which similar cultures are found is called a culture area. Thus culture area (for the historicists or diffusionists) looks to the reconstruction of the past and enclosed a geographical over which fairly intensive diffusion had taken place²⁵.

In order to give greater historical depth to the concept of culture area Alfred Lewis Kroeber (1939) added the concepts of ‘cultural intensity’ and ‘cultural climax’ with the feeling that culture could not be wholly understood by observable elements and Kroeber called these the ‘sensitive indicators’ of culture. He was convinced that the sensitive indicators or elements of culture (these sensitive indicators included art, music, religion, ethos, philosophy and similar aspects of intellectual life) were more characteristic of culture than the concrete elements. Kroeber marked these more diagnostic of cultural intensity where intensity has been identified by the achievable level of cultures and areas. Some of the examples of this are religious hierarchy, social classes, detailed property law, etc. Along with these Kroeber interpreted the term ‘cultural climax’ as the dynamic equivalent of the term ‘culture center’. By cultural climax Kroeber has indicated the part of the area where the tribes have a larger contact of culture. In other words he has used this term to refer to the area from where most of the material elements of culture(s) had spread. The theoretical aspects of culture area, cultural intensity and cultural climax have been found significant in addressing the internal aspects of different ethnic communities of CHTs under study. These have enabled me particularly to focus on the pattern of interrelations and sharing of various cultural elements while living in close proximity.

From one perspective, as I have come to realize from the scholarly examination, Berger and Luckmann’s argument is an important contribution to intellectual debate leading from phenomenological (interpretive) sociology to postmodernism. It is now generally accepted that cultural meanings are inter-subjectively negotiated, that they change through time and that individuals may well differ in the significance they attribute to others’ actions and messages²⁶. Thus it can be idealized that the meanings of cultures are negotiated among different groups of people and are subject to change through time. In terms of individuals bearing the cultures they also differ from each other on specific grounds but maintaining the actions, messages and relationships to each other. To understand the pattern of interaction the cumulative effects of changes has been given priority and it also involves power which has been identified as to transform the structure of social relations. It, in other words, refers to the degree of accumulation of power by

²⁵ For more see Upadhyay, V. S., and Gaya Pandey (1997:128).

²⁶ For more see R. Layton (1997:121-122).

different individuals. Social relations can also be determined by the differences of power accessed by different individuals differently.

Status, Role and Relationship

Concepts like status, role and relationship are central to the social analysis and have been taken in this study using both the perspectives of functionalists and interactionists. Linton (1936), an American anthropologist, formulated that a person occupies a status when they are attributed the right or the duty to behave and be treated in a certain way during social interaction; when they act as expected of them in that status, they are performing the associated role (Layton 1997:37). What the functionalists identified is that status refers to position in a pattern of social relationship and role consists of behavior associated with status. Depending on the relationship between status (position) and interaction it can be said that in a society every individual can have several statuses. In other words it depends on their patterns of interaction. Functionalists have argued that this status of individuals can be both ascribed²⁷ and achieved²⁸.

Following the functionalist orientation to status and role, interactionist approach has been analyzed to understand the reality of social relationships operating within and among different groups of people. In many cases, many scholars have given priority to the pattern of exchanges in order to interpret the mode of interaction. In doing so Layton (ibid. 99) mentioned that in addressing social interaction Mauss (1965) has idealized the nature of exchange by saying that social relationships are generated through exchange, rather than being 'given' as part of an existing social structure²⁹.

Another way to interpret status, role and relationship is the language of social relations in interaction. During the 1950s and 1960s, many anthropologists abandoned the analysis of static social structures for a study of the social processes created by exchange. Fortes³⁰ was perhaps the first to question the usefulness of a static model of social relationships (Layton 1997:113). In this regard Evans-Pritchard (1950) maintained that social life has a pattern because humans are reasonable creatures and must live in a world in which social relations are ordered and intelligible. Following this and considering social structure (using the analogy between language and social life) Lévi-Strauss (1952a:524-53) argued that communication operates at three levels of social life: the exchange of women in marriage, the exchange of goods and services, and the exchange of verbal messages through language (Layton 1997:116).

Linguistic analogy, a model developed by the American anthropologist Goodenough, can be seen for reanalysis of social relationships (also using the concepts status and role). Goodenough has found it useful to look upon the content of social relationships as containing (among other things), "vocabularies" of different kinds of forms and a "syntax" or set of rules for their composition into (and interpretation as) meaningful sequences of social events (Goodenough 1965). Thus Goodenough argued that status

²⁷ Statuses that are assigned to individuals automatically, by virtue of their possessing certain socially defined characteristics (Layton 1997:37).

²⁸ Statuses which can only be taken on as a result of demonstrating certain skills or accumulating sufficient wealth (Ibid. 37).

²⁹ In Mauss' words 'I have not described [social systems] as if they were fixed, in a static and skeletal condition...We see them in motion' (Mauss 1965). For more see R. Layton (:98-99).

³⁰ For more see M. Fortes (1949:1-32).

was a social identity, and that the occupant always had some latitude in how (s)he might interpret that identity; such latitude could, however, only be interpreted with the idiom of the culture, which provided the 'syntactic principles' governing the composition of social relationships (Layton 1997:116). From another point of view I have found Raymond Firth's analysis important here. Without using linguistic analogy Firth (1954; 1955) distinguished between social structure, which he defined as the major patterns of existing social relationships which constrained the possibilities of future interaction, and social organization: the constant process of responding to fresh situations by adopting appropriate strategies³¹. In analyzing social interaction among different individuals Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued that people perceive the world as meaningful which originates not in a pre-existent collective consciousness, but in the thoughts and actions of individuals; out of random interaction, agreed understandings will be negotiated.

Economy and Market

In line with the functionalist's perspective Polanyi (1945) argued that people have always been more interested in protecting their social standing than in the possession of material goods. In the long run all social obligations are reciprocal, and their fulfillment serves also the individual's give-and-take interest best. Developing the idea of distinguishing between modes and spheres of exchange Polanyi further related the idea of market economy for social interaction. From his perspectives it can be illustrated that exchanges do not always create a social relationship. But market economy (or the relationships depended on this) operates in such a place where there can be a form of money. Whether it is exchange or forms of money, some sorts of relationship operate among the individuals involved. According to Polanyi where the market predominates, it inverts the relationship between exchange and social relationships associated with other modes; instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations become embedded in the economic system (Polanyi 1945). An understanding of these connotations I have found it noteworthy to see how different ethnic communities operate their pattern of interaction in the society where for years market system can be seen playing crucial role to promote social relationships where initially people maintain their status and role.

Following this a Marxist anthropological perspective can be taken into consideration. Questioning the validity of treating small-scale societies as isolates rather than as elements in the colonial and post-colonial world Marxist anthropology further challenged both the functionalists' tendency to attribute equal force to all elements in the social system, and the structuralists' claims that social life was driven by the structure of people's thought rather than the practical outcome of their actions (Layton 1997:130-131). Following Marx's dictum Harris maintained that social action proceed from material to ideological bases; material conditions of social life (through social relationships) limit the possible forms that values and ideas can assume (Harris 1979). Thus encouraging a convergence between anthropology and history Marxist anthropology emphasizes the fact that interaction always takes place within an existing system generated by cumulative social processes³².

³¹ For more see R. Layton (1997:116-18).

³² For more see R. Layton (1997:155).

Power Relations

Michel Foucault's has elaborated the concept of power relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions from a critical and historical viewpoint. Initially Foucault's analysis of power has given a picture about the way various institutions exert their power on groups and individuals, and how the latter affirm their own identity and resistance to the effects of power. Here his basic idea has been developed around the notions of powerful and powerless to examine how it operates in day to day interactions between people and institutions. His theoretical contribution to power relations has been seen crucial for this study to realize the existing power relations operating among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras.

The Marxist thinker Louis Althusser studied how people are oppressed by the state institutions and how they build themselves as individuals through the mystifying action of the ideology; and for him individuals are just puppets of the ideological and repressive apparatus and power is seen as acting from top downwards (1984). But for Foucault power is not something that can be owned, but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way; it is more a strategy than a possession: "power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain...Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization...Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (Foucault 1980:98). For S. Mills this way of addressing power has two features: a) power is a system, a network of relations encompassing the whole society, rather than a relation between the oppressed and the oppressor; and b) individuals are not just the objects of power, but they are the locus where the power and the resistance to it are exerted (Mills 2003:35). Again Mark G.E. Kelly thinks that these features can be further nuanced. According to him Foucault's view of power involves – "impersonality, or subjectlessness, of power, meaning that it is not guided by the will of individual subjects; relationality of power, meaning that power is always a case of power relations between people, as opposed to a quantum possessed by people; decentredness of power, meaning that it is not concentrated on a single individual or class; multidirectionality of power, meaning that it does not flow only from the more to the less powerful, but rather "comes from below," even if it is nevertheless "nonegalitarian"; and strategic nature of power, meaning that it has a dynamic of its own, is intentional" (Kelly 2009:37-38).

Foucault further argued that "where there is power there is resistance" – which means that power relations between individuals cannot be reduced to master-slave or oppressor-victim relations, but they are productive relations, because they imply resistance; and the state is not mainly something that owns power, but rather something which builds a system of relations between individuals so that the political system works (Foucault 1978). Regarding political power Foucault focused on power relations related to government, asking who can and should govern, who is to be governed, and how should we conceive the methods of government, i.e. the methods of shaping others' behavior. Following this Mills argued that: "if power is relational rather than emanating from a particular site such as the government or the police; if it is diffused throughout all social relations rather than being imposed from above; if it is unstable and in need of constant repetition to maintain; if it is productive as well as being repressive, then it is difficult to see power relations as simply negative and as constraining" (Mills 2003:47).

Analyzing "governmentality", Foucault stressed that it would be an error to understand institutions such as the state as being essentially oppressive and as being permanent and

solid – which they are not, but just the opposite is true: they are fragile and have a great potential of change: “overvaluing the problem of the state is one which is paradoxical because apparently reductionist: it is a form of analysis that consists in reducing the state to a certain number of functions, such as the development of productive forces of the reproduction of relations of production, and yet this reductionist vision of the relative importance of the state’s role nevertheless invariably renders it absolutely essential as a target needing to be attacked and a privileged position needing to be occupied. But the state, no more probably than at any other time in its history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor to speak frankly, this importance: maybe after all, the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicised abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think” (Foucault 1991:85-103). So for Foucault the state is not a super-human agent, having will and intentions analogue to those of people. This doesn’t mean we should give up the notion of state, but we should go beyond it when analyzing power relations: “the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations” (Foucault 1980:107-133). These understandings of power relations have broadened the scope of this study to look into the nature and exercise of power in the hill *paras* where every human interaction, peoples’ power is subject to negotiation with their hierarchical places. Thus from Foucault’s understandings it is conceivable that relations between individuals and society go beyond the exercises of power of institutions, groups or the state. This has helped to see how power is maintained among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in course of their interactions.

Ethnicity and Identity

I have been working on ethnicity and identity, particularly with those people living in the CHTs, for long. In course of my study I have found this interesting as well as difficult to open-out the meaning of ethnicity and identity considered by different people in a straight way. In many cases ethnicity and identity have been analyzed associated with conflict or political struggles. But it has been realized that the issue ethnicity and identity is not necessarily connected with conflict and engages multi-dimensional aspects of peoples’ reality. However, for this study primordial, instrumental, transactional and postmodern theoretical perspectives of ethnicity and identity have been taken into consideration along with a major focus on the ideas developed by Fredrik Barth, Max Weber, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Erik H. Erikson, Stuart Hall and Anthony D. Smith.

Ethnicity

The term ethnicity³³ first appeared in English language in the 1950s and recorded in Oxford English Dictionary of 1953 and on this term it has been stated as ‘ethnicity seems to be a new term’ (Glazer and Moynihan 1975). From the beginning the meaning of the term varied among the scholars and ethnicity has been meant as ‘the essence of an ethnic group’ or ‘what it is you have if you are an “ethnic group”’ (Chapman et al, eds. 1989) in comparison with other such groups, and as ‘the classification of peoples and

³³ It has been identified that as a term ethnicity is a product of a long standing feature of English sociolinguistics. Ethnicity as an abstract noun meaning what it is you have if you are an ethnic group where ethnicity and ethnic group occupy one side duality, tacit or otherwise, of familiarity and strangeness; thus ethnicity is a term that only makes sense in a context of relativities, of processes of identification and as an analytical concept (Chapman et al, eds. 1989).

group relationships with the context “self-other” distinctions’ (Eriksen 1993). The term ‘ethnicity’ is a derivative of the much older term, commonly used adjective ‘ethnic’ and in the English language goes back to the middle ages. The English adjective ‘ethnic’ has been derived from the ancient Greek term ‘ethnos’³⁴. In French the Greek noun survives as ‘ethnie’, with an associated adjective ‘ethnique’. As the English language has no concrete noun for ‘ethnos’ or ‘ethnie’, the French term is used to denote an ‘ethnic community’ or ‘ethnic group’³⁵ (Hutchinson and Smith, eds. 1996).

All these terms have been used (starting from its first usage) to refer to a number of people or animal who share some cultural or biological characteristics, live and act in concert, and at the same time to those (other) people who belong to some group unlike one’s own³⁶. I have found the usage of this term also illustrating several other concepts such as ethnic identity, ethnic origin, ethnocentrism, ethnicism etc. all of which have underlying meanings. In other words we can find different meanings of these concepts which include identification with culturally defined collectivity or belonging to a particular cultural community, a sense of tracing ancestors and nativity, on an individual level as a synonym for disdain of the stranger, and movements of protest and resistance against oppressive or exploitative outsiders³⁷. Following these to the basics of the concept *ethnie* Handelman (1977) has distinguished four levels: ethnic category (the loosest level of incorporation, having a sense of boundary between the group and outsiders) ethnic network (maintaining regular interaction between ethnic members), ethnic association (developing common interest and political organization for collectivity), and ethnic community (possessing a permanent territory over and above its political organizations). With these conceptual understandings Smith (1986) mentioned six characteristic features of *ethnie* which include having a common proper name for community identity, a myth of common ancestry to trace a common origin in name and place, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity.

In accordance with these there exists different theoretical approaches to ethnicity. Primordialism approach to ethnicity, first used by Edward Shils (1957:113-45), distinguished certain kinds of social bonds such as personal, primordial, shared and civil ties. With this primordiality has been attributed by individuals to the ties of religion, blood, race, language, region and custom. For these Geertz (1963) suggested that state’s interaction with personal identity is based on the primordial ties³⁸. But later primordialism has been criticized for its static and naturalistic view of ethnicity and came

³⁴ The ancient Greeks used the term in various ways: in Homer *ethnos betairon* meaning ‘a band of birds’, Aeschylus call the ‘Persians’ an *ethnos*, Pindar uses *ethnos aneron* meaning ‘a race of men or women’, Herodotus used *Medicon ethnos* meaning ‘the Median people’, and Plato used *ethnos kerukikon* meaning ‘a caste of heralds’. In New Testament writers all these became *ta ethne* meaning ‘the gentile peoples’ (Hutchinson and Smith 1996).

³⁵ Anthony D. Smith (1986) argued that an ethnic group is a group of human beings whose members identify with each other, usually on a presumed or real common heritage. Many social scientists regard ethnicity more as a product of interaction, rather than reflecting essential qualities inherent to human groups. Members of an ethnic group, on the whole, claim cultural continuities over time, although historians and cultural anthropologists have documented that many of the values, practices, and norms that imply continuity with the past are of relatively recent invention (Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds. 1983).

³⁶ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:4).

³⁷ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:5).

³⁸ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:8).

the instrumentalist approach. Instrumentalists treated ethnicity as a social, political, and cultural resource for different interest – and – status groups. It has been observed that one of the central ideas of this approach is the socially constructed nature of ethnicity, and the ability of individuals to ‘cut and mix’ from a variety of ethnic heritages and cultures forging identity; but this approach has been criticized for neglecting wider cultural environment and emphasizing material terms³⁹. For further understanding three alternative approaches to primordialism and instrumentalism developed by Barth, Horowitz, and Armstrong and Smith have been evaluated. Barth used transactionalist approach to treat ethnic groups as units of ascription focusing social boundaries for the persistence of the group, but criticized for assuming the fixity of bounded ethnic identities; Horowitz used social psychological approach focusing on differential estimations of group worth and their collective stereotypes, and ethnic affiliation based on kinship myths and on a sense of group honor in relation to other groups; and Armstrong and Smith used ethno-symbolic approach and illustrated that myths and symbols play vital role in unifying populations and ensuring their continuity over many generations⁴⁰. Overall these approaches have tried to show the underlying meaning of ethnicity and ethnic identity by accumulating myth of origin historical orientations to group belongingness. With an understanding of modern world bureaucratic state and capitalism, McNeill (1986) argued that ethnic communities take a new political importance to be united and homogenous, producing conflicts in states composed of several ethnic communities. These approaches generated the issues ethnic and national identities leading to incorporate the ideas of cultural assimilation, ethnic loyalties (demonstrating economic and political modernization), creation of nations and nation-states, multiculturalism and plural societies among others. Finally these theoretical approaches (including debates) illustrate that in the face of twenty first century on one hand advanced industrialism and nationalism have little space for sub-national ethnic identities, and on the other globalization, economic and cultural factors reducing ethnicity to folkloristic meanings of society. But this is not the end of what ethnicity can be meant⁴¹. Further theoretical analyses help to see ethnicity with more underlying meanings. Initially some of the core elements of ethnicity, as has been identified by different scholars, can be illustrated as cultural markers of kinship, commensuality and religious cult, differences in dress or dress codes indicating ethnic boundary identification, differences in language, differences in physical features, and tradition (past of a culture having continuity, presence and future).

In addressing ethnicity Max Weber (1996) argued that ethnic groups⁴² refer to those having a subjective belief in their common descent, similarities of physical type or

³⁹ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:8-9).

⁴⁰ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:9-11).

⁴¹ In this context and according to Joshua Fishman’s (1996) argument, ‘we need to recognize and appreciate that ethnicity is a powerful experience. Sex roles are not the same as sexism; religious beliefs are not the same as religious bigotry; and the phenomenon of ethnicity is not identical to ethnocentrism or racism. Ethnicity must therefore be approached seriously, even sympathetically, as a social dimension that has received too little attention and too much abuse during the past two centuries’.

⁴² Among the first to bring the term ‘ethnic group’ into social studies was the German Sociologist Max Weber, who defined it as: [T]hose human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists (Weber 1978 [1922]).

customs or both for the propagation of group formation; ethnic membership facilitates group formation of any kind (particularly in the political sphere) which further takes the rational association turning into personal relationships. In doing so senses of ethnic honor for a belief in common ethnicity delimiting social circles. Later Weber mentioned about groups which can engender sentiments of likeness to have an ethnic connotation. Weber talked of these as language groups bearing a specific cultural possession of the masses and making mutual understanding possible or easier. Thus for Weber common language and the ritual regulation of life (determined by shared religious beliefs) everywhere are conducive to feelings of ethnic affinity. In accordance with this Weber included several other identical factors for the markers of ethnic affinity such as differences in economic way of life, clothes, housing, food and eating habits, and division of labor between the sexes. These can be identified with individual's sense of honor and dignity. This sense of honor is the honor of the masses that belong to the subjectively believed community of descent. Thus Weber's thesis tells about designing ethnic groups as status groups and ethnic repulsion may take hold of all conceivable differences among the notions of propriety and transform them into ethnic conventions. With these Weber mentioned about the creation of a feeling of common ethnicity (also notions of kinship), linguistic and religious differences along with economic and political conditions of various social groups⁴³. Above all Weber oscillates between according primacy to political factors and historical memories in the shaping of a sense of common ethnicity and the prevailing preoccupation with cultural and biological differences in limiting ethnic affiliations (Hutchinson and Smith, eds. 1996:32). Weber's ideas help in understanding ethnic groups who initially take part into ethnic relations and also help realizing that in addressing ethnicity and identity the prevailing issues of status and honor will have to be incorporated.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993) argued that in everyday language the words 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' still have a ring of exotic peoples, minority issues and race relations, but within social sciences the usage has become more generalized to all human groups that regard themselves and are regarded by others as culturally distinctive. Ethnic identity is further marked by the recognition from others of a group's distinctiveness and the recognition of common cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioral or biological traits, real or presumed, as indicators of contrast to other groups⁴⁴. There has been a parallel development in the social sciences. During the 1980s and early 1990s, we have witnessed an explosion in the growth of scholarly publications on ethnicity and nationalism, particularly in the field of political science, history, sociology and social anthropology. In the case of social anthropology, ethnicity has been a main preoccupation since the late 1960s and it remains a central focus for research in the 1990s. Thus according to Eriksen anthropological approaches also enable us to explore the ways in which ethnic relations are being defined and perceived by people; how they talk and think about their own group as well as other groups, and how particular world views are being maintained or contested. Following these aspects he further identified that when cultural differences regularly make a difference in interaction between members of groups, the social

⁴³ Weber, however, maintained that ethnic groups were '*künstlich*' (artificial, i.e. a social construct) because they were based on a subjective belief in shared '*Gemeinschaft*' (community). Secondly, this belief in shared '*Gemeinschaft*' did not create the group; the group created the belief. Third, group formation resulted from the drive to monopolize power and status. This was contrary to the prevailing naturalist belief of the time, which held that socio-cultural and behavioral differences between peoples stemmed from inherited traits and tendencies derived from common descent, then called 'race' (Banton 2007).

⁴⁴ For more see Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2001a).

relationship has an ethnic element; ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction, and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity; and in this way it has a political, organizational as well as a symbolic aspect.

Fredrik Barth (1969) has been identical in analyzing ethnicity from a different perspective. He started with theoretical departures regarding ethnicity and argued that ethnic groups are categories of ascription, identification by the actors themselves, characteristic of organizing interaction between people, and have specific boundary maintenance strategies. In so doing ethnic group has been defined (in anthropological literature) to designate a population which is largely biologically self-perpetuating, shares fundamental cultural values, makes up a field of communication and interaction, and has a membership which identifies itself and is identified by others. Barth critically maintained that boundary maintenance follows from the isolation where groups develop its cultural and social forms in relative isolation in response to local ecologic factors and a history of adaptation. To Barth ethnicity was perpetually negotiated and renegotiated by both external ascription and internal self-identification. To him ethnic groups are not discontinuous cultural isolates, or logical a priori to which people naturally belong. With this he focused on the interconnectedness of ethnic identities, and described that categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories. In a process to interpret ethnicity more in-depth Barth identified ethnic groups from two different but related aspects: one as culture bearing units where classification of persons and local groups depend on exhibiting particular traits of culture (judged objectively by ethnographic observer in culture-area tradition), and the overt cultural forms exhibiting the effects of ecology; and the other as organizational type for self-ascription and ascription by others (classifying a person in terms of basic, general identity determined by his origin and background.). Actors (individuals) can be seen responsible in using ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction. Here cultural differences account for ethnic categories where cultural contents take two orders: one is overt signals or signs – diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity (such as dress, language, style of life etc.); and the other is basic value orientations – standards of morality and excellence to judge performance and identity. Taking ascription as critical feature of ethnic groups, according to Barth, two conceptual difficulties can be solved: continuity of ethnic unit depends on the maintenance of a boundary; and socially relevant factors are diagnostic for membership generated by other factors. Thus ethnic boundary has been observed as canalizing social life and entailing a frequently quite complex organization of behavior and social relations. Situations of social contact between persons of different cultures can also be entailed. Eventually Barth argued that stable inter-ethnic relations presuppose such a structuring of interaction. Thus it appears that in analyzing interactional and organizational features of inter-ethnic relations problems of boundary maintenance will have to be given attention. Much attention has also been given to individual's value standards. These ultimately refer to the interdependence of different ethnic groups. Thus with the transactionalist and instrumentalist perspectives in anthropology Barth's model emphasized the strength of social boundary of ethnic group stressing the interplay between ethnic groups and the ways in which transactions across the boundary served to strengthen it⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:33).

In dealing with ethnicity, and particularly isolating the phenomena and processes of ethnicity, Abner Cohen (1996) argued that contemporary ethnicity is the result of intensive interaction between ethnic groupings and not the result of complete separatism. This is contrary to what one may call 'the glue theory of tribalism' (suggested by some writers) denoting that during colonial period, colonial power acted as 'glue' to stick together within state and some diverse 'tribal' groups, and when the glue was removed (withdrawal of colonial power) each package state began to disintegrate and fall into its original parts. But in practical, during colonial period, a great deal of integration between the constituent tribal groups had taken place and this had given rise to increasing interaction between these groups. In addition to these Cohen has identified strategic positions of power in terms of places of employment, taxation, funds for development, education, political positions, and so on. These sources of power are different for different tribal groups resulting in cleavages on tribal lines. According to Cohen all these processes intensified struggle more effectively, creating political groupings among them, and developing an impression for them to return to the traditional cultures⁴⁶. At the same time a sense of tribalism develops involving a dynamic rearrangement of relations and of customs, and is not the outcome of cultural conservatism or continuity. At another level Cohen identified ethnicity as essentially a political phenomenon and with this emphasis has been given to political cleavages along with peoples' mutual interest⁴⁷. Later Cohen stated that ethnic grouping is essentially informal with the explanation that if an ethnic grouping is formally recognized (either as a state or as a region within a federal framework) then it will not be ethnicity but national or international politics. Thus Cohen's thesis appears to be more instrumentalist approach to ethnicity, considering it as a type of political resource, and unlike Barth (refusing ethnic boundary for granted) stressing the ways in which ethnic groups and ties are useful for attaining individual and collective goals⁴⁸. From Cohen's analysis it can be understood that there are multidimensional aspects in dealing with ethnicity, ethnic groups, and ethnic identity taking groups' and peoples' interests as well as political cleavages that sometimes help integrate or disintegrate the ethnic community.

In another attempt Paul R. Brass (1996) has tried to define ethnic groups through three ways- objective attributes, subjective feelings, and behavior. In this process objective attributes meant to separate one group of people from another by distinguishing cultural features such as language, territory, religion, color, diet, dress or any of them. But it is not always possible to categorize ethnic people as it seems difficult to determine boundaries between them. On the other hand subjective definitions have the difficulty to answer the basic question how a group of people arrives at subjective self-consciousness. And behavioral definitions (thought to be a form of objective definition) assume that ethnic groups behave or do not behave in relation to and in interaction with other groups⁴⁹. Through this analysis Brass identified that appropriate definition for ethnic group is to

⁴⁶ In this context and according to M. Gluckman (1955), 'where in a changing system the dominant cleavage is into two culture-groups, each of these groups will tend to set increasingly greater value on its own endo-culture, since this expresses the dominant cleavage'.

⁴⁷ The term ethnicity had often been used in lieu of older terms such as 'cultural' or 'tribal' when referring to smaller groups with shared cultural systems and shared heritage, but that 'ethnicity' had the added value of being able to describe the commonalities between systems of group identity in both tribal and modern societies. Thus claims concerning 'ethnic' identity (like earlier claims concerning 'tribal' identity) are often colonialist practices and effects of the relations between colonized peoples and nation-states (Cohen 1978).

⁴⁸ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:33).

⁴⁹ For more see Hutchinson, J., and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996:85).

do with objective cultural markers along with recognizing their susceptibility to change and variation. It appears that the objective analysis helps to identify ethnic groups more appropriately than other perspectives leading to ethnicity. Using De Vos' (1975) definition of ethnicity (in a sense of ethnic identity) as consisting of the 'subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people...of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups'. Brass maintained that ethnicity is to ethnic category what class consciousness is to class. Accordingly Brass considered ethnicity as an alternative form of social organization and identification to class, but at the same time relating it to contingent and changeable status that may or may not be articulated in particular contexts or at particular times. Interpreting the pattern of multiethnic societies where languages have not yet become standardized, Brass' position is to identify ethnicity with political interests of the ethnic groups. More accurately Brass focused on the idea that ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing and in postindustrial societies involving competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, and social status between competing elite, class, and leadership groups both within and among different ethnic categories. Thus Brass takes an instrumental political approach in dealing with ethnic groups, ethnic categories, and ethnicity⁵⁰. This analysis helps to understand the nature of ethnic groups as well as ethnicity from another perspective ('political' in this case) and ultimately shows the multidimensional character of ethnicity. Here raises the question of political motive toward interrelations between different groups of people in the CHTs. If it is politics other than anything then a proper understanding is a must on the part of the state to minimize whatsoever uncertainties regarding interrelations.

Michael Banton (1996) used the actor's model to describe ethnic relations or ethnicity with the conception of human individual, socializing and optimizing, and belonging to various social groups. In so doing Banton further clarified that ethnic nationalism is often misinterpreted and also pointed out that there are some other issues more influential than ethnic identification such as self-interest to gain social status, and sentiments of obligation to friends, neighbor or fellow worker among others. Through these situations Banton pointed out that there is an inter-ethnic relation between the capacity of a group to compete collectively in the public sphere, such as taking up a stand regarding language maintenance, and their collective organization in the private sphere. Furthermore to illustrate ethnic relations Banton brought the contrast situation in between immigrant group and settled population. With this process, according to this hypothesis, ethnic boundaries are seen to be dissolved; some situations continuing to evoke ethnic alignment, but the pattern of social relations changes with the introduction of new relationships, such as those deriving from motoring, the market for consumer goods, paying taxes, using new technology, and many kinds of employment, which are seen as independent of ethnic definitions⁵¹. Banton illustrated that an actor's model is one which he or she uses to navigate a course through daily life, while an observer's model uses abstract concepts like that of ethnicity, and seeks to distinguish ethnic, national and religious attributes⁵². Banton goes further to interpret the signs of ethnicity and

⁵⁰Cohen (1978) argued that ethnicity is 'a series of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness... can be narrowed or broadened in boundary terms in relation to the specific needs of political mobilization'.

⁵¹ For more see Banton, Michael 1994. Modeling ethnic and national relations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17(1): 2-7, 9-10.

⁵² In English-language usage ethnic groups are commonly regarded as sub-divisions of racial groups; a physical feature is taken to indicate that an individual is to be assigned to a racial

elaborated that language and costume can be signs of ethnic self-assignment, but differ in their social implications; no one can hear, see, smell, taste or touch ethnicity; it can only be known through the things that are taken as signs of it such as personal names, long shared history, members' behavior, cultural tradition of its own (including family and social customs and manners), geographical origin or descent, language, literature, religion, and size among others. All these indicate the signs of the presence of an ethnic group. Thus Banton's approach to ethnicity (ethnic relations) is a rational choice one rejecting normative and structuralist explanations, and built models of group solidarity on the basis of individual pursuit of public goods. In this process ethnicity has been clarified taking multidimensional aspects of individuals and groups particularly focusing social relations or relationships operating among different ethnic groups illustrating their identity as well.

Stuart Hall (1992:256-58) mentioned about politics of representation in dealing with ethnicity. Addressing the degree of ethnicity as a concept (in the form of a culturally constructed sense of Englishness and as a core characteristic of British racism based on closed, exclusive and regressive form of English national identity), Hall searched for a renewed meaning of the term ethnicity itself. The term ethnicity, then, acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity. Representation, as Hall idealized, is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formation of a particular space and time. Apart from a mere understanding of ethnicity referring to racism or multiculturalism, Hall further mentioned that the new politics of representation sets in motion an ideological contestation around the term ethnicity. In so doing he has re-theorized the concept of difference and attributed that for the new conception ethnicity engages difference depending on the cultural construction of new ethnic identities. Accordingly Hall connected ethnicity to margins and periphery that is to speak from a particular place, out of particular history, out of a particular experience, and a particular culture. This has been identified with the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity. Therefore, Hall's thesis tells us to look into the concept of ethnicity from the perspective of politics of representation which engages various factors such as history, culture, tradition and similar other issues and these are based on differences. In other words all these show the multidimensional aspects of ethnicity.

Following these theoretical trends Cynthia Enloe's (1980:350-60) thesis seems significant where she addressed both religion and ethnicity, and maintained that ethnicity is both objective and subjective. Ethnicity, then, involves cultural attributes that can be observed, but those attributes must be of conscious value to a collection of people to amount to ethnicity. Hence there is a growing agreement among scholars, according to Enloe, that ethnicity requires a sense of belonging and awareness of boundaries between members and non-members, however vague and mutable those boundaries may be from situation to situation or from time to time⁵³. Ethnicity is difficult to define and its characteristic attributes include language, religion, territory and custom, but these are viewed insufficient to identify an ethnic group. Enloe elaborated that language (or a common language) is a typical component of the ethnic cluster, but it is neither necessary

category while a cultural feature is taken as a sign that the individual is a member of an ethnic group (Banton 1994).

⁵³ For more see Barth, Fredrik 1969. Pathan Identity and its Maintenance. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. id, ed. Norway: Universitetsforlaget. The situational character of ethnic identity is persuasively described in Judith Nagata (1974:331-50).

nor sufficient to distinguish ethnicity⁵⁴. Taking all these factors into account Enloe further maintained that religion has something to do with ethnicity, and explores the religious differences on intergroup boundary visibility and maintenance between two ethnic groups to find out the interconnectivity of religion with ethnic differentiations. According to Enloe religion as part of an ethnic group's communal package will determine how porous the ethnic boundaries are, and how prone the group will be to absorb outsiders through intermarriage or conversion. Religion becomes a significant factor in interethnic dynamics, and to Enloe, the most tensed interethnic relationship occurs where two ethnic groups confess different religions, each religion is theologically and organizationally elaborated and explicit. Therefore, as Enloe interpreted, when assessing what religion adds to ethnic identification and interethnic relations, it is essential to note that there are critical differences among religions which bear directly on how ethnicity is expressed and maintained collectively. Enloe's thesis indicates that interethnic hostility may arise when each ethnic group interpret their basic theology as correct, and with relatively close religious beliefs other differences become important for boundary maintenance. Thus, according to Enloe's illustration, the most common way of rendering the extent to which religion sustains ethnic boundaries operative in the study of ethnicity has been to focus on rates of intermarriage which is, in a sense, the 'bottom line' of ethnicity. Here the rate of intermarriage is not determined by religious rules exclusively since class and racial factors are also important in reducing or promoting intermarriage. With these a sense of multiethnic and multi-religious belongingness has been seen operating in different states, and it has also been given priority to understand the nature of religion as uphold by the members of ethnic groups. Because it has been suggested that religious distinctiveness is key to ethnic differentiation or ethnic saliency. Overall Enloe's approach is based on how religion or religious beliefs of different ethnic communities not only help maintaining their boundaries but also a pattern of interethnic relationships through operating within the basic aspects of human life.

Alberto Melucci (1989) has brought the idea of postmodern revival of ethnicity. He maintained that industrial capitalism and modernization of complex societies have produced dominant (class) and subordinated cultures within productive relations and thus influencing directly by throwing them into the great machine of mass culture. It has been identified that individual cultures have been destroyed due to multiplication of contacts and constant flow of messages, i.e. the media transmits standardized models. In this context several other factors include migration, mass tourism, and differentiation of roles which entrusted basic social functions to bureaucratic organizations that intervene in the definition and regulation of social behavior. According to Melucci though highly differentiated relations, typical of complex societies, unable to provide forms of membership and identification to meet individuals' needs for self-realization, communicative interaction and recognition, safeguarding or revival of declining traditional ties may offer new channels of solidarity and identification. Thus ethnic identity is seen as one of these channels, and revival of ethnicity is a response to a need for collective identity transcending general status of the group. In this regard Parsons (1975) suggested the term 'de-differentiation' to explain this need for collective identity among particular groups. Ethnicity is seen to be revived as a source of identity. Following these aspects of ethnicity, the ethno-national concept has been brought with a plural

⁵⁴ In this context John Edwards (1985) explained that a very useful discussions of ethnicity (or symbolic ethnicity), as provided by Gans (1979), is that the new ethnicity has not affected basic processes of acculturation and assimilation, but there is a new interest in roots; and language provides a meaningful aspect of ethnicity, public and private, or symbolic and non-symbolic.

meaning: as ethnic identity, as a weapon of revenge, as instrument to apply pressure in the political market, and as a response to needs for personal and collective identity. Through these senses built on ethnicity, a sense of ethno-national movement develops to ensure the protection and renewed validity of group culture. These movements, thus, give roots, based on a language, culture, and an ancient history transcending the specific conditions of ethnic group. Thus Melucci's postmodern thought of ethnicity helps to understand that the very concept ethnicity has multiple meaning and correspond to individuals' personal as well as collective identity through developing a sense of ethno-national movement within the context of complex societies.

In some cases, especially involving transnational migration, or colonial expansion, ethnicity is linked to nationality. Anthropologists and historians, following the modernist understanding of ethnicity as proposed by Ernest Gellner (1983) sees nations and nationalism as developing with the rise of modern state system in the seventeenth century, culminating in the rise of 'nation-states' in which the presumptive boundaries of the nation coincided (or ideally coincided) with state boundaries. Thus, in the West, the notion of ethnicity, like race and nation, developed in the context of European colonial expansion, when mercantilism and capitalism were promoting global movements of populations at the same time that state boundaries were being more clearly and rigidly defined. Nation-states, however, invariably include populations that have been excluded from national life for one reason or another. Members of excluded groups, consequently, will either demand inclusion on the basis of equality, or seek autonomy, sometimes even to the extent of complete political separation in their own nation-state (Pohl 1998). Under these conditions—when people moved from one state to another or one state conquered or colonized peoples beyond its national boundaries—ethnic groups were formed by people who identified with one nation, but lived in another state (Ong 1996). An important insight from anthropological research is that ethnic organization and identity radically opposed to modern state are reactions to the process of modernization. According to Jonathan Friedman (1990:311), '[e]thnic and cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenization are not two arguments, two opposing view of what is happening in the world today, but two constitutive trends of global reality'. Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. It can thus also be defined as a social identity characterized by metaphoric or fictive kinship (Yelvington 1991).

Identity

Anthropologists became more interested to study identity with the emergence of modern concerns of ethnicity and social movements in the 1970s. The Eriksonian approach to identity remained in force, with the result that identity has continued until recently to be used in a largely socio-historical way to refer to qualities of sameness in relation to a person's connection to others and to a particular group of people. This ambiguous and confusing approach to identity has led on occasion to rather restrictive interpretations of the concept, following two more or less opposite tendencies. The first favors a primordialist approach which takes the sense of self and belonging to a collective group as a fixed thing, defined by objective criteria such as common ancestry and common biological characteristics. The second, rooted in social constructionist theory, takes the view that identity is formed by a predominantly political choice of

certain characteristics⁵⁵. Both approaches need to be understood in their respective political and historical contexts, characterized by debate on issues of class, race and ethnicity. The first approach treats identity as fundamentally a group phenomenon, binding group members together on exclusive common characteristics. Identity here is understood as denoting a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group⁵⁶. To most proponents of modernization in the 1960s, assertions of ethnic identity feeling were seen as backward and anachronistically attached to traditional values. Ethnic groupness continued to be associated with objective socio-biological criteria. With the emergence of political conflicts in which issues of ethnicity played a central role, this approach led to an acceptance of objective and perceived differences between social groups as a basis for the construction of group distinction and consequently of political mobilization. While moving towards a subjective approach to ethnic identity, as a politicized cultural identity, these so-called instrumentalist theories still gave ethnic groupness an essentialist quality. By associating it with political strategy-making, overflowing sometimes into violence, ethnic groupness was also often given negative connotations. This has caused in many cases a return to a rather primordialist view of ethnic groupness, as the ethnic group is understood to be fighting for its distinctive values⁵⁷. Personal identity, for Erikson (1980 [1959]), was located deep in the unconscious as a durable and persistent sense of sameness of the self, whatever happens, however traumatic the experience or dramatic the passage from one phase of life to another, the non path-logical individual does not consider himself or herself to have become someone else. Individuals conceive of the self in terms of the cognitive models or paradigm types of personality or moral character available in their historical time band within spatial range of their experience.

Another approach to identity, and consequently to ethnicity, which may be described as subjective, interprets the concepts as deriving from a sense of self formed out of an awareness of distinctiveness, of difference to others. By introducing the concept of ethnic boundaries as an analytical tool for looking at ethnicity, Barth (1969) helped to de-essentialize ethnicity and ethnic identity and to challenge their a priori existence or continuity. Analyses of ethnic groups, he suggested, should focus on their use of symbolic boundaries to mark the limits of group belonging. Ethnic groups were thus seen to be active creators of their groupness, a process which he described as involving three stages: self-ascription, mutual recognition and mutual ascription. In this way, ethnic identity could be understood as formed on the basis of what is chosen and agreed (we want to be like this, we feel different to them on the basis of things we believe we have in common) rather than as a collection of fixed types (blood, language, history, character). This notion of ethnic boundaries provides a way of understanding how a sense of organization and order in a social environment and a sense of group membership is developed and sustained amidst surrounding change. They assist people in their creation of bonds based on shared ideas and emotions as part of a group in contrast to others, to such an extent that it is not necessary for them to know each other personally (Anderson 1983). In this case, for a proper interrelation among different groups of people, particularly in case of CHTs, the notion of interaction and shared ideas is of crucial importance.

⁵⁵ For more see Erik H. Erikson (1974).

⁵⁶ For more see R.H. Thompson (1989:21-48).

⁵⁷ For more see Anthony D. Smith (1986).

Some scholars discussed the concept of cultural schemas to discuss the 'role of symbols to identity', as cultural schemas (or schemata) are mental representations of prototypical events, behaviors and things; these schemas define for the person the nature of any situation in which he or she is involved. Roy G. D'Andrade has argued that cultural schemas structure how emotion is experienced and what goals are followed. Summarizing his ideas of the 'overlap' between culture and personality he writes: 'some cultural values appear to be incorporated into the individual's superego- to become part of the individual's deepest sense of what is right. Some cultural symbols appear to have unconscious meaning and under certain conditions apparently become an important part an individual's identity. And some...cultural schemata appear to be internalized by most individuals and to function as general goal systems or motives' (D'Andrade 1990). This formulation is not perhaps so very different from Sapir's original idea of unconscious 'patterns' in language, but it does not take up his observation that, from the point of view of a child, 'culture is...not something given but something to be gradually and gropingly discovered' and that 'the child will unconsciously accept the various elements of culture with entirely different meanings, according to the biographical conditions that attend their introduction to him (D'Andrade 1990). In other words, 'cultural schemas' have to be constituted by children and, in this process, will necessarily be transformed.

Some anthropologists of the 1970s concentrated on the social and political role of symbols to address identity. Clifford Geertz worked on the idea of culture as a particular symbolic system promoted by a social group, assisting the group in its way of thinking and looking at the world. As a set of symbolic statements, culture shapes and gives meaning to human perceptions and behavior. Geertz views this negotiation of meaning as fundamentally a social process which occurs, "not in the head, but in that public world where people talk together, name things, make assertions, and to a degree understand each other" (Geertz 1973). Over the following decades, identity came to be seen as an object of personal struggle in social and political studies (Calhoun 1994). What occurs then is a politics of difference, whereby group identities assert themselves in opposition to perceived pressures of homogenization and, in doing so, assume roles in the political arena. Following this line of thought, new social movements and minority nationalism were seen as an attempt by small social groups to regain control of their destinies. Likewise, identity came to be understood as a potential ideological construct for political mobilization, alongside that of ethnicity and nationalism. Wallman (1977) suggests that differences between social groups become ethnic boundaries "only when heated into significance by the identity investments of the other side". Glazer and Moynihan (1975:7) have treated identity as a politicized social fact, whereby social change and new political challenges are seen to bring about self-consciousness. While this approach helps us to understand how some groups manage to construct and maintain a sense of identity, it fails to recognize the possibility of different interpretations of this group identity amongst its members.

As Calhoun (1994:28) noted, "there are always internal tensions and inconsistencies among the various identities and group memberships of individuals". In a broader context, social scientists are confronted with the challenge of dealing with the multitude of social and cultural experiences acquired today in the context of globalization. Today with a trans-local flow of people, capital and technology, people of different cultures mingle and mix, producing a whole new set of values and reference points. Responding to the questions regarding the self and identity in an age of 'globalization', 'homogenization', 'mass culture' and 'extensive communication' have caused a renewed questioning of the self (Caglar 1997). Thus rather than questioning the use of the word

'identity', many have sought to adapt their analytical approach by presenting identity as something fluid, changing and multi-dimensional, and put forward the idea of 'multiple identity', whereby an individual builds up and expresses a range of identities based on personal experience (Kershen 1998; Werbner and Modood, eds. 1997).

Cohen (1994), as one of the most outspoken critics of the idea that ethnic identity can be generalized to all members of the group, argued that ethnicity is continually reconstructed on the collective level thanks to the individual members of the group. He pointed to the need to be aware of the individual variations that can exist within an ethnic group, talking of boundaries as things that acquire meaning in the minds of individuals (Cohen 1994; 1998). While Barth (1969) suggested that the boundaries between groups are of primary definitional importance, Cohen (1998) drew attention to the risk of erroneously thinking that the understanding of these boundaries is equally shared by all members of the group. Members have their own ways of defining their membership and understanding their ethnic group and they express this through their own use of symbolic boundaries. They may share many common characteristics of a prototypical ethnic identity, but not all (Mahmood and Armstrong 1992).

These different explorations of 'identity' demonstrate how difficult a concept it is to pin down. Since identity is a virtual thing, it is impossible to define it empirically. Discussions of identity use the term with different meanings, from fundamental and abiding sameness, to fluidity, contingency, negotiated and so on. Brubaker and Cooper (2000:5) note a tendency in many scholars to confuse identity as a category of practice and as a category of analysis. Indeed, many scholars demonstrate a tendency to follow their own preconceptions of identity, following more or less the frameworks listed above, rather than taking into account the mechanisms by which the concept is crystallized as reality. In this environment, some analysts, such as Brubaker and Cooper (2000:1), have suggested doing away with the concept completely. Others, by contrast, have sought to introduce alternative concepts in an attempt to capture the dynamic and fluid qualities of human social self-expression. Hall (1995), for example, suggests treating identity as a process, to take into account the reality of diverse and ever-changing social experience. Some scholars have introduced the idea of identification, whereby identity is perceived as made up of different components that are 'identified' and interpreted by individuals. The construction of an individual sense of self is achieved by personal choices regarding who and what to associate with. Such approaches are liberating in their recognition of the role of the individual in social interaction and the construction of identity.

As a non-directive and flexible analytical tool, the concept of boundaries helps both to map and to define the changeability and mutability that are characteristic of people's experiences of the self in society. While identity is a volatile, flexible and abstract 'thing', its manifestations and the ways in which it is exercised are often open to view. Identity is made evident through the use of markers such as language, dress, behavior and choice of space, whose effect depends on their recognition by other social beings. In a social context, misunderstandings can arise due to a misinterpretation of the significance of specific markers. Equally, an individual can use markers of identity to exert influence on other people without necessarily fulfilling all the criteria that an external observer might typically associate with such an abstract identity. This is also crucial for understanding the happenings in the CHT today.

Anthropologists have already noted how symbols can be appropriated by individuals in ways that have meanings different from those originally or conventionally intended. The

symbolic and social context in which individuals find themselves is used and interpreted differently by them for the construction of their uniquely personal sense of identity. At the same time, the individual's sense of self is influenced by his or her surroundings. And as the symbolic and social context changes, so do the person's sense of self and his or her desires of how to be understood by others. People can manipulate boundaries to their own individual advantage and refashion their selves in a variety of ways at different moments in time. Thus contrary to conventional views of identity as homogeneous within a given social or ethnic community, people are selective in their appropriations of different aspects of identity according to circumstances (Bray 2004).

Globalization for Culture and Identity

There is no accepted standard definition of globalization, but it has been characterized by reduction or elimination of barriers among different nations in terms of trade, commerce, investments, finance, transportation and communication among others. It leads to free movements of goods, service, money, people and ideas across the national boundaries. Thus it is quite difficult to reach any consensual framework for globalization because it embraces all human relations and institutions. Globalization and the attendant concerns about poverty and inequality have become a focus of discussion in a way that few other topics, except for international terrorism or global warming, have.

Globalization is an umbrella term for a complex series of economic, social, technological, cultural and political changes seen as increasing interdependence, integration and interaction among people and companies in disparate locations. It has often been argued that globalization⁵⁸ is a social change, an increase in connections among societies and their elements. The term is applied to many social, commercial and economic activities. Depending on the context it can mean closer contact between different parts of the world (globalization of the world), or increasing relations among the members of any industry in different parts of the world (globalization of an industry). It shares a number of characteristics with internationalization and is used interchangeably, although some prefer to use globalization to emphasize the erosion of the nation or national boundaries (Hirst and Thompson 1991). Thus conceptualizing globalization is more difficult. Emanuel Heisenberg maintained that globalization is the process by which the experience of everyday life, marked by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, is becoming standardized around the world (Heisenberg 2002).

In another case both David Held and Anthony McGrew wrote in their entry for Oxford Companion to Politics that globalization can be conceived as a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, expressed in transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and power (Held and McGrew 2000). So globalization cannot be rigidly defined or brought under any single term of reference. As time goes the concepts and thinking of different specialists in different parts of the world are getting multidimensional nature of understandings. Because globalization itself is related to many different aspects of human life and it also bears multivariate contents and meanings.

⁵⁸ Globalization has become identified with a number of trends, most of which may have developed or accelerated since World War II. These include greater international movement of commodities, money, information, and people; and the development of technology, organizations, legal systems, and infrastructures to allow this movement.

Characteristically globalization includes international cultural exchange, greater global technical or legal data flow, and promotion of free trade among others.

Globalization does not carry with it a universal consensus. Conceptually globalization should be distinguished from internationalization. The essential distinction is that globalization denotes a process of denationalization whereas internationalization refers to the corporate activities of national action. There are two meanings of globalization: one refers to trade liberalization, together with its economic and political dimensions, that involves increased pressure on manufacturers to sell and build in more than one country; and the other refers to cultural homogenization, in particular, the spread of Western commodities (e.g. Coke, McDonald foods, Hollywood films), tastes, styles, icons, beliefs and attitudes (Lind 1997:69)⁵⁹. Coordinated through calculated symbol management, the globalization agenda is ideological as well as political and economic. What unifies the diverse prescription of this extra parliamentary formation of a transformational framework of law is the single, final goal of releasing corporate investment from any interference or social conditions set by national or local authority and this refers to a natural right (McMurtry 1997). However, the current ideological and political wave of globalization rest in what David C. Korten (1995) called corporate libertarianism. A concise overview of some principles and assumptions that under grid the corporate competition ideology include: 1) sustained economic growth, as measured by GNP, is the path to human progress; 2) free markets unrestrained by government, generally result in the most efficient and socially optimal allocation of resources; 3) economic globalization, achieved by removing barriers to the free flow of goods and money anywhere in the world, spurs competition, increases economic efficiency, creates jobs, increases economic growth and is generally beneficial to almost everyone; 4) privatization, which moves functions and assets from governments to the private sector, improves efficiency; and 5) the primary responsibility of the government is to provide the infrastructure necessary to advance commerce and enforce the rule of law with respect to property rights and contracts (Korten 1995).

South Asia, with 21 percent of the world population, has the largest concentration of the world's poverty. It suffers from endemic poverty and sense of deprivation with poor communication, education or sheer illiteracy, nutrition, resource poor bases, etc. In most regions of the world all such cooperative mechanisms have been utilized for overcoming the challenges of globalization, but in South Asia such mechanisms remained dysfunctional. Though it is often expressed that the poorer countries stand to gain from globalization, but it seems far from the real picture. Technological globalization does offer a great background, breakthrough and potential for human advance and for eradicating poverty such as that South Asia has, but perhaps not with current development agenda of the South Asian nations like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka,

⁵⁹According to Lind (1997), more specifically, globalization refers to: i) an increase in international trade; ii) increase in international flow of capital; iii) greater trans-border data flow, through internet, communication satellites and telephones; iv) greater international cultural exchange; v) reduction in global cultural diversity through hybridization, Westernization, Americanization or Sinosization of cultures; vi) erosion of national sovereignty and national borders through international agreements; vii) greater immigration, including illegal immigration; viii) development of global telecommunications infrastructure; ix) increase in the share of the world economy controlled by multinational corporations; and x) increased role of international organizations such as WTO, WIPO, and IMF that deal with international transactions among others.

Bangladesh, etc. (Rahman and Sen 1998). One of the most identifiable impacts of globalization in Bangladesh is seen in its local or indigenous cultural diversity.

Today, it is very clear that due to the development of information and communication technology (ICT) globally, people are getting connected to the western culture through satellite and TV channels. These are making greater cultural integration among the people of different culture of origin including the Bangalees and other ethnic communities as well. Moreover, the frequent flow of foreign goods is also making a shift in the nature and taste of these people and, thus, becoming significant contributor for people's own cultural identity.

Globalization has heralded the onset of a 'global age' since the closing decade of the 20th century and the beginning of the millennium, though it is very much an integral part of the civilizational journey of mankind. Globalization has ushered a radically different era, unique in the history of humanity. Globally the responses to the upcoming features of globalization are not the same and it varies in terms of international borders and regions. Thus, it is imperative to the right move to maximize the benefits and minimize the downscale of globalization in order to create both a sustainable and profitable world.

This is also true for the South Asian context and for the development in a developing country like Bangladesh. It is a fact that globalization is opening up economic development potentials for many countries, but it is also overtaxing the capabilities of entire regions of the world. In such a sequence it would be convenient for a developing country like Bangladesh to receive the maximum opportunities created by globalization on an international scale through strong coordination, commitment, regional and international culture of partnership among nation states and so on.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The field of this study in this part of the world asks for more exploration. The existing perceptions of minorities most often undermining the ethnic communities, giving birth to discrimination and exclusion, resulting in violation of human rights and affecting the interrelations between the ethnic and Bangalee people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Because in the context of Bangladesh a fair and effective justice is crucial in fostering recondition, peace, stability and development among the discriminated people. Both internal and external forces are responsible for creating and generating distances among different communities and it is thought that the ethnic people are mostly affected. But at the same time it is believed that with a proper investigation into the different dimensions of interrelations between ethnic and Bangalee people, certain facts will come out to understand the actual scenario for the existing relations. Discrimination never creates a harmonious environment for any human being rather it creates social stratification and unequal ethnic relations leading to hostility. It has been observed that over a few decade tensions have crept up in the CHTs and the facts for these tensions have remained attached with the ethnic conflict and conflict over right based issues. Economic, social, political, cultural and several other aspects have been threatened and have always asked for investigation. Moreover, aspects of ethnicity and identity have been critically dealt with. With this backdrop it has been understood that this study has been a significant one to bring out the underlying facts of interrelations among different ethnic groups and create new avenue for further study on ethnicity and identity.

1.6 Experiences in the Field

After getting training in anthropology I have been working with the issues of ethnicity and ethnic identity in the context of Bangladesh. With academic experiences and some theoretical understanding on various aspects of ethnicity and identity I started to feel about people who are suffering for their most basic need i.e. problems of identity formation. As I have already mentioned, Chittagong Hill Tracts is such a beautiful area that attracts most of the people whether tourists, researchers, general visitors or others from around the world. But beneath this beauty there is another story of hard life, particularly for those who are identified as ethnic people. Applying some techniques for an easy entry to the field, as every anthropologist do, I have been able to find my way to the life and livelihood of the people of my study villages or *paras Beltali*, *Paltanjay* and *Singinala* (belong to the *Perachhara Union* of *Khagrachari Sadar Upazila*). I do not consider the problems faced in the field to be something special factors rather I have received many more from the people than the problems faced.

Ethnically I belong to the Bangalee community and this is the only thing that caused some problems. Whatever efforts taken still I am recognized by them as an outsider. With this I have realized the importance of identity. The Bangalee residents in the study area were quite comfortable for interaction. This was also the same in case of the Chakma and Tripura people, but with some boundaries such as language difference, cultural variation, and differences in the thought process. Despite these factors I have experienced the most beautiful part of my life. Getting close to the people in the field and building interaction with people to whom I am an intruder has taught me how to deal with them. During the course of my study I have met with people of all ages and all strata including community leaders, officials, and administration. I still remember that I had to cross the river *Chengi* to go to my study village. During winter people used to cross the river through walking as the water level goes very down. But during rainy season local people, mostly women from Chakma or Tripura community, used to drive boat to carry people from one side to the other of the river. I have experienced all the ways to cross the river and in many occasions it helped me to get close to the village people.

However, staying in the field at night, particularly where the village is surrounded by both hills and river, has given me the ample opportunity to observe and listen to their perspectives and stories comprising the issues of inter-ethnic relations and identity formation. It is now known to all that not only the Bangalee, but also the Chakma and Tripura people are also engaged to different local and national level political activities. I have observed several cases of political as well as community activities and protests over the rights based issues and later found out that these practices have multidimensional underlying meanings. In any case I consider myself lucky to mix with all my study people and get close to their thinking of inter-ethnic relations based on identity issue. Finally I must mention is that I have a grandmother (I am not mentioning her or any of my study people's name in the thesis because I have promised them not to mention their names in any format in my writings) in my study village *Beltali* and she has taught me about many of their ongoing aspects, and also showed me the ways to get close to and receive valuable information from a number of people belonging not only to the Chakmas and Tripuras but also to the Bangalees. I consider all these experiences further addition to my anthropological training.

Civilization is the result not the cause of civilization...moving under their own laws and customs, they will turn out, not debased and miniature epitomes of Englishmen, but a new noble type of God's creature (Lewin 2011 [1869]).

CHAPTER-2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review

For the purpose of this study some literary works have been studied thoroughly which are relevant to the objectives. At the same time it has been maintained that the selected works have addressed the issues of this study where the main thrust is to uncover the underlying factors responsible for the nature of interrelations among Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities of the CHTs. A brief review of the related literary works is given here.

During 1950 Claude Lévi-Strauss (1952b)⁶⁰ conducted study on the kinship systems or relationship terms where he⁶¹ has made a short visit to the Chittagong Hill Tribes. He has done the work on the Bengal-Burma border in September 1950, on a mission to Pakistan for the UNESCO Department of Social Sciences. Lévi-Strauss has documented the kinship relationship terms of three tribal communities known as the Chakma, Kuki and Mog. In analyzing kinship terms he has also focused on the marriage and social organizational pattern of the three communities. Lévi-Strauss has identified that the political power among the Chakma, for example, belong to a patrilineal lineage where it is transmitted from father to the first-born son. There is not much to be gained from this article, but certainly it provides with some basic understandings of the use of kinship terms of some tribal communities little known to the world at that time. One of the major findings of Lévi-Strauss in this article is that he has been able to observe the freedom of women in the society. What Lévi-Strauss idealized from this practice is that this freedom of women and free missing of men and women in the society has made these communities more responsive to each other and also to the outside world. This leads to an outline for the present study that some considerable features of ethnic communities ('tribal' according to Lévi-Strauss) have helped creating an atmosphere tolerable for different communities living in and outside their territories. Quite rightly it can be explained that such a common understanding has had created a place for mutual relationship among the people of different ethnic origins respecting every culture and community feeling. Overall these findings of Lévi-Strauss have given some input to the present study as well.

The terms 'ethnic groups' and 'boundaries' have been broadly dealt with by Fredrik Barth (1969)⁶². Here he has mainly attempted to focus on the social organization of cultural differences and through these puts light on how different cultural groups are organized ethnically in different geographical locations. All the essays of this book address the problems of ethnic groups and their persistence. Barth has quite clearly identified that boundaries between ethnic groups persist even though there is a continuous flow of people among them. In doing so he has tried to identify the definition of ethnic group as

⁶⁰ For more see Lévi-Strauss, Claude 1952b. *Kinship Systems of Three Chittagong Hill Tribes (Pakistan)*. Southern Journal of Anthropology 8. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

⁶¹ Lévi-Strauss has done the fieldwork during 1950 when the transportation and communication system to the Chittagong Hill Tracts has been less developed. But his work has been an anthropological one and till now studies in the CHTs have been very less. There is the lack of documentation on every aspect of ethnic communities and one thing is clear that most of the attentions were given to the Chakma ethnic community. Still there are so many small ethnic communities who are not well documented.

⁶² For more see Barth, Fredrik, ed. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

understood in anthropological literature⁶³ to designate a population which is biologically self-perpetuating, with fundamental cultural values, for communication and interaction and has a definite membership category to identify itself. Using the example of Pathan local system from the Swat Valley of Pakistan Barth has given some characteristics of ethnic groups which further tell us about boundary maintenance and ethnicity such as ethnic groups are cultural bearing units with their organizational tendency. Finally Barth has outlined that although different ethnic groups maintain interrelations but there still remains a boundary among them which helps shaping our understandings in a way that it is not only culture but also a continual organizational existence with boundaries to create differentiation as well as interaction. In line with Barth the other contributor of this book Harald Eidheim (1969)⁶⁴ has tried to focus light on ethnic identity as a social stigma where ethnic groups are social categories providing a basis for status ascription and inter-ethnic relations. Referring to an area of mixed Norwegian-Coast Lappish population of Northern Norway he further indicates to the process of role-taking for inter-ethnic relations. Thus he refers to ethnic identity as a stigmatized one. In addressing identity, Eidheim says, interaction is organized in different spheres of communication where behavior belonging in one or another of the spheres is dependent on definable circumstances or opportunity situations. It is understandable from his essay that maintenance of interaction at different stages of social life defines how people are ethnically identified. Thus the term network can be used which emerges as a consequence of the local distribution of exchange resources in the population. In Eidheim's words, "we have the paradoxical situation that it is ethnic status which underlies and delimits relations in public network".

In another essay of this book Gunnar Haaland (1969)⁶⁵ has discussed about economic determinants in ethnic processes. In other words he has analyzed the processes of boundary maintenance taking the nature of ethnic identity and determinants in the change of identity. In discussing about two communities of Western Darfur in his thesis, he has analyzed the nature of inter-ethnic relations and processes of identity change based on the economic system within the society. It is understandable from his findings that socio-cultural traits, joint economic enterprise, transitional category, participation in social situation and animal husbandry are some factors to determine ethnic relations. Conceptually Haaland's analysis is very much useful in establishing concepts in the present thesis where surely market and economic systems are significant to address any community's interrelations. In their essays Jan-Petter Blom (1969)⁶⁶ and Karl Eric Knutsson (1969)⁶⁷ have discussed about ethnic and cultural differentiation, and dichotomization and integration processes for ethnic communities. Blom has critically analyzed the cultural and organizational requirements for the establishment of ethnic

⁶³ For more see Narroll, R. 1964. Ethnic Unit Classification. *Current Anthropology* 5(4).

⁶⁴ For more see Eidheim, H. 1969. When Ethnic Identity is a Social Stigma. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. Fredrik Barth, ed. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

⁶⁵ For more see Haaland, G. 1969. Economic Determinants in Ethnic Processes. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. Fredrik Barth, ed. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

⁶⁶ For more see Blom, Jan-Petter. 1969. Ethnic and Cultural Differentiation. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. Fredrik Barth, ed. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

⁶⁷ For more see Knutsson, K. E. 1969. Dichotomization and Integration. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. Fredrik Barth, ed. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

boundaries. In his thesis Blom has pointed out that organization of ethnic identity does not depend of cultural diversity but to particular social meanings to a limited set of acts. One of the key aspects of his findings is the maintenance of relationship between the mountaineers and lowlanders through seasonal rental of livestock, exchange of goods and sharing mountain areas for the lowlanders for different purposes. On the other hand Knutsson has focused on dichotomization and integration for inter-ethnic relations in Southern Ethiopia. He has pointed out that the identity of different communities is intimately connected with their total way of life and environment. This essay makes it clear that ethnicity varies on the basis of geographical variations and the use of technologies. It is not always a boundary comparable to ecological ones. Another element that maintains the inter-ethnic relations is the poly-ethnic market system within which different ethnic communities operate. In Knutsson's words, "...ethnicity becomes not one single universally applicable term but rather the representation of a wide range of interrelations in which the dominant reference is to an ethnic status ascribed on the basis of birth, language and socialization" (1969:99).

However, Henning Siverts (1969)⁶⁸, Fredrik Barth (1969)⁶⁹ and Karl G. Izikowitz (1969)⁷⁰ have discussed about ethnic stability and boundary dynamics, Pathan identity and its maintenance, and neighbor concepts in addressing ethnic boundary and ethnicity. Siverts findings tell us that despite the constancy of ethnic boundary groups are interacted on different sectors of activity such as administrative works, market relation and business transactions. Barth maintained that identity is recognized but can be altered without any change in the conventional characteristics of status. Changes are common in the face of urbanization and new administration, boundary persists maintaining cultural and organizational pattern of the community. Finally Izikowitz has analyzed boundary maintenance using the term neighbors. In this process he has pointed out that 'one nation, one race, one people, one culture' etc. is just a slogan where the minorities often got the worst of it. Though differences between the relationships of different ethnic groups exist through the techniques of impression, value systems and self-identification, relationship through interaction persists via nature, accepted evaluation, imitation of customs, peaceful trade and many other types of similar action. Above all this book on ethnic groups and boundaries has the conceptual ground for present study to focus on interethnic relations i.e. to understand the nature of ethnicity and identity.

Leo A. Despres (1975)⁷¹ has tried to draw light on ethnicity and resource competition in plural societies in his edited book. The authors of different articles in the book have largely focused on the theoretical understanding of Fredrik Barth to address ethnicity. Few issues have also been drawn from Marxists perspectives. One of the key issues of the book is to show ethnicity and interethnic relations in regard to the management of resources (termed as resource competition). As a result boundary maintenance, socio-racial diversity, and ethnic stratification- all these have also been evaluated to show the nature of ethnicity and resource competition. It has been identified that in a post-colonial, modern world with plural culture and ethnic origins, political and economic

⁶⁸ For more see Siverts, H. 1969. Ethnic Stability and Boundary Dynamics in Southern Mexico. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. Fredrik Barth, ed. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

⁶⁹ For more see Barth, Fredrik 1969. Pathan Identity and its Maintenance. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. id, ed. Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

⁷⁰ For more see K. G. Izikowitz (1969).

⁷¹ For more see Despres, Leo A. 1975. Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Plural Societies. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.

power exercise and decision making play vital role for ethnic boundary maintenance as well as the maintenance of interethnic relationship. Toward the end of the book the editor Despres has critically analyzed some theoretical background of ethnicity where the concepts developed by Barth, Whitten, Skinner and others have been evaluated to understand ethnic phenomena through defining ethnicity, ethnic status, and ethnic stratification among others. However, this work has given valuable information to the formation of basic understanding of ethnicity and identity of this study.

Edward Tuite Dalton (1978)⁷² has done one of the most significant documents or works on the history of tribal people in this sub-continent, particularly of Eastern India. Practically through this work Dalton addressed different ethnic communities of different areas of Eastern India which included hill tribes of northern frontier, population of Assam valley, northern borders, Tiperah and Chittagong tribes, Hinduised aborigines and broken tribes, Bhuniya or Bhuiya, the Kolarians, the Dravidians, and the Aryans. Hundreds time read and cited this book has the basic information of the tribal people of this part of the world and the data gathered at a time when there has been limitations of this type of work. The importance of this book for the present study is that it gives the historical information to trace the origin of the ethnic community of this study but with a very limited fashion. However, many of the terms used in addressing the ethnic communities can be criticized as being unable to understand the underlying meanings and functions of defining ethnic communities. Apart from these limitations this book is an account to guide for tracing the origins (root) of ethnic communities.

Florencio Sánchez Cámara and Felipe Ayala, eds. (1979)⁷³ have tried to illustrate ideas to the concepts for communication and development in bilingual-bicultural communities of the world from an anthropological perspective. They further illustrated that the historical importance of varying cultural backgrounds is not to be underestimated in considering the circumstances that separate the so-called developed countries from the countries to be developed. The root cause of this, as developed by the writings of this book, is the isomorphic nature of the asymmetrical relationships and inferior standards of living in bilingual-bicultural communities everywhere. These communities have been identified by the authors as minority populations with an indigenous language and culture, dominated economically and politically by the systems of the wider societies. In relation to this the authors' selection of another common tenet is that any country can be strengthened by the existence of the right to self-determination of their peoples of diverse languages and cultures. Taking all these ideas into account the authors of this book have tried to show changes and development among indigenous people and culture through education and communication in the communities of Mexico. More importantly it has given some idea on the possibility of change, which shows the dynamism in turn, in interethnic relations through bilingual-bicultural education. Interestingly one of the authors Elsie Rockwell (1979)⁷⁴ has mentioned that no real change in interethnic relations is possible through education when the basic economic structure continues to be characterized by

⁷² For more see Dalton, E. T. 1978. Tribal History of Eastern India [Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal]. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications.

⁷³ For more see Cámara, Florencio Sánchez, and Felipe Ayala, eds. 1979. Concepts for Communication and Development in Bilingual and Bicultural Communities. Paris: Mouton Publishers.

⁷⁴ For more see Rockwell, E. 1979. The Possibility of Change in Interethnic Relations Through Bilingual-Bicultural Education. *In* Concepts for Communication and Development in Bilingual and Bicultural Communities. Florencio Sánchez Cámara, and Felipe Ayala, eds. Paris: Mouton Publishers.

exploitation of the native groups, and when the process of domination includes the educational system itself. Though this book largely focused on communication and development through education in bilingual-bicultural communities, but it has a connection with the present study to clarify the patterns and processes of changes and development in interethnic relations taking place through education of the ethnic communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.

Philip Gain (ed.) (1993)⁷⁵ has made a documentation focusing the rights and identities of those people whom the world knows as indigenous people. Comprising the writings of different scholars Gain has tried to show the debates surrounding the concept 'indigenous people'. It appears from his findings that there is no single, agreed definition of what constitutes as indigenous people. He has quoted several definitions of indigenous people developed by different agencies such as 'The World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP)', 'International Labour Organisation (ILO)', etc. But these attempts have not been successful in solving the problem regarding how to address these ethnic people. It has been rightly identified that the subject of indigenous peoples is a question of identity. Following these the sense of long and inherited linkage to land, separateness, and differences in terms of culture, language, religion, moral values and many other such things have been considered to determine the identity of indigenous peoples. Overall Gain has critically evaluated the attempts taken so far to address the ethnic people globally and it helps the present study to have a brief idea on ethnic relations and identity formation.

Ethnicity and nationalism have been well conceptualized by Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993)⁷⁶ from an anthropological perspective. In defining ethnicity Eriksen has pointed out that ethnicity has something to do with the classification of people and group relationships. In other words, and in social anthropology, it refers to aspects of relationships between groups which are culturally distinctive. In doing so he has coined the terms race, nationalism, class, minorities, indigenes, etc. with ethnicity. He has clarified that ethnicity refers to aspects of gain and loss in interaction and in the creation of identity. Thus in dealing with this issue it is understandable that ethnicity has a political, organizational and symbolic aspect. Eriksen has reduced this concept to the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders, but again constituted through social contact. Another significant issue is ethnic stigma where it is a fact that many interethnic relations are highly asymmetrical regarding access to political power and economic resources. However, by implication and according to Eriksen, ethnicity entails both commonalities and differences between categories of people as well as both complementarization and dichotomization. It appears from Eriksen's thesis that ethnic identity and ideology maintain the social organization for cultural differences. So from the perspective of historical change a process of ethno-genesis has worked out for the creation of ethnic relations and ethnic identities. One thing which cannot be forgotten is the importance of technology and modern education in generating opportunities and constraints for cultural and social organization and also to facilitate the development of abstract identification through an understanding of selves.

⁷⁵ For more see Gain, Philip, ed. 1993. Year of the Indigenous People, 1993: Indigenous Peoples of Bangladesh. SEHD Report 2. Indigenous Peoples' Issue. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁷⁶ For more see Eriksen, Thomas Hylland 1993. Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives. London: Pluto Press.

May be for this purpose Eriksen has used Smith's (1986) argument that modern ethnic ideologies have identifiable objective cultural roots which, as can be understood, helps in shaping today's ethnic relationships. He has further mentioned that depending on situations ethnicity may raise the sense of nationalism using Ernest Gellner's (1964:169)⁷⁷ concept of nationalism in the way that 'nationalism is not the awakening of self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist'. In this process Eriksen has stressed on nationalisms to be ethnic in character. In another attempt he has also focused on the concepts like minority or marginalized versus state and majority and relates these with ethnic identity using Eidheim (1992)⁷⁸ and Henriksen's (1992)⁷⁹ words that ethnic minorities survive not because of cultural change but because of their relative ability to master the changes and utilize new technologies and political possibilities for their own ends. However, Eriksen has also discussed about gender roles for ethnicity and it seems obvious that both men and women are responsible both in maintaining conflict and cohesion among different groups. Taking all these concepts into account Eriksen's concept of ethnicity and nationalism has been found very significant for present study in dealing with the events of different Bangalee and Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities in the CHTs.

Amartya Sen (1995)⁸⁰ has critically reexamined the pattern of equality/ inequality in human society. Using the term 'equality of what' Sen mentioned that this question derives from the actual diversity of human beings, so that demanding equality in terms of one variable tends to clash – in fact and not just in theory – with wanting equality in terms of another. In this process he has quite rightly specified that the idea of equality is confronted by two different types of diversities: one is the basic heterogeneity of human beings and the other is the multiplicity of variables in terms of which equality can be judged. Thus Amartya Sen has analyzed various issues to justify what do we mean by equality through an understanding of human diversity, well-being and freedom, compatibility sets and value objects, role of agency for well-being and freedom, and the relationships between inequality and the nature of poverty, class and gender relations. Overall this appears to be a highly demandable work to address not only equality as a single entity, but also to unfold the underlying factors that promote inequality in the society. One of the most important issues has been the concern of human diversity, class and economic pattern of different people in the same society which further show that people are also responsible to maintain this inequality. Therefore, Sen's thesis has helped the present study to relate equality/ inequality with the pattern of ethnicity. This means to see the same thing (ethnicity) from various points in accordance with how people maintain inequality (fails/ do not want to maintain equality) in the society.

Harikishore Chakma, Taposh Chakma, Preyasi Dewan and Mahfuz Ullah (1995)⁸¹ have explored the uneasy situation of Chittagong Hill Tracts through the work that they

⁷⁷ Gellner, Ernest 1964. *Thought and Change*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

⁷⁸ Eidheim, Harald 1992. *Stages in the Development of Sami Selfhood*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget (Scandinavian University Press).

⁷⁹ Henriksen, Georg 1992. The experience of social worth as a force in inter-ethnic relations. *In* *The Ecology of Choice and Symbols, Essays in Honour of Fredrik Barth*. Reider Gronhaug, Gunnar Haaland, and Georg Henriksen, eds. Pp. 407-425. Bergen: Alma Mater.

⁸⁰ For more see Sen, Amartya 1995. *Inequality Reexamined*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁸¹ For more see Chakma, Harikishore, Taposh Chakma, Preyasi Dewan, and Mahfuz Ullah 1995. *Bara Parang: The tale of the developmental refugees of the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Dhaka: Centre for Sustainable Development (CFSD).

named Bara Parang⁸². They have identified that the feeling of being left out by the ethnic minorities in the CHTs was created in the nineteen sixties when the Pakistan government decided to construct the Kaptai Hydro-electric dam on the Karnaphuli river. It has been observed that this type of project has brought damages not only to the life and nature of the CHTs but also the entire culture and habitation of the ethnic peoples. Moreover, damages were severe for those who were minor among the ethnic communities. In this process the authors have presented the conflict between development and people. The authors have also evaluated the sufferings of the people living in close proximity of the Kaptai Dam project and questioned whether the government has the right to play with the fate and lives of its people. One of the major strengths of this work is that it has taken the natives' point of view properly to make public the hidden truths that the people of different ethnic communities have gone through. The authors have been successful to touch almost every aspects of the ethnic people based on this issue (impact of Kaptai Dam project) which further showed that the Bangalee people were also affected similarly. It appears that the authors have evaluated the nature of ethnic struggle and the pattern of relations worked among different groups and agencies in the CHTs where the focal point was the establishment of Kaptai Dam project. In this process this work has given crucial insights to the understanding of the plights of ethnic people in the CHTs.

John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1996)⁸³ have tried to bring in the perspectives of anthropology in dealing with ethnicity. One of the most important aspects of this book is that it has incorporated every significant issues of ethnicity such as concepts and theories of ethnicity, ethnicity in the modern world, ethnicity, religion and language, race and ethnicity, ethnic conflict and nationalism and twentieth century understanding in transcending ethnicity. Sixty three articles have been included in this book where everyone has given their perspectives to the understanding of ethnicity. In terms of conceptualizing ethnicity status of minority groups, history of ethnicity, elements of ethnicity and relationship of ethnicity with race, class and nation have been considered. Similarly in theorizing ethnicity Max Weber's notions of the origins of ethnic groups has been coined with how ethnicity can be seen as being, doing and knowing, nature of environmental bond, Fredrik Barth's theory of ethnic groups and boundaries, along with ethnicity, politics, ethnic identity formation, rational choice and actor's model of ethnic relations. Overall this book can be seen as a body of documentations of concepts, ideas and theories of ethnicity and nationalism in anthropology and has significant connection in developing understanding of ethnicity and identity of the study people in this study.

Syed Murtaza Ali (1996)⁸⁴ has explored the emergence of insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts at a time when there were intolerable situations and tensions among the Bangalees and the ethnic communities. On the basis of the then circumstances Ali has identified the area as trouble-torn. He has been able to identify local peoples' perspectives regarding the tensed situation in the hills. Addressing his work as 'hitch in the hills' he has mentioned about several happenings where the hill peoples, other than the Bangalees, have been threatened to not only loss their lives but also their economic,

⁸² The name Bara Parang is an expression in Chakma language meaning "great exodus". The message of the word has been passed down through generations, their heart still bleed and the damage remains beyond repair (Chakma, H. et al 1995).

⁸³ For more see Hutchinson, J. and Anthony D. Smith, eds. 1996. *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸⁴ For more see Ali, Syed Murtaza 1996. *The Hitch in the Hills: CHT Diary*. Chittagong: Dil Monowara Begum.

cultural and social resources. In this context Ali has analyzed the activities of PCJSS⁸⁵ and the then government of Bangladesh and in many occasions challenged the continuation of peace process. In search for the rise of politically motivated agencies among the hill peoples it has been identified that PCJSS, Shanti Bahini (the armed cadre of the PCJSS) and particularly the Chakmas got the most impression and engagement. Here Ali has given a historical background to the development of these agencies. Ali has documented very well the insurgency movements in the CHTs and showed the emergence of Shantu Larma⁸⁶ as the crucial activist to protect these rights. However, Ali has presented several case studies of insurgencies in the hills which are known globally (notably the case of Kalpana Chakma). Overall his findings, though mainly based on secondary sources, have given the actual scenario that existed in the CHTs. These represent the pattern of relationships and also the gaps existing between the state and the hill people. This work has provided with some of the historical evidences that took place in the hills for the present study.

Bankim Krishna Chakma (1998)⁸⁷ is himself a representative of Chakma community. Being a member of the Chakma community the author has been able to highlight almost every aspects of the Chakma community. He has started with analyzing the features of Chakma community focusing from their historical background to their religion, festivals, language, letters, folklore, and cultural patterns. With these Chakma has been able to set a clear understanding of the background of the Chakma people in the CHTs. In the later section of the book he has mentioned about the classification of the Chakmas and their categorization of internal kinship based group formation. This included kinship, rules of marriage and inheritance, death rituals and other festivals in the community. Overall this work is a description of the origin of the Chakma people and their cultural practices in the CHTs. The author has mentioned that in every step of their livelihood strategies the Chakmas maintain their originality and interact with other peoples. However, there is no clear cut picture of the patterns of ethnicity and formation of identity as well as the interethnic relations in the book, and it is in this regard that the present study is significant with an effort to unfold the underlying structure of ethnicity and identity taking three communities in the CHTs- Chakma, Tripura and Bangalee.

Philip Gain (1998)⁸⁸, in his edited book, has discussed about the people of forest areas of Bangladesh. Particular focus has been given to the ethnic communities, forest and forest people, land rights, land use and indigenous peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs), conflict of traditions with traditional land rights for the hill people, thwarting the indigenous custodians of bio-diversity, addressing the *Paharias*⁸⁹ in a changing society,

⁸⁵ PCJSS refers to *Parbatya Chattagram Jono Sambati Samity- a samity* (Chittagong Hill Tracts Ethnic People's Coordination Association)/ political organization runs by the hill people.

⁸⁶ Later who has become the major spoke person from among the ethnic communities with the state over demanding many rights based issues.

⁸⁷ For more see Chakma, B. K. 1998. *Chakma Samaj O Sanskriti* [Society and Culture of the Chakmas]. Rangamati: Tribal Cultural Institute, Rangamati Hill Tracts.

⁸⁸ For more see Gain, Philip, ed. 1998. *Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People*. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁸⁹ The word *Paharia* is a *Bangla* term which refers particularly to those ethnic peoples who live in the hill areas. In case of Bangladesh most of the hilly areas belong to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Not only outsiders to these areas but also the local people use this term in addressing their separate identity.

cultural world of the *adivasis*⁹⁰ and struggle of the indigenous peoples for cultural and political rights. In this book eight authors have given their thoughts on the above mentioned issues. It has been critically identified that there is the lack of anthropological research works on the ethnic communities of Bangladesh and confusion exist in addressing the ethnic communities. One of the authors, Khaleque (1998)⁹¹, has pointed out that the indigenous inhabitants of forests, hills and some plain lands are trying to retain their cultural and agricultural practices and facing the challenges for their occupation and economy, political life, language, religion, acculturation and cultural conflicts. Gain (1998)⁹² puts the situation and difficulties facing the Bangladeshi forest people in a new context. Based primarily on journalistic work at the field level, he has explained how the aid financed development activities (reformation and commercial plantations) have further worsened the land problems of these people. In a similar sequence Roy (1998)⁹³ has made an effort to break the myths about land in the CHTs indicating the needs for serious attention of the government and international financial institutions for preserving last remaining forests and biological resources. In this book Farooque (1998)⁹⁴ has dealt with customary rights or perception of forest land and eventually criticized the so-called development projects responsible grabbing the local peoples' land. In another essay of the book Gomes (1998)⁹⁵ has discussed about the identity issue of the ethnic people. He has rightly mentioned that their interaction with environment and dominant culture is putting constant pressure on them to disintegrate and assimilate with the larger groups around them. His findings to some extent show the contemporary situation of ethnic peoples' identity crisis and challenge the process of interaction between the ethnic and other communities.

On the other hand Chakma and Hill (1998)⁹⁶ have addressed the importance of indigenous knowledge, innovations and practices for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. They have agreed for the promotion and wider application of indigenous knowledge to uphold the traditional cultural practices. Finally Rahman

⁹⁰ The word *adivasi* has several meaning to several peoples both inside and outside of the hilly as well as forest areas. In recent times this term has been challenged questioning what would be the trademarks of demanding a community as *adivasi*? Controversies are there, but for this study attempts have been made to find out the underlying factors of using or not using this term which has been discussed in the analysis on identity.

⁹¹ For more see Khaleque, K. 1998. Ethnic Communities of Bangladesh. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. Philip Gain, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁹² For more see Gain, Philip 1998. Forest and Forest People of Bangladesh. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. id, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁹³ For more see Roy, R. D. 1998. Land Rights, Land Use and Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. Philip Gain, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁹⁴ For more see Farooque, M. 1998. Traditional Land Rights: Conflict of Traditions. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. Philip Gain, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁹⁵ For more see Gomes, F. S. 1998. The Paharias in a Changing Society. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. Philip Gain, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁹⁶ For more see Chakma, K. and G. Hill 1998. Thwarting the Indigenous Custodians of Biodiversity. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. Philip Gain, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

(1998)⁹⁷ and D'Souza (1998)⁹⁸ have shown how the forest, cultural and political life of the ethnic people are closely interrelated and how they are victimized with the intrusion of non-forest people into their areas. Above all the experiences and ideas involved in this book have a greater view on the livelihood strategies of ethnic people where they have to interact with greater society. But it would not be always right to blame cultural interaction for their challenges, rather what the state and local communities are thinking and on what ground these people are interacting should be addressed. This book seems to be useful for this study to accumulate knowledge and information about the current scenario regarding the ethnic communities and their life-based issues.

In another edited work Philip Gain, ed. (2000)⁹⁹ has captured the thoughts of several scholars regarding life and nature of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Accordingly the authors of this book have started with 'the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) is a unique territory of Bangladesh with mountains and beautiful landscapes; the region is also home to 12 amazing indigenous communities of mongoloid races; however, both nature and life in the CHTs are threatened today'. The beginning of these sentences demonstrates a life with both natural and human beauties, but the authors are also anxious about contemporary situations in the CHTs. In the first section of the book to analyze the nature of risk of life and nature in the CHTs Gain has started with the geography, people and their diversity in the hills. The demographic changes i.e. the settlement of Bengalis has had impact on the culture and values of ethnic people and the settler Bengalis have pushed them out of their land. Thus the main focus of Gain has been on land, how the Bengalis have grabbed the land and the economy, and the nature of conflict created through land based issues. Through his discussion on forest resources, human security, environment, human rights, justice and violence in the hills it appears that the Bengalis, especially the Bengali settlers, are responsible for all the injustice. But this is not fully agreeable in this study. In the second section Raja Devasish Roy has briefly discussed about the administration in the CHTs stating that 'CHT is formally a part of a 'unitary', as opposed to a 'federal' state, having a unique legal and administrative system that has no parallel in other parts of Bangladesh'. Following both constitutional and legal status of CHT administrative system Roy has categorically discussed about contemporary administrative system as general (civil, criminal, revenue and all other matters vested to DC), police (law and order situations), land and revenue (land settlement grants, transfer of land titles, issuing licenses, and land revenue collection), justice (all legal and judicial matters similar to that of the plain district), and forests (both RFs¹⁰⁰ and USFs¹⁰¹ administered by the government in conjunction with the district councils, the chiefs and headman). Overall Roy has tried to identify the ongoing processes of administrative systems in the CHTs considering the interests of ethnic communities first in the fate of state policies. This may provide insider's view on administrative issues. In another section of the book Amena Mohsin has critically discussed about state hegemony with the assumption that modern state in South Asia is a hegemonic construct. She has

⁹⁷ For more see Rahman, M. 1998. The Cultural World of the Adivasis of Bangladesh. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. Philip Gain, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁹⁸ For more see D'Souza, B. J. 1998. Struggle of the Indigenous Peoples for Cultural and Political Rights. *In* Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People. Philip Gain, ed. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

⁹⁹ For more see Gain, Philip, ed. 2000. The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature at Risk. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

¹⁰⁰ RFs refer to Reserve Forests of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

¹⁰¹ USFs refer to Unclassed State Forests of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

highlighted the construction of the *Jumma* people in the CHTs as an identity construction along nationalist lines to beset with hegemonism and divisive. In support to this Mohsin has briefly discussed the political history to idealize the making of a hegemonic state and the construction of the *Jummas*. By analyzing the political, economic, security, Bengali settlement, and refugee issues she has again criticized the state policies where the interests of the ethnic communities have been ignored. This is crucial and has importance to this study but there is more to be understood. Meghna Guhathakurta has discussed about hill women's survival and resistance by stating that hill women are frank, humorous and visible in contrast to their Bengali counterparts. What can be seen from her study is that like the other areas of Bangladesh, women of the CHTs are also property and defenseless against human rights abuses including rape. With reference to the events took place in the past, as Guhathakurta has elaborated, it cannot be denied that in a militarized situation *Jumma* women constituted the most vulnerable section of the population. Throughout her writings Guhathakurta has tried to demonstrate that from sexual harassment to politicization of hill women, they relate these directly to the establishment of military rule. Women have developed their resistance power against these but those were not sufficient enough. Following these situations Prashanta Tripura, in the last section of the book, has focused on culture, identity and development of hill people by suggesting that development in the CHTs has always meant dislocation, disruption and destruction of life and nature and it is time for the development agents to understand the dynamics of culture and identity of the CHT people. Overall this book has given some historical facts in the CHTs and covers the dynamic issues related to ethnic and Bengali people. This book is helpful for this study through providing information on diversified aspects of the people of CHTs and to understand the actual scenario.

Mohammad Rafi and A. Mushtaque R. Chowdhury, eds. (2001)¹⁰² have discussed about development in Chittagong Hill Tracts with an introduction to the area, history of immigration and politico-development, education, economy, health, and environmental condition of CHTs. Briefly the authors have shown the status of basic needs of ethnic people with statistical information such as village and household status, enrollment and literacy status of the ethnic people, land acquisition, cultivation and marketing situation, food security, comprehensive health practices with health seeking behavior and health care facilities, and finally the status of animals and plants. This book is significant for present study in providing some statistical and historical information of Chakma, Tripura and Bangalee people touching their religion, language, culture and politics of these people. It has been designed by the editors to focus on statistical information on various issues of ethnic people. All the authors have been able to show the current status of ethnic people, but there are some qualitative information as well such as on the point of marketing it has been identified that a large number of Bangalee and Chakma people used to sell their commodities in the market, while this is little less for others like the Mru and Tripura. These types of information have been considered as secondary sources in writing the present thesis. However, despite all these issues some missing areas are the points of interaction where all the ethnic and Bangalee people come together for common sharing or for any other conflict of interests.

¹⁰² For more see Rafi, M., and A. Mushtaque R. Chowdhury, eds. 2001. *Counting the Hills: Assessing Development in Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.

In another work Amena Mohsin (2002)¹⁰³ has tried to examine the process of nationality construction within the hill people¹⁰⁴ of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. In understanding the economic, social, political and military marginalization of ethnic people the author has taken a historical perspective starting from British period to Pakistan and finally Bangladesh. Throughout the work Mohsin has searched for an answer to the question of ethnic identity i.e. the way the hill people claim themselves to be separate nation *Jumma*¹⁰⁵ within the state of Bangladesh. However, the author has concluded by saying that *Jumma* nationalism too is beset with hegemonism and as such cannot be an answer for the hill people. What seems clear from her work is the development of the idea of nation-state. At the beginning the author has given a brief description to the definition of the concept of nation, nationalism and nation-state followed by a description of the people of Chittagong Hill Tracts. From there she went on to find out the positioning of ethnic people in CHTs in terms of constitutional, economic, social, political as well as national identity. It has been identified that the element of hegemonism and exploitation are more acute and profound among the hill people. This has further addressed the politics of Bengali nationalism which has never focused on the acceptance of separate identity for the ethnic people. Similarly Mohsin has documented the politics of development in different phases of political regime including British, Pakistan and Bangladesh period. It appears quite right that so called development has really exploited as well as discriminated the ethnic people in the CHTs which further affected their security. In this regard Mohsin has mentioned about so many cases in the CHTs which illustrates that everything of ethnic people has come under risk such as land, nature, cultivation, life, economy and culture among others. The author has also mentioned about the activities of local political groups such as PCJSS who has demanded for separate territory, administration, land, politics, security and cultural rights among others. At the end of her writing she has urged for the need to separate the concept of nation from state where nation is a cultural category and state is a political one. However, this book has a close connection to the present study basically to have a glimpse into the historical background of the politics of nationalism for the ethnic people of CHTs and is a successful work in documenting the position of ethnic people in Bangladesh.

Fernand de Varennes (2002)¹⁰⁶ has started with an examination of the failure of peace accords globally. According to him very few agreements, ceasefires and declarations concluded between hostile parties since the Second World War have lead to durable settlements. At the same time he has mentioned that the number and intensity of conflicts have lessened dramatically for greater autonomy and power-sharing to minorities. For the last few decades most conflicts are no longer international and to Varennes conflicts among the majorities and the minorities do arise due to active discrimination by the government in the areas like employment, land use, property rights and language use. According to Varennes, very small minorities or recent immigrants

¹⁰³ For more see Mohsin, Amena 2002. The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.

¹⁰⁴ Here the term 'hill people' has been used as the author of the book has mentioned in her work.

¹⁰⁵ In many literatures and also among the people of CHTs the term *Jumma* has been commonly used to refer to their common identity. It has been identified that this identity is related to their supreme cultivation activities in the hills.

¹⁰⁶ For more see Varennes, Fernand de 2002. Lessons in Conflict Prevention: A Comparative Examination of the Content of Peace Accords (Research Note). The Global Review of Ethnopolitics 1(3):53-59.

almost never revert to violence in a conflict against the state and the majority in support of political demands; it is with large, historically established minorities with same territorial identification that one finds the setting under which have a potential for conflicts under certain conditions. The writer has evaluated hundreds of peace accords from all over the world and concluded that at least following demands will be included universally: independence/ autonomy/ power-sharing, human rights guarantees, and 'fair' distribution of resources/ employment among others.

From his writings it appears that the conflict of interests between the majorities and the minorities (in most of the cases small ethnic communities comparing to the majority one) throughout the world do persist because a state usually protect (reflect as well) the interests of the majority demonstrating definite cultural, linguistic or religious preferences. Thus persons belonging to minorities find themselves in a double dilemma: gap in interests and under-representations. Varennes has outlined some of the sources of ethnic tensions (most commonly seen globally) such as exclusion/ discrimination for employment opportunities, denial of traditional land ownership, economic development projects in the minority region to benefit the majority, expropriation of traditional lands without proper compensation, and refusal to use minority language publicly among others. From his analysis it appears that successful agreements (for peace accord) involving indigenous peoples provide greater legal recognition and enforcement of their traditional/ customary laws. However, Varennes has made an effort to comparatively discuss about the conditions of peace accords globally. This can be seen as an attempt to critically understand the nature of peace accord. For the present study it has helped to not only understand the nature but also develop insights for the operation and development of agreement for a peace accord. It has been realized from this work that the elements of a peace accord or an agreement to settle down disputes are based on (in most of the cases) the interests of the majorities of a state. This is also crucial for an understanding of peace accord (done in 1997, the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord) of Bangladesh.

Willem van Schendel (2002)¹⁰⁷ has explored the meaning of nudity¹⁰⁸ among the Mru ethnic community of Bangladesh by analyzing their photographs. This has been addressed by Schendel as a politics of nudity in the framing of a confrontation between local and external cultural styles. Schendel has identified that the politics of nudity in Chittagong Hill Tracts can be seen to have underpinned deeply intrusive policies of development, oppression, expulsion and war. By presenting the analysis of visual history of South Asia Schendel mentioned about Levine's (1989)¹⁰⁹ findings that a major challenge for visual historians is to contextualize visual evidence, to explain how various visual discourses emerged from specific political, economic and social relations and to show how these discourses contributed to maintaining or changing these relations. From this it appears that relationship is one of the major factors to realize the cultural practices among many ethnic communities. Schendel has emphasized photographic presentation of the CHTs to document visually the enormous social changes which followed

¹⁰⁷ For more see Schendel, Willem van 2002. A Politics of Nudity: Photographs of the 'Naked Mru' of Bangladesh. *Modern Asian Studies* 36(2):341-374. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰⁸ In the mid-nineteenth century, nakedness had been a symbol of wildness; a century later it had become a symbol of underdevelopment (van Schendel 2002:349).

¹⁰⁹ For more see Levine, Robert M. 1989. *Images of History: Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth-Century Latin America Photographs as Documents*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

decolonization in this region. It has been identified that changes in anthropological theory has made it possible to see the photographs of nudity of the ethnic people in a functionalist way: to make a cultural point, to show the authenticity and to demonstrate their ways of life. But in Bangladesh this term nakedness has been applied for the ethnic people to identify themselves as primitive, wild and underdeveloped. However, two types of perspectives can be documented responsible for these types of thinking: one if internal and the other is external. Actually maintaining dress on the body or not belongs to the cultural practices of a community and if nudity is seen from this point of view there is no problem about what people wear or what not. As Schendel mentioned, group relations are significant to express the real understanding among different communities. Schendel's findings have given some insightful thought for the present study particularly focusing the cultural practices of ethnic people in the CHTs. But nudity or nakedness is not the overall pattern of CHTs as there are various other peoples including the Bangalees who are said to maintaining a certain type of group relationship for a authentic living in the CHTs.

It would not be significant to discuss about CHT issues without referring to the Peace Accord of 1997 to ensure a lasting resolution to the conflict in the area. Amena Mohsin (2003)¹¹⁰, with reference to the 1997 Peace Accord, has made an inquiry into the processes and politics of conflict and peace building in the CHTs. Taking a historical look into the formation of different local political bodies (such as PCJSS) and their practices she has highlighted the past scenario of conflict situations in the CHTs and the attempts taken by the then Bangladesh government. In her words, "the CHT problem is a majority/ minority conflict revolving around the politics of nation and state building, wherein hegemony and centralization inherently alienate the minority problems...they themselves adopt the politics of identity formation as a strategy of counter hegemony". In addressing the politics of identity formation of ethnic communities Mohsin has pointed out the events took place after the liberation war of Bangladesh through highlighting the conversations between Mujib and Larma over the issue of autonomy for CHT, identity based on language, etc. The major questions raised by the people of CHTs focused on their cultural identities. Accordingly Mohsin has discussed about the economic development processes of CHT with a critical analysis of the establishment of Kaptai Dam which caused damages to the indigenous resources and people of CHT, displacement, loss of rights, criminalization and environmental degradation in the forest areas, right to land being endangered, etc.

The critical analysis of these issues has made the author to be able to identify the actual scenario of the CHTs. Mohsin has been able to show the demands of PCJSS (the demands were cultural, political, economic, security, refugees, etc.) and gaps between PCJSS demands and peace accord provisions. One of the most important aspects of her findings has been to criticize the shortcomings of peace accord where she has termed these as the problematic of peace accord. Discord within the accord over the issue of their customary land rights, governmentalization of CHT administration, hegemonic peace i.e. lacks the principles and vision necessary to create a non-hegemonic society, lack of justice, absence of constitutional safeguards, etc.- all these have been ideally criticized due to their inability to properly create a peaceful environment. Following these the author has evaluated the postaccord CHT where frustrations, resentment, anger,

¹¹⁰ For more see Mohsin, Amena 2003. *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

feelings of helplessness and entrapment have been identified by her as pervasive among the ethnic people.

Quite significantly several issues have been put forwarded by her which focus on age old agendas for the ethnic peoples such as lack of coordination in administration, lack of democratic practices and values but too much governmentalization, addressing peace accord by the HWF¹¹¹ and PGP¹¹² as a 'compromised accord', subject of inter-community violence, economic dependency and polarization, etc. All these have shown the unequal reactions of different ethnic communities towards peace accord. Taking all these into account Mohsin has made some policy recommendations which she has thought would work in search of peace and these are- democratization of constitution, political representation and decentralizing the government, sensitizing media and academic curriculum, transparency of military, democratization of political processes focusing land, development, Bengali settlers, local environment, empowerment of women, education and security, and international agencies' interventions. From these it can be said that she has discussed about three types of interventions- a) national interventions, b) local interventions, and c) regional and international interventions. However, this work is related to the objectives of the present study. Though the issues addressed center around peace accord, but these take into account the rights based issues appropriately. But it seems that the author has also tried to popularize peace accord from the point of view of the government and it is the ground where current study differs as it is not the objective of this study to popularize peace rather to identify the interrelations working among the Bangalee and ethnic communities in their everyday activities and interactions.

In his edited work Albert Mankin (2004)¹¹³ has explored the Bangladesh Government's perspectives on the rights of *adivasi* people on land and forest. Here Mankin has addressed the traditional forest dwellers of the Chittagong Hill Tracts as the *adivasi* of Bangladesh. But there are controversies over using the term '*adivasi*' and particularly in the present study the people of the CHTs, other than the Bangalees, have been identified with their own name (community identity). From the writings of Mankin it appears that everywhere in the CHTs and in other areas of Bangladesh these *adivasi* peoples have been always oppressed and mistreated. It is true that in many occasions they were ill justified, but now-a-days they have become aware of their rights and identity where the impact of globalization and communication have played vital roles in maintaining relationships. But when it comes to resources, i.e. land and forest, there is surely conflict of interests exist with a peaceful struggle for ensuring rights over forest lands which Mankin has observed at Modhupur, Tangail, Sylhet and the CHTs. Studying the cases of Garo, Koch, Khasi and the customary land rights in the CHTs he has explained that in this context the perspectives of Bangladesh government have threatened the customary rights over land and forest of *adivasi* peoples. The authors of this book have emphasized that the *adivasi* of Bangladesh are rightful owner of land and forest in CHTs, Modhurpu, Kulaura (Sylhet) and other forest areas since they have been custodians of these forest lands for centuries. The Bangladesh government has planned a goal for forestry sector development and the authors have emphasized that this will work better if the government enter into a meaningful discussion with the *adivasi* people. However, one of

¹¹¹ It refers to Hill Women's Federation.

¹¹² It refers to *Pahari Gono Parishad* (Hill People's Council).

¹¹³ For more see Mankin, Albert, ed. 2004. *The Rights of Adivasis on Land and Forests – Bangladesh Government's Perspectives*. Dhaka: CIPRAD (Centre for Indigenous Peoples Research and Development).

the major findings of his work has been to present documents (published in the daily newspapers of Bangladesh) on the land rights issues of *adivasi* people indicating how different government projects in the *adivasi* forest areas have destroyed their life and nature. This work has helped to see the irregularities in the forest areas, especially for the *adivasi* peoples' rights based issues. At the same time it is true that there remains gap of understanding in between the *adivasi* and the Bangladesh government over these issues. This, in other words, shows the nature of ethnic relations and identity crisis for the ethnic people in Bangladesh. Though there are several issues raised by the authors can be criticized, but it appears to be true that people with marginality in number have always suffered by the majority. It is in this context that a crucial understanding of the actual pattern of ethnicity demands more study.

Ali and Shafie (2005)¹¹⁴ have explored the processes of making social boundaries and human categorizations, enforcing separations implanted with a sense of hierarchy, based on a set of operations designed strategically to establish distinctions, differences and discrimination in the context of Bangladesh. In trying to make meaningful sense of social categorization they have provided empirically grounded analysis of relations between micro and macro-level processes. Here making of categorizations and principles of classifications have been identified as social and deeply woven into social fabric respectively. It has been rightly discovered by the authors that relations of competition, cooperation and symbiosis among social groups in Bangladesh can be viewed through contested categorizations such as *adibashi* (indigenous) vs. Bangalee. The main theme of their writing has been to show the dynamic aspects of discrimination operating within the social groups of Bangladesh through an understanding of deciphering of social categories, diversity in beliefs, cost of discrimination and gender and discrimination. Throughout the study patterns of social relation have been highlighted where the processes of discrimination are impairing the recognition, enjoyment and/ or exercise of human rights. According to Ali and Shafie these can be observed on an equal footing in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other fields of public life. In this regard stigma has been seen as a social process of identifying a person. Broadly speaking their work engaged three different aspects: constructions of a social category, interpreting meaningful sense of these and nature of communication among social categories¹¹⁵. Taking these issues into account the authors have worked among eight different communities of eight different areas of Bangladesh. Different markers have been used in this work to crystallize discrimination among these communities and also to develop a ground to show how various relations operate among them irrespective of competition and cooperation. This work has provided with some practical understanding of discrimination and exploitation which further illustrated the nature of social categorization and social relations for the present study.

Athena S. Leoussi and Steven Grosby (2007)¹¹⁶ have tried to incorporate ideas regarding history, culture and ethnicity in the formation of nations. This is an edited work where

¹¹⁴ For more see Ali, Ahsan and Hasan Shafie 2005. Entitlement and Deprivation: Selected Cases of Discrimination in Bangladesh. Dhaka: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

¹¹⁵ Discussing about social categories, it is important to focus on the social life. According to Barth (1987), social life is composed of actual events of interaction, of mingling, cooperation and strife between people.

¹¹⁶ For more see Leoussi, Athena S., and Steven Grosby, eds. 2007. Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

they also addressed this process as nationalism and ethnosymbolism. In this edited book the authors of different articles have discussed about nationalism and ethnosymbolism taking into consideration the history, culture and ethnicity to form nations. This book is organized into eight sections which include theorizing nationalism and ethnosymbolism, music, poetry and antiquity in ethnosymbolic approach, and ethnosymbolism in different parts of the world (Europe, Russia, Middle East, Far East, India, Africa and America). Few of the writings of this book have helped the present study. For example some theoretical understandings have been gained from the book for nationalism, racism, globalization, making of a language of Patriotism and the power of ethnic traditions in the modern world. This book has provided with significant critical evaluation of ethnicity, nation and nationalism paradoxes realizing the sense of ethnosymbolism. From a pure conceptual background the authors of the book like Conversi, Stone and Rizova, Hutchinson, Ferdinand and Smith have successfully interpreted ethnicity, ethnic groups and nationalism where common origin, culture, shared memories, territory and communal solidarity etc. have been evaluated to be used as factors for understanding the terms mentioned above. However, it becomes clear that ethnicity has a certain background and the importance of history and culture cannot be denied which is also a focus of present study.

Mesbah Kamal, Zahidul Islam, and Sugata Chakma, eds. (2007)¹¹⁷, in their edited work, have tried to make documentation of the indigenous or ethnic communities of Bangladesh. Actually this is a part of 'Cultural Survey of Bangladesh'¹¹⁸ as designed by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. It starts with an analysis of the term *adivasi* to define the ethnic communities. But it seems that the introductory analysis of *adivasi* has made it more critical. Though several points from ILO¹¹⁹ conventions have been addressed but a pure anthropological understanding is absent. The data collected for this volume has been part of a research conducted by Asiatic Society of Bangladesh trying to organize the ethnic communities of Bangladesh into three separate regions- Chittagong Hill Tracts, North Bengal and Mymensingh-Sylhet regions. Altogether 45 ethnic communities from these regions have been addressed starting from their historical background to politics, economy, society, religion and cultural practices. This can be seen as a large volume on the ethnic communities of Bangladesh and information on Chakma and Tripura has been helpful for the present study, especially for their historical background. But there are some shortcomings of this volume. One of the major problems is that most of the authors belong to their specific communities who do not have any anthropological training on writing of a culture. In many cases the writings of the communities appear to be simple description of their economy, society, culture, politics, etc. But works like this demand more in-depth understanding and analysis of different aspects of the ethnic communities. However, this work has been taken as a source of some information, but not as a whole.

¹¹⁷ For more see Kamal, M., Z. Islam, and S. Chakma, eds. 2007. Indigenous Communities, Cultural Survey of Bangladesh Series-5. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

¹¹⁸ 'Cultural Survey of Bangladesh' has been a project taken by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. One of the major goals of this project has been the documentation of all the ethnic communities of Bangladesh by engaging the ethnic peoples themselves to collect information from their own communities.

¹¹⁹ International Labor Organization.

Khairul Chowdhury (2008)¹²⁰ has examined the *Jumma* and indigenous identity formation, historical contingency and dynamics among the hill people of Chittagong Hill Tracts. In this context he has explained that groups' identities are products of agencies emerging from struggle between the groups and other political forces. He has also identified history, place and practices responsible for the formation of these identities. Accordingly Chowdhury has showed that claim over the resources is based on the indigenous identities of these people which will have to be understood in the context of specific historical background, group's relationships with the state and their ideological settings. Like the other writers Chowdhury has also started his discussion with the controversy over the issue of addressing these people as 'tribal' or 'indigenous'. But his main argument is based on relating identity formation of indigenous people (basically hill people) with the resources available in the hill areas. In this regard he has maintained that multiple representations of indigenous communities are more realistic since various actors and interests exist among the hill peoples. He has used the term ethnonationalism for the hill peoples to identify both political and ideological movements against nation-states. It appears from his analysis that he has tried to show the assertion of indigenous identity through these processes. Overall his focused area has been the community, indigenous identity and management of resources which he observed among the people of the CHTs. He has done this by discussing the geographical settings, administration and forest resources (including land system) of the CHTs. Quite rightly he has mentioned that in course of time the process of '*Jumma* Nationalism' has been identified as 'Chakma movement' as the major initiatives have been taken by the Chakmas. Chowdhury's final line has been that groups' identity formation and resource claims emerge under certain conditions and conjunctures. However, his work highly interprets the debates and analyses of how the issue of identity has been dealt with based on certain nationalism perspectives. This certainly gives some ideas for a crucial understanding of identity issue, but the cases of interrelations existing among different peoples (including the Bangalees) has not been addressed properly. It is not always true that only the antagonistic and hostile relationships as well as domination by the majority (particularly the Bangalees) create the tension in the hill areas. Several underlying issues are also crucial to have the actual scenario. It is only the Bangalee and other ethnic communities who are responsible to maintain a dynamic relation among them focusing land, forest, resources and nature.

In the edited work of Philip Gain, ed. (2008)¹²¹ various scholars have discussed about the cultures of ethnic people (here termed as '*adivasi*') of Bangladesh. Overall this book addresses the cultural patterns of different ethnic groups such as Chakma, Tripura, Santal, Oraon, Marma, Monipuri and Rakhains among others. Several other issues have been addressed in this book which includes cultural rights, ethnic language, political and cultural struggle and promoting *adivasi* culture through festivals. This book can be seen as a window, as coined by Gain, to the culture of *adivasis* in Bangladesh through which it can be said that the cultural diversity is our pride. This book is an excellent outcome of the works of all the authors where the ongoing problems and constraints of ethnic people in Bangladesh have been well identified. For example, it has been clearly understood that there is a need for the development of the speeches of smaller ethnic groups. Similarly authors of this book have shown the importance of cultural and

¹²⁰ For more see Chowdhury, Khairul 2008. Politics of Identities and Resources in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: Ethnonationalism and/ or Indigenous Identity. Asian Journal of Social Science 36.

¹²¹ For more see Gain, Philip, ed. 2008. Culture of Adivasis in Bangladesh. Dhaka: Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

political rights of ethnic people in Bangladesh. It has also been explained that irrespective of age, sex and identity all the people of Bangladesh need to show respect to each other's culture and language identity. To make it understandable for realizing the cultural diversity as well as unity in diversity the book ends with a discussion on promoting *adivasi* culture through analyzing the cultural festivals that took place from 2005 to 2008. The book appears well organized but two things can be mentioned. First, the authors have tried to develop a view on realizing that Bangladesh is a country of so many cultures of different ethnic people and this diversity of culture should be respected and given priority by Bengali people as we to support the cultural rights of the ethnic people. And secondly, it seems confusing about the use of the term *adivasi*, tribe or ethnic people in the book. Different authors have used different terms and there is the need for developing a common platform in addressing the ethnic groups. However, there are so many issues addressed in the book which needs acceptance from different bodies of the state to develop a common understanding about our cultural diversity, and appears helpful for the present study to develop ideas from diversified situations of ethnic groups in Bangladesh.

Eva Gerharz (2009)¹²² has started her discussion with an explanation of the use of the term 'tribal', 'indigenous', and/ or '*adivasi*' among others to refer to the identity of ethnic minority people of Bangladesh. Analyzing the concept indigenoussness, she has focused on the Bangladesh's indigenous¹²³ peoples' activism from a global to local continuum. Showing the interrelations among different ethnic groups Gerharz has indicated the changes occurred for the ethnic people in Bangladesh in the areas like leadership, organization, coalition-formation, new disparities, cleavages and disputes. This work has been done from the perspective of transnational activism with an assumption that a translocalization of Bangladeshi indigenous activism has taken place which implies a number of changes representation and strategic action, interaction, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. It has been identified that Gerharz has been able to figure out the contexts of indigenous activism (taking Bangalee activists' perspectives as well) in Bangladesh with a critical understanding of peace accord of 1997. Thus it reflects the activists' point of view more importantly and to some extent missing the other aspects of internal dynamic relationships working among different ethnic communities. However, in analyzing the indigenous strategy of self-representation she has quoted Muehlebach's (2001)¹²⁴ findings that two elements make u this self-representation: politics of place and political aim of self-determination. From Gerharz's global and local perspectives on these issues of ethnic people in Bangladesh it seems that activism is the only solution to preserve their rights and status, but there are so many points of interaction both within and among different ethnic communities which may play vital role for a real peace-building and a common understanding of respect to each other. It is in this context this work lack some purely in-depth evaluation of the existing scenario, but at the same time bears the ideas on how activism operates both globally and locally.

¹²² For more see Gerharz, Eva 2009. Beyond and Beneath the Nation-State: Bangladeshi Indigenous People's Activism between Marginalization and Self-Assertion. Paper presented at the Critical Studies Conference "Empires, States, and Migration" organized by the Calcutta Migration Research Group (MRG). 11-12 September 2009. Kolkata.

¹²³ Gerharz (2009) has used the term 'indigenous' to address the identity of ethnic people, usually those who are smaller in number. It appears that she has tried to find a solution to the problem of addressing these people, which has been a major problem in Bangladesh for years.

¹²⁴ For more see Muehlebach, Andrea 2001. 'Making Place' at the United Nations: Indigenous Cultural Politics at the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations. *Cultural Anthropology* 16(3):415-448.

Muhammad Ala Uddin (2009)¹²⁵ has examined the cultural assimilation and survival strategy of the ethnic people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh on the basis of the impact of Bengali dress on ethnic physique. In this process he has analyzed how the cultural practice of the majority put pressure on the people of minority ethnic community. He has administered 'dress' as one of the most important factors for adapting to the mainstream cultural practices of Bangladesh. In other words he has compared this changing pattern to their survival strategy. For a general understanding Uddin has discussed about the historical background of CHTs and held the Bengali people responsible for these types of changes, but this is not always true. Cultural assimilation is not single handedly responsible factor for this and it can be estimated that because of globalization all the people have come into contact with various modern aspects of life. Again it is not any natural process where people have been bound to change their dress pattern, rather (according to Uddin) Bengali intrusion in the area might have affected people for such a change. However, it can be considered as a single element of forcing the ethnic people to change their physical stature, but this does not indicate an overall change of their identity. Uddin's findings have given some common view of the nature of how changes occur, but do not idealize the nature of inter-ethnic relationships operating among different ethnic communities in the CHTs. In this regard present study tries to identify different factors operating to maintain interrelations irrespective of conflict of interests.

T. H. Lewin (2011 [1869])¹²⁶ had written on the geography and history of the hill area and its people of Chittagong Hill Tracts. In fact this work can be considered as a documentary history of the people of the hills dating back to 1869. Analytically Lewin has discussed about the flora-fauna as well as the rise and progress of British power in the hill tracts. He has addressed the hill people, except the Bangalees, as the tribal people and went on to discuss about almost every aspects of their lives. Addressing the hill tribes as sons of the river Lewin has elaborately discussed about the customs, traditions, religion and classification of the tribes. In doing so he has documented the history of several tribal peoples which include the Khyongtha, Chakma, Tipperah, Murng, Kumi, Mru, Khyeng, Bungjogee, Pankho, Kookies or Lhoosai and Shendoos. Like many other ethnographic works this study can be considered as detailed description of various ethnic communities (whom Lewin addressed as tribes). But it lacks to show the pattern of interrelations among different ethnic communities in the hill tracts including the Bangalees. Use of the term 'tribe' can be challenged on several grounds, but the effort taken by him is also appreciable as to provide with background information on different aspects of the hill peoples.

Jafar Ahmed Hanafi (2011)¹²⁷ has made a discussion on Chakma culture and literature from his long experience of living with/ among the ethnic communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts. He has critically analyzed the problems persist in understanding the Chakma culture. From this he went on to discuss about both ethnic and mainstream population of Bangladesh. Hanafi has been able to show the relationship between the cultures of

¹²⁵ For more see Uddin, Muhammad Ala 2009. Cultural Assimilation and Survival Strategy of Ethnic People in Bangladesh: Bengali Dress on Ethnic Physique in Chittagong Hill Tracts. *Canadian Social Science* 5(1).

¹²⁶ For more see Lewin, T. H. 2011 [1869]. *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers therein with Comparative Vocabularies of the Hill Dialects*. Khagrachari: Khudra Nrigoshthir Cultural Institute (Originally published by Bengal Printing Company Limited. Calcutta. 1869).

¹²⁷ For more see Hanafi, J. A. 2011. *Chakma Shahittyo: Samaj O Sanskriti [Chakma Literature: Society and Culture]*. Khagrachari: Khudra Nrigoshthir Cultural Institute.

ethnic and Bengali people, but in most cases his analyses are based on secondary sources. Despite few limitations he has been able to search for the history and identity of Chakma people in Bangladesh. In doing so he has mentioned about the naming of Chakma by quoting T. H. Lewin (2011 [1869]) that the word 'Chakma' is also sometime spelt 'Tsakma' or 'Tsak' or it is called in Burmese 'Thek'. To some extent the attempt of the author to trace the origin and history of Chakma people has been successful and at the same time taken as a valuable reference for the historical background of the Chakma people of present study.

Anthropological approaches to the study of media interacting with contexts of ethnic and religious diversity has been studied by Patrick Eisenlohr (2011)¹²⁸ and his idea is based on the perspective of media anthropology¹²⁹. His main argument is that not only issues of access to and exclusion from public¹³⁰ spheres are relevant for an understanding of media and pluralism. It has been identified that anthropologists have asked how media influence ethnic and religious belonging, the formation of ethnic and religious networks and communities, and how, more generally, uses of media technology shape the relationship between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. But from the early 1950s the study conducted by Karl Deutsch (1953)¹³¹ has made important contribution to an understanding of how the changes in technology, economy, transport and communication have affected the national identities in Europe. Thus the central concept, as mentioned by Eisenlohr, to the debate about the relationship between uses of media and the shaping of ethnic and national forms of identification is certainly the public sphere. Taking these concepts into account Eisenlohr has identified relationships between media technologies and the politics of pluralism that helped producing new socio-cultural developments in different societies and cultures. He has further mentioned that in terms of public sphere, ethnic and religious diversity, the issue of media and media technologies appears as one of access and representation.

By discussing about the uses of media technologies for Islam and Hindu religions, Eisenlohr has showed that there can be a media-driven politics of immediacy in struggles over transnational and diasporic authority. On this point Eisenlohr has mentioned Appadurai where Appadurai (2006)¹³² discussed that wishes for purity and more favorable self-representation on a global scale often turn into rage and hatred against ethnic and religious minorities. Thus Eisenlohr has emancipated that media-driven politics of immediacy in situations of crisis, at times, may also be the 'weapon of the

¹²⁸ For more see Eisenlohr, Patrick 2011. The anthropology of media and the question of ethnic and religious pluralism. *Social Anthropology* 19(1):40-55. European Association of Social Anthropologists.

¹²⁹ Beginning with the research of Terry Turner, Faye Ginsburg and others, anthropologists have analyzed uses of new media technologies as profoundly interconnected with diverse cultural frames of reference (Eisenlohr 2011:42-43). The anthropology of media as an identifiable field of study only dates back to the late 1980s. However, there were some anthropological engagements with media practices before perhaps the earliest and most notable being Hortense Powdermaker's study of the Hollywood film industry (Powdermaker 1950).

¹³⁰ Publics can be understood as modern self-organizing formations that vastly transcend face-to-face interactions. They, therefore, necessitate uses of various media technologies as a condition of possibility for publics as self-constituting forms of address (Eisenlohr 2011:41).

¹³¹ Deutsch, K. W. 1953. *Nationalism and social communication: an inquiry into the foundations of nationality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/ New York: Wiley.

¹³² For more see Appadurai, A. 2006. *Fear of small numbers: an essay on the geography of anger*. Durham: Duke University Press.

weak and marginalized'. However, Eisenlohr's ideas of media technologies and their effect on the ethnic/ religious diversity appears significant to the present study to put light on the variations of self-representation, identity formation, and maintaining relationships in public spheres. Because there are different dimensions of factors operating to shape the pattern of relationships among different ethnic communities where media and communication technologies, at these days, are believed to be playing crucial roles.

Mainly written in Bengali language by one of the ethnic peoples, Sugata Chakma (2011)¹³³, this work provides information on three different ethnic communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts- Chakma, Marma and Tripura. The author has briefly discussed about almost every aspects of these communities which include historical background, culture, society, religious rituals and festivals and different types of marriage relations among others. Before discussing these aspects of ethnic communities Sugata Chakma has mentioned about the historical context of CHTs, the practice of traditional headmanship, CHT peace accord, CHT regulation of 1900 and the language, religion, *jhum* cultivation, pattern of inheritance and the cultural festivals organized for new year celebration. It appears to be a flat description with an advantage that the author is a member of Chakma ethnic community. On the other hand the descriptions are drawn from first hand information though the limitation belongs to the author for not having been able to develop a findings focusing on the interethnic relations and patterns of communication with each other. Apart from these the work of Sugata Chakma has assisted the present study by providing information on CHT and the two ethnic communities of the CHTs- Chakma and Tripura.

Kerryn Husk and Malcolm Williams (2012)¹³⁴ have examined the complex processes involved in small-scale ethnicity emergence and legitimation. In doing so they have highlighted the multi-dimensional elements present in moving from a strong regional identity to an externally legitimate ethnic group. They have given example of the 'Cornish' who are the inhabitants of Cornwall in the far South West peninsula of Great Britain. In their opinion 'push' and 'pull' mechanisms are responsible for creating the Cornish as a distinct ethnic group with strong symbolic as well as regional identity. Accordingly they have quoted from Wimmer (2008)¹³⁵ that important in the legitimation of groups are the typologies of formation of ethnic boundaries, specifically the subjugation or assimilation processes into nation-states. Husk and Williams have mentioned about two categories of typology of boundary formation: expansion¹³⁶ and ethnogenesis or contraction¹³⁷. From these findings it appears that maintaining relationships and/ or distances are crucial to the formation of ethnic groups where it can

¹³³ For more see Chakma, S. 2011. Khudro Nri-gosthir Samajik Protha O Ritinity: Chakma, Marma O Tripura [Social Customs and Traditions of Minority Ethnic Communities: Chakma, Marma and Tripura]. Khagrachari: Khudra Nrigosthir Cultural Institute.

¹³⁴ For more see Husk, Kerryn and Malcolm Williams 2012. The Legitimation of Ethnicity: The Case of the Cornish. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12(2). Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN).

¹³⁵ For more see Wimmer, Andreas 2008. Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(6):1025-55.

¹³⁶ It indicates that during the creation of clearly defined national majority groups, at many stages throughout nation-building, cultural elites shift ethnic boundaries to form highly delineated ethnic minorities (Wimmer 2008).

¹³⁷ Processes of ethnogenesis or contraction indicate groups defining themselves against the majority population in increasingly small populations (Husk and Williams 2012).

be seen that individuals within groups forge new ethnic relationships. Initially, as developed by the authors, a natural expansion of the group follows. Following this an integration process has been idealized in favor of creating organized social behavior. With this a more populist ethnic discourse has been emphasized which the authors believed to match the characteristics of Smith's 'ethnie'¹³⁸. It appears from their work on a specific community that the identity of a group as a separate entity demands not only their own cultural identity and integration process, but also a recognition from the state authority to be legitimized. Everywhere in the world this process has been observed and this gives a feeling that conflict of interest among different groups eventually develops. Accordingly the tension and/ or integration process operate to create / maintain ethnicity among different groups as well as to create imposed categorization¹³⁹ to some extent. These ideas developed by Husk and Williams have some crucial points to enrich the aspects of present study.

From the literatures reviewed it is evident that the *Pabari* (as depicted by the outsiders) and Bangalee issue of the CHT is not new today. Many discussions and dialogues have been made in different platforms. Activists are trying to bring out measures to resolve the problems. But as the literatures suggest it is significant that a complete study on this issue will address all the aspects of their life such as economic, social, political, religious, and cultural and rights based issues to understand the extent of interrelations between these people.

¹³⁸ For more see Anthony D. Smith (1986, 1991 & 1999).

¹³⁹ The experience of categorization may strengthen existing group identity through a process of resistance and reaction. Thus, the experience of being categorized may contribute to the formation of group identity (Jenkins 1994).

Today, culture is used to explain why minorities and marginalized groups do not easily assimilate or merge into the mainstream of society. A criticism of such uses is valuable in making us aware of the role of academic discourse in the production and legitimization of marginalization; a role that academic personnel engage in often without an awareness of it (e.g. Bhabha 1994; Fox 1991; Said 1978).

CHAPTER-3: PLACE AND PEOPLE: HISTORY, ORIGIN AND IDENTITY

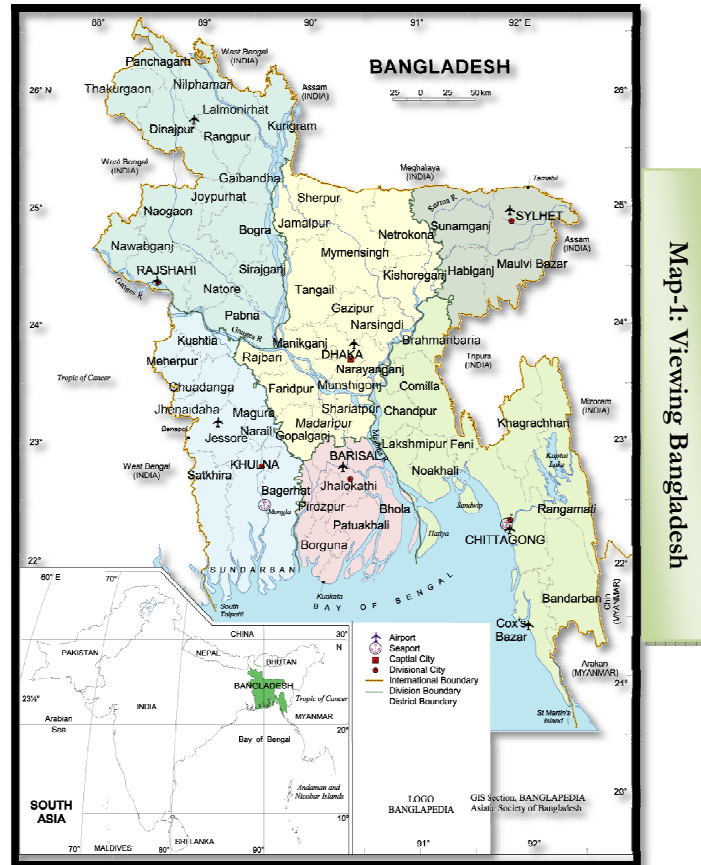
3.1 Profiling the Study Area

3.2 Study People (Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura): Tracing their History, Origin and Identity

3.1 Profiling the Study Area

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs)

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) in southeastern Bangladesh (see Map-1 viewing Bangladesh), bordering India and Myanmar, covers an area of 13,190 square kilometers that constitutes about 10 per cent of the total land area of Bangladesh. The area is divided into three districts - Rangamati¹⁴⁰, Khagrachari¹⁴¹ and Bandarban¹⁴² - for administrative purposes. The region consists of several valleys running in a northwest to southeasterly direction, with ridges rising to 3000 feet. More than 90 per cent of the area is covered by hills with only 129,000 hectares of cropped land. About 87 per cent of the land is covered with forest totaling 11,475 square kilometers mostly owned by the government (Dasgupta and Ahmed 1998). This upland forested area is in sharp contrast to the landscape of other parts of Bangladesh, which are flat and subject to regular monsoon flooding.



The District of Chittagong Hill Tracts spreads itself from the borders of Burma (present Myanmar) and the far off Lushai Hills (Mizo Hills) to the boundaries of the Tripura state in India and those of Chittagong district. It is situated between 21°25' and 23°45' north latitude and between

¹⁴⁰ Rangamati District (Chittagong division), with an area of 6116.13 sq km, is bounded by the Tripura State of India on the north, Bandarban district on the south, Mizoram State of India and Chin State of Myanmar on the east, Khagrachari and Chittagong districts on the west (Islam, ed. 2006).

¹⁴¹ Khagrachari District (Chittagong division), with an area of 2699.55 square kilometer, is bounded by the Indian State of Tripura on the north, Rangamati and Chittagong districts on the south, Rangamati district on the east, and Chittagong district and the Indian State of Tripura on the west. The hills of this region are composed of folded sedimentary rocks which include the hill ranges Alu Tila, Bhanga Mura, Matai Pukhiri, and Matai Lakho (Islam, ed. 2006).

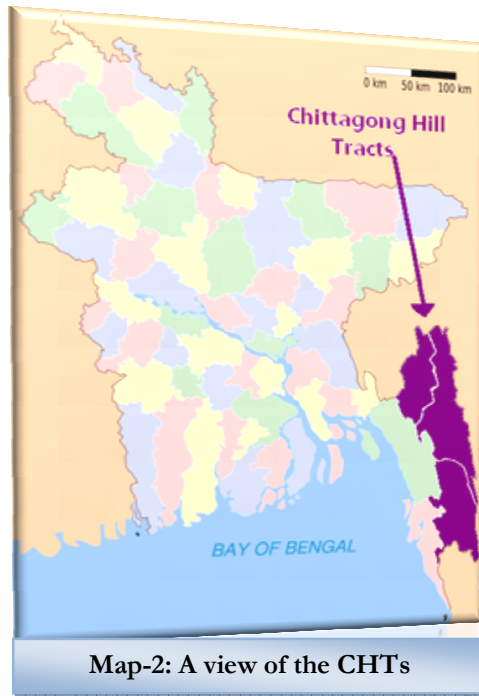
¹⁴² Bandarban District (Chittagong division), with an area of 4479 square kilometers, is bounded by Rangamati district on the north, Arakan (Myanmar) and the river Naf on the south, Arakan and Rangamati district on the east and Chittagong and Cox'sbazar district on the west. Bandarban mostly consists of forests and hills and its main rivers are Shankha (Sangu), Matamuhuri and Bakkhali. The four major mountain ranges of the district are the Meranja, Wailatong, Tambang and Politai (Islam, ed. 2006).

91°45' and 92°50' east longitude. The district is divided into four valleys formed by the Feni, Karnafuli, Sangu and Matamuhuri rivers and their tributaries and is marked by the chains of hills running from the south in a north-westerly direction (Ishaq, ed. 1971). All the hill ranges of the Hill Tracts are almost hogback ridges; they rise steeply, thus looking far more impressive than their height would imply, and extended in a long narrow ridges, whose tops are barely 100 feet wide; most of the hills have scraps in the west with cliffs and waterfalls; they form sharp water partings and have a trellis drainage system; four ranges with an elevation of over a thousand feet strike in a north-south direction in the northern part of the Hill Tracts District; sedimentary rocks consisting of sandstone, shale, siltstone and clay-stone and ranging in age from early to late Miocene epoch are present in the CHTs; they are overlain by alluvium of recent age in the valleys; and rock out crops are mainly seen in the river channel cuttings and in the cliffs¹⁴³. I have briefly outlined the pattern of soil of the hills to give a picture of about the types of soil with which the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura people are associated in the hills for their livelihood. However, the chart-1 below gives a comprehensive and generalized sequence of rock types in the CHTs.

Chart-1: Comprehensive and generalized sequence of rock types in the CHTs

Age	Formation	Lithology
Recent	Alluvium	Stream-channel and flood plain deposits of unconsolidated clay, silt and sand.
Upper Miocene	Dupi Tila	Coarse ferruginous sands, mottled sands, and clays, fossil wood.
Middle to Late Miocene	Tipam Sandstone	Yellowish-brown, medium to coarse grained ferruginous sandstone
Middle Miocene	Surma Group	Grey, grayish brown, sandstone, siltstone, shale and claystone.

Source: Ishaq, Muhammad, ed. 1971. Bangladesh District Gazetteers, Chittagong Hill Tracts. Dacca: Bangladesh Government Press. Pp. 4-5.



Map-2: A view of the CHTs

The average population density of CHTs (see Map-2 showing Chittagong Hill Tracts) is 103 persons per square kilometers as against the national average of 1040 persons per square kilometers. On the other hand, cropland per capita in CHTs is 0.23 acres (0.09 hectare), while the national average is 0.13 acres (0.05 hectare) (World Bank 2004; Adnan 2004; Rahman 2001). Although compared to the national average the CHTs seem to be under populated, the difference in per capita cropped land is comparatively low. Most of the valleys of the CHTs are covered with thick virgin forests interspersed by small waterways and swamps of all sizes and descriptions. The main features of the vegetation are semi-

¹⁴³ For more see Ishaq, ed. 1971:3-5.

evergreen (deciduous) or tropical evergreen, dominated by tall trees.

The hill tracts are rich in commercial natural resources, especially different types of forest and mineral resources such as timber, bamboo, fruits, medicinal plants and gas. In addition to these resources, a huge stock of fish also exists in the lakes and rivers of the CHTs. Thus the general aspect of the topography of the district is a mass of hills, rivers and cliffs covered with dense forests and creeper jungles along with semi-evergreen to tropical evergreen vegetation; despite human habitation, expansion of agriculture and industrialization the mammalian feature of the CHTs is rich including different species like birds, various reptiles and amphibians, animals, and fishes¹⁴⁴.

Before the 1950s the CHT region was inhabited mostly by the tribal¹⁴⁵ people (Dasgupta and Ahmed, 1998) who differ significantly from the mainstream population¹⁴⁶ of Bangladesh. They are of Sino-Tibetan descent, have a distinctive appearance with Mongolian features, and are predominantly Buddhists with small numbers of Hindus. Currently a total of at least 12 ethnic groups, also the Bangalees, live in the CHTs which includes are Chakma, Marma, Pankho, Khumi, Lusai, Murang (Mru), Bonojogi, Tanchanga, Bom, Kheang, Chak and Tripura. The CHTs is a great area of showing the colorful inhabitants in Bangladesh where all these communities differ in terms of language, social organization, culture, religious rites, and food and agricultural techniques among others. According to the Chakma headman of *Paltanjay Para* (I have translated and presented his full statement here),

“...we are the indigenous people of this area in the Chittagong Hill Tracts by displaying our own culture patterns and processes through our beliefs, rituals, traditional values and norms among others; we believe that these practices help to unify our each and every community in the hills and we consider ourselves as the children of the hills and rivers; therefore, we have a long history associated with the history of the hills and hill districts”.

Taking the headman’s perspective into account, I have gone through the historical records to the establishment of the CHTs and found it significant as well as relevant to discuss about some of its historical facts here. The hill and forest areas of the old Chittagong district were separated from the Chittagong district in the years 1860 and the newly created district was named ‘the Chittagong Hill tracts’¹⁴⁷. But there is more to know about the development of the CHTs from the Bangladesh District Gazetteers of Chittagong Hill Tracts (Ishaq, ed. 1971:25-26) in the following discussions. Geographically CHTs belong to the hilly region that breaches from the Himalayan ranges to the South through Assam and Hill Tripura to Arakan and Burma. Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong formed a bone of connection between the rules of Hill Tripura and Arakan and it frequently changed hands. According to one account, Bira Raja was the founder of Hill Tripura Raj Dynasty in 590 A.D. Zuja Rupa (Bira Raja) defeated the king of Hill Chittagong and made Rangamati his capital. In 953 A.D. Tsula Tsandra (951-957), a king of Arakan, occupied the present districts of the CHTs, and again in 1240

¹⁴⁴ For more see Ishaq, ed. 1971:10-16.

¹⁴⁵ The term ‘tribal’ has been used as the authors mentioned.

¹⁴⁶ This means to indicate the greater Bangalee population, but I think it is debatable to idealize the ethnic communities on this parameter. This is may be so as historically these people are distinct and different from the Bengalees of Bangladesh in respect of race, language, culture, and religion.

¹⁴⁷ For more see Ishaq, ed. 1971:1.

A.D. the king of Tripura occupied this region. Later Sultan Fakhrudin Mubarak Shah (1338-49) conquered Chittagong (possibly including parts of Hill Tracts). The Chakma king Mwun Tsni, driven out from upper Burma in 1418, took shelter in Alikadam of Bandarban under the Muslim officer. He settled the Chakmas at Ruma and Teknaf. In 1406 Shua Mangji usurped the Throne of Arakan and forced the Arakanese King Meng Soamwan to seek refuge in the Court of Sultan Jalaludin Muhammad Shah (1418-31) of Gaur. In 1430 a military officer under Sultan Jalaluddin, Wali Khan, rebelled against Gaur and the Sultan Jalaluddin sent an army which killed Wali Khan, invaded Arakan, and helped the restoration of Mugh King Meng Soamwan to Arakanese Throne. Later a successor of Meng Soamwan, Mengkhari *alias* Ali Khan (1434-39), tried to reoccupy the territories lost to Muslims¹⁴⁸. The Hyas Shahi Sultan, Rukunuddin Barbak Shah (1459-74), re-established his authority towards the end of his rule. During the reign of Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519) the King of Arakan recovered this territory for a short time. According to *Rajmala*, the Arakanese King took advantage of Hussain's pre-occupation with Tripura King. In 1517 a Portuguese emissary, Joao de Silveiro, landed at Chittagong and found the port in possession of 'the King of Bangla'. It has been identified that Jaychandra (1482-1531), a Buddhist Mugh Chief at Chakrasala, exercised authority over the territory between the rivers *Karnaphuli* and *Sangu* as a tributary to the Sultan of Bengal.

In the Bangladesh District Gazetteers of Chittagong Hill Tracts Ishaq, ed. (1971:26) further mentioned that according to *Rajmala*, Dhanya Manikya re-established the authority of the Tripura Dynasty in the Chittagong region and also invaded Arakan by 1515 A.D. Arakanese Mugh King Minyaza re-conquered some territories in 1518. In the same year Chakma Chief Chanui made submission to the Arakanese Mugh King, the Arakanese King bestowed the title of Kuphru to the Chakma King, and married the daughter of the Chakma Chief in 1520. Deb Manikya of Tripura wrested some territory from Arakanese hands temporarily in 1522, but Minbin *alias* Zabauk Shah (1531-53) of Arakan re-occupied the territory in 1531. The port of Chittagong had become the rendezvous of the Portuguese (colony) during the time of Sher Shah's war for the time being, but later the port was re-occupied by Sher Shah's authority. The Tripura Kings had played a prominent part in the history of Bengal in the sixteenth century and Bijaya Manikya (1540-71), as mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, recovered Chittagong region from the Muslims. The Arakanese Kings seem to have recaptured the district in 1575 A.D. by taking advantages of internal troubles and political complications following Akbar's nominal conquest of Bengal, and during 1571-1593 the Arakanese King Meng Phalaung brought the whole Chittagong region under his sway¹⁴⁹.

Later the Portuguese sea-rovers¹⁵⁰ caused several problems with the King of Arakan by making close alliances with the local people of Chittagong known as Mughs¹⁵¹. The District of CHTs remained in Arakanese possession till 1666 A.D. The Mughal Governor of Bengal Shaista Khan conquered the district in 1666, changed the name Chatgaon to Islamabad, and the region remained undisturbed in Mughal possession until 1760 A.D. when it was ceded to the East India Company. During the first few years after the cession of Chittagong to East India Company attention has been given to the

¹⁴⁸ For more see Ishaq, ed. 1971:25.

¹⁴⁹ Also occupied a large portion of Noakhali and Tripura. For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:26-27.

¹⁵⁰ Commonly known as Feringi pirates. For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:26-27.

¹⁵¹ Historically it is well known that these people were cruel and adventurous, and harsh and brutal in mentality. For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:26-27.

administration to form the region as Regulation District. The head mans of hill tribes were allowed to retain their authority and also easing the tax and revenue collection by the Government. In 1829 the Commissioner Mr. Halhad stated that the hill tribes were not the British subjects, but merely tributaries, and recognized no rights of the British to interfere with their internal arrangements¹⁵². However, from a letter written by the Company's Chief of Chittagong to Warren Hastings (Governor General) in April 1777 it has been identified that the Kukis created troubles to the hill areas. From another letter written by the Raja of Arakan to the Chief of Chittagong on June 1787 it has been learnt that some tribes absconded from Arakan (took asylum in Chittagong Hills) were exercising depredation on the people of both the countries.

Accordingly in 1859 the Commissioner of Regulation District recommended for the removal of the Hill Tracts the Regulation District by appointing a Superintendent and this recommendation was adopted by the Act XXII in 1860. Henceforth the area has been known as the Hill Tracts of Chittagong, and in 1867 the designation of Superintendent changed to Deputy Commissioner with full control of all matter (including revenue and justice)¹⁵³. The headquarters of the district was first established at Chandraghona until 1868 and in November of the same year the headquarters were transferred to Rangamati with Captain T. H. Lewin as the Deputy Commissioner¹⁵⁴.

With these historical facts I have tried to go further and understand the nature of the establishment of a livable Hill Tracts region. Accordingly I have come to learn from Ishaq, ed. (1971:30-32, 256) that during the British regime "Kuki" raids were recorded in 1859, 1866, 1869, 1888 and 1892. In 1860 the independent tribes, known by the generic name of Kukies, committed some murderous outrages on British subjects in the adjacent district of Tipperah. With this incidence, in January 1861, a military force was assembled at Barkal to punish the offenders. Accordingly in the years of 1862, 1863 and 1864 several similar incidences took place including attack on Bangalee wood-cutters. These events continued until 1875 where various other tribal raids took place in the Hill Tracts and during those years the final military expedition launched in 1898. After the annexation of the Lushai Hills by the British in 1891 the District of CHTs lost much of its importance gaining the status of a sub-division and in 1900 it was again formed into a District by Regulation-I while dividing it into three circles (and also in Mouzas): Chakma, Mong and Bomong¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵² It has been identified that the then Government also did not interfere directly with the internal economy of the Hill Tracts. For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:28-29.

¹⁵³ For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:29.

¹⁵⁴ During June 30, 1867 the Provincial Government issued following rules (summarized) for Hill Tracts: i) to allow no middlemen between the representatives of the Government and the people; ii) to attain simplification of procedure and freedom; iii) to administer justice in the simplest and expeditious manner possible; iv) to observe and respect the local customs and prejudices of the people with as little interference as possible between the Executive Officers and the Chiefs and their tribes; and v) the Provincial Government vested the Deputy Commissioner with full powers of a magistrate (Ishaq, ed. 1971:255). I have summarized the rules here to have a picture of the then rules and regulations concerning Hill Tracts and the inhabitants therein.

¹⁵⁵ The Chakma Circle occupied the center and north of the district, the Mong Circle in the North-West, and the Bomong Circle in the South; all the Chiefs had respective functions along with their subordinates such as headman, village officials, and others selected from each clan of the Circles and had the power to impose fine, enforce restriction, and imprisonment (Ishaq, ed. 1971:252-255).

Corresponding to these circles were three subdivisions: Rangamati, Bandarban and Ramgarh. It has been identified that later the rules in the CHTs Manual made under Regulation-I of 1900 were intended to protect the rights and interests of the tribal hill men, their customs and practices, their local or racial peculiarities and prejudices¹⁵⁶. Since 1920 alienation or sub-letting of land to outsiders was strictly forbidden, but some of the rules were amended in 1930 and the most important of these was that no permission need from the Deputy Commissioner to enter the non-regulated district. This has enabled people of other districts to carry on trade in the Hill Tracts and their number started to increase with the fast development of the district. It appeared to me that by nature the situations during British invasion have been an executive one. It has been realized (in consultation with the local people as well) that through the above mentioned processes the CHTs started to develop as a separate living areas with the establishment of three demarcated (having strict boundary maintenance) districts. However, with the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, the CHTs came under the jurisdiction of new state facing changes and development. It has been identified that the CHTs ceased to be tribal area since January 10, 1964 with the commencement of the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1963 (Act No. I of 1964)¹⁵⁷. But until 1956, CHTs districts were managed administratively as 'Excluded Area' (Kamal et al, eds. 2007:4). One of the most significant events that caused the displacement and rehabilitation of more than hundred thousand people has been due to the construction of Kaptai Dam on the Karnafuli River in 1962. These people lost their hearth and home (an area of 253 square miles¹⁵⁸) which have been submerged by water. Till today people remember this incident as a curse to their fate. During the year of 1950 a separate police office was constructed in the CHTs with 11 police stations in the three subdivisions until 1967. Thus the situations during Pakistan period can be referred to as a stage of economic development, though this is debatable on many grounds. After the liberation war and during 1979 the then Bangladesh Government introduced Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati Local Government *Parishad* Law which is now known as 'Hill Tracts District Parishad Law' (Kamal et al, eds. 2007:4-6). In course of time and after 1980 three separate districts have been established in the years of 1981 (Bandarban District), and 1983 (Khagrachari and Rangamati Districts). Till now 17 different departments have been placed under the Hill Tracts District *Parishad* and following the CHTs Peace Accord of 1997, Ministry of Chittagong Affairs started to work during 1998.

However, in the above information the historical background of Chittagong Hill Tracts has been elaborated. In doing so it has been clarified that how different invasions and regimes played crucial roles not only in establishing their dynasties but also to the development of Hill Tracts regions through various rules and regulations. This historical record, obtained from the field and secondary sources, have given me the ample opportunity to understand the nature of the Hill Districts and the people dwelling therein.

Khagrachari District and Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila*

Before going to discuss about the Khagrachari District in detail I have found it relevant to know about the background of the district. According to the District Gazetteer of 1971, Kagrachari (present Khagrachari district) is situated on the left bank of the river

¹⁵⁶ For more see Annexure-III (Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation 1900) of this Thesis.

¹⁵⁷ For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:29.

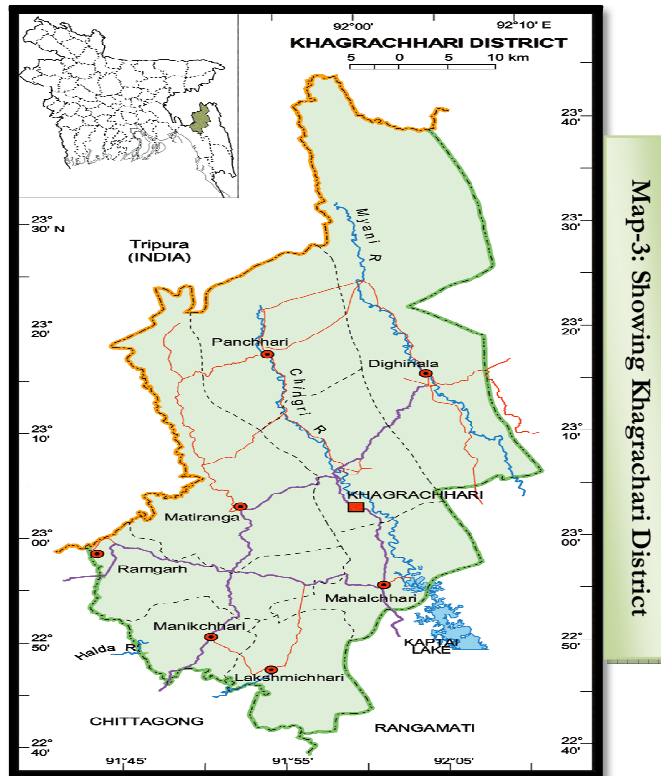
¹⁵⁸ For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:263.

Chengi and in Ramgarh subdivision with an area of 45289 acres and a population of 12900 according to 1961 census (Ishaq, ed. 1971:289). The then Ramgarh had three Thanas: Ramgarh Sadar, Mahalchari and Dighinala. Khagrachari was a union under Mahalchari Thana. During 1968 Khagrachari was developed as a Thana. It has been centrally located in an enlightened area and developed as the new sub-divisional headquarters of Ramgarh from 1st January of 1971. It was connected with the old town of Ramgarh by road, about 35 miles north-east and by launch-cum-jeep service with Rangamati. It has been a well known business center with a big bazaar.

Later in 7th November of 1983 Khagrachari was declared as a District. It has been noted that the district Khagrachari was named from the forest of '*nalkhagra*' as there was deep forest of '*nalkhagra*' on both the sides of a '*charra*' (lake) that has flowed through the middle of Khagrachari District¹⁵⁹.

Following the district of Chittagong Hill Tract Regulation Act the Chittagong Hill Tract was divided into three subdivisions (included Khagrachari) in 1900. The Khagrachari Local Government Legislative Council was formed in 1989 (in accordance with the Khagrachari Hill Districts Council, Act 20), which, on the basis of the 'Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord', was turned into Khagrachari Hill District Council on 2 December, 1997 (Islam, ed. 2006).

Present Khagrachari District (see Map-3 showing Khagrachari District) is bounded by the Indian State of Tripura on the north, Rangamati and Chittagong districts on the south, Rangamati district on the east, and Chittagong district and the Indian State of Tripura on the west. The area of the district is 2699.56 square kilometers. It has 8 *Upazilas* (Khagrachari Sadar, Dighinala, Panchhari, Matiranga, Manikchari, Mahalchari, Lakshmichhari, and Ramgarh), 9 *Thanas*, 3 *Pourashavas* or City Corporations (Khagrachari, Ramgarh and Matiranga), 35 *Unions*, 121 *Mouzas*, and 1388 villages or *Paras* (Hashim, ed. 2008).



Map-3: Showing Khagrachari District

¹⁵⁹ For more on this see Ishaq, ed. 1971:289.

According to the Census of 2011 the total population of Khagrachari District of both sexes is 6,13,917 which include 3,13,793 male and 3,00,124 female respectively (BBS 2012). However, according to the information received from the Khagrachari Hill District Council, in terms of ethnic identity the number of ethnic people (other than the Bangalees) is 2,69,904 (52.06%) where Chakma 1,46,045 (28.17%), Marma 55,844 (10.77%), Tripura 67,342 (12.99%) and others (Santal and Rakhain) 673 (0.13%) respectively; on the other hand the Bangalees and others is 2,48,599¹⁶⁰ (48%) (Hashim, ed. 2008). In recent years the many educational institutions have been established in the district, which I have found to be one of the major factors to trigger the literacy rate. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of this district along with agricultural laborers, wage laborers, and various service holders. This indicates that land is very valuable (with good market value) in this area. In the 21st century the roads, transportation and communication system of the district has developed. See Map-4 showing the administrative units of the Khagrachari District or *Zila*.



Map-4: Administrative Units: Khagrachari

Cartography & GIS project BBS - 2012

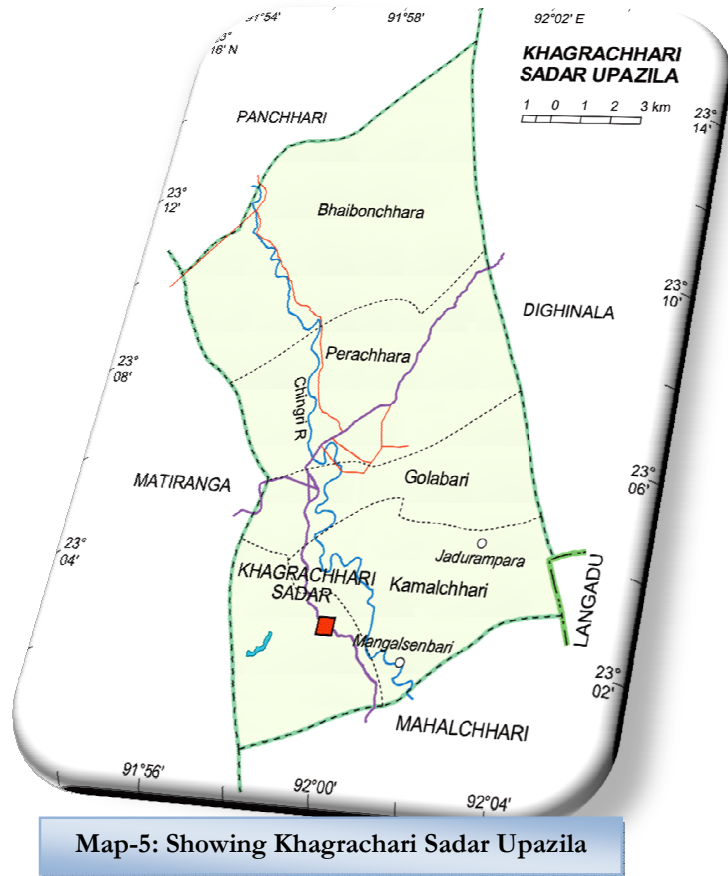
¹⁶⁰ Actually the ethnic population data dates back to the Census of 2001 and there is no information regarding the exact number of ethnic people specified in the Census of 2011. I have asked the concerned authorities of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics several times about this but got no answer.

However, according to the Census of 2011 Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila* (of Khagrachari district; see Map-5 showing Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila*), with an area of 297.91 square kilometer or 115.02 square mile, and total population 1,11,833 of both sexes where male 58,366 and female 53,467 (BBS 2012), is bounded by Panchhari *upazila* on the north, Mahalchhari *upazila* on the south, Dighinala and Langdu *upazilas* on the east, and Matiranga *upazila* on the west with the main river *Chengi*. Khagrachari town was established in 1860 by Remrochai Chowdhury.

It has an area of 67.99 square kilometer with a town population of 39654 (male 57.20% and female 42.80%). As there is no information about the ethnic groups of the CHTs mentioned categorically in the 2011 Census Report, I have mentioned the previous record here to have an idea of the characteristic understanding of the population data.

In this regard and following Islam, ed. (2006) it is mentionable that the total population of the Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila* (notably according to the Census of 1991) is 61306 (Bangalee 21266 and other ethnic or hill people 40040; male 54.02% and female 45.98%; Muslim 30.16%, Hindu 28.43%, Buddhist 40.64%, and others 0.77%). Khagrachhari Thana, now an *Upazila*, was established in 1974. The *upazila* consists of one municipality, 9 wards, 61 *maballas*, 9 *union parishads*, 36 *mouzas* and 77 villages (Islam, ed. 2006).

Overall the land pattern, agricultural practices, occupational categories, educational aspects, and the road, transportation and communication systems of the area bear the same character as that of the district scenario. Before going to describe the study *paras*, I have found it significant to have a glimpse into the statistical information about the Khagrachari District and Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila* as well which include population, sex ratio, household, literacy rate, and geographic unit in the following table-1.



Map-5: Showing Khagrachari Sadar Upazila

Table-1: 2011 and 2001 census result at a glance about Khagrachari District and Khagrachari Sadar Upazila

Items	District/ Zila		Sadar Upazila	
	2011	2001	2011	2001
Population (Enumerated), Sex Ratio and Households (HH)				
Both Sex	6,13,917	5,25,664	1,11,833	92,380
Male	3,13,793	2,77,614	58,366	50,380
Female	3,00,124	2,48,050	53,467	42,000
Annual growth rate	1.54	4.38	1.9	4.18
Sex Ratio (Total)	105	112	109	120
Households (Total)	1,33,792	1,09,190	24,316	18,985
Average HH Size (Overall)	4.53	4.78	4.49	4.81
Areas and Density of Population				
Area sq. km	2749.16	2699.55	297.91	297.91
Area sq. mile	1061.45	1042.3	115.02	115.02
Density per sq. km	223	195	375	310
Density per sq. mile	578	504	972	803
Literacy (%)				
Both Sex	46.1	41.8	57.1	47.2
Male	51.9	49.9	63.2	55.0
Female	40.1	32.7	50.4	37.8
Population (Adjusted)				
Both Sex	6,38,967	5,48,953	1,16,831	96,921
Male	3,26,621	2,89,930	60,987	52,875
Female	3,12,346	2,59,023	55,844	44,046
Geographic Unit				
<i>Upazila/Thana</i>	8	8	-	-
<i>Union</i>	38	34	5	5
<i>Mauza</i>	120	120	13	13
<i>Village</i>	1,702	1581	246	228
<i>Paurashava</i>	3	1	1	1
<i>Paura Ward</i>	27	9	9	9
<i>Paura Mahalla</i>	154	61	72	61

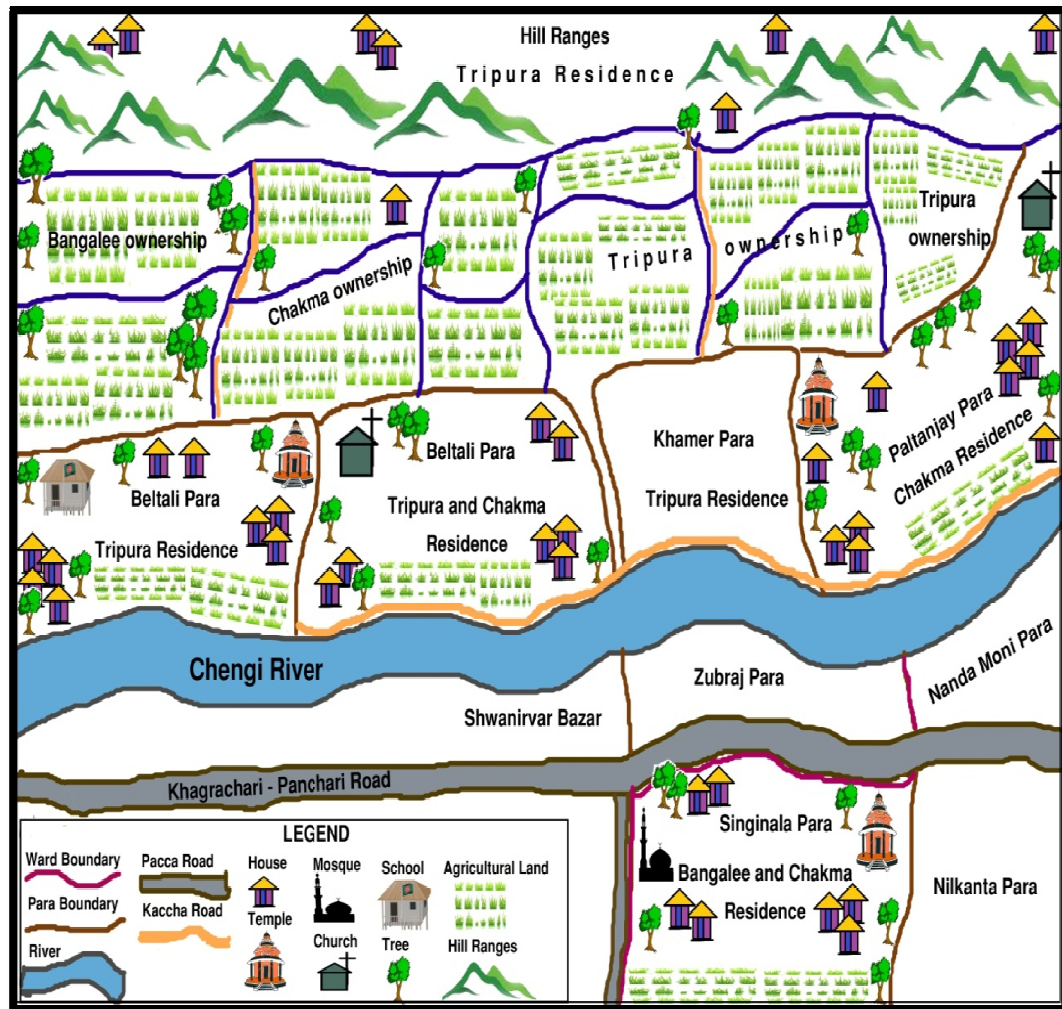
Source: BBS 2012. Community Report Khagrachari Zila-June 2012, Population and Housing Census 2011. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Study Paras¹⁶¹ (Village): Beltali, Paltanjay and Singinala

I have conducted fieldwork among three community people and they are the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura residing in adjacent *paras* or villages of Khagrachari *Paurashava* and Perachara Union. Considering the nature of the study I have to select these areas where the three communities live in close proximity. Of the three *paras* Beltali *para* (*Para* number 4, *Mouza* number 76 and Ward number 75) and Paltanjay *para* (*Para* number 6, *Mouza* number 76 and Ward number 75) belong to the Perachara Union of Khagrachari Sadar Upazila. On the other hand Singinala *para* (*Mouza* number 856 and Ward number 1) belongs to the Khagrachari *Paurashava* of Khagrachari Sadar Upazila (BBS 2012). Actually Singinala *para* is an urban area (only 5 kilometers from the main town), while both the

¹⁶¹ In the CHTs the villages are referred to as Paras and this word resemble the nature and characteristics of the villages usually observed in the plain land areas of Bangladesh. All through in this study the villages have been termed as Paras.

Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* belong to the rural areas of Khagrachari District (only 10 kilometers from the main town). Among these Singinala *para* is very close to the *Shwanirvar Bazar* of Khagrachari *Paurashava*. Following Map-6 shows the area and location (social mapping) of the Beltali, Paltanjay and Singinala *paras*.



Source: Fieldwork at Khagrachari, 2012.

Map-6: Social Mapping of study paras

The *Shwanirvar Bazar* is a very popular area where people of different ethnic communities including the Bangalees gather for their daily and weekly shopping. Various local traders from different ethnic communities assemble there with their agricultural, poultry, handicrafts, cotton, and many other materials and this gives all the community people an opportunity not only sell their products but also make a common gathering. It has been observed that most of the Chakma and Tripura households to sell their garden products as well as the vegetables and household utensils from the hills in this bazaar. At the same time few of the Bangalees have grocery shop in the bazaar along with the Chakma and Tripura households. They keep almost all the materials needed for households and they bring these from Khagrachari town, Chittagong and also from Dhaka. All these have, initially, established this place considerably as one of their heart places for gossiping, gathering, integrating, sharing of views and of course making their living.

Geographically both the Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* belong to an area with hills on one side and the river *Chengi* on the other. The people living in these *paras* are the Chakmas and Tripuras and are blessed by both the hills and river. The houses are built both on the hill tops and slopes as well as in the plain lands down to these hills.

It has been observed that the village people cultivate not only on the hill slopes but also in the plain areas where they have learnt to practice the plain land cultivation system. Though these *paras* are considered as rural areas, but it takes only 25-30 minutes to go to the town by motor vehicles. The history to the development or the establishment of these *paras* goes with the history of Khagrachari District and Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila*. And almost every elder men and women of the *paras* know about the history to their settlement here. They recall this history deeply rooted with their myth and a feeling of indigenoussness in the locality largely.

The Singinala *para* is situated near the main road leading to *Shwanirvar Bazar* and the town. This area has all the features to be identified as an urban area and inhabited by the Bangalees as well. The Bangalees residing in here have a long history to their settlement where they recall the names of Chakma Rajas by whom their ancestors were brought to introduce and develop plough or plain land cultivation system (this is elaborated further in the section 'Bangalee'). These Bangalees are also surrounded by different ethnic communities, mostly the Chakmas and Tripuras. All these *paras* have been inhabited by different ethnic communities for centuries, but in recent times the number of population has increased quite significantly.

In terms of households and population by residence of the study *paras* as well as of the Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila*, according to the Census of 2011, there are 83 households (number of population is 352) residing in the Beltali *para*, 77 households (number of population is 385) residing in the Paltanjay *para*, and 155 households (number of population is 711) residing in the Singinala *para* among which 53 households (number of population is 223) belong to the Bangalee residents. Overall in the Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila* the total number of households is 24,316 with the number of population 1,11,833.

On the other hand, in terms of community and religion based households and population, there are 16 households belong to Buddhist Chakmas (number of population is 66) and 67 households belong to Hindu Tripuras (number of population is 286) in Beltali *para*; there are 18 households belong to Buddhist Chakmas (number of population is 73), 11 households belong to Christian Chakmas (number of population is 45) and 48 households belong to Hindu Tripuras (number of population is 267) in Paltanjay *para*; and there are 33 households belong to Hindu Bangalees (number of population is 132), and 20 households belong to Muslim Bangalees (number of population is 91). Therefore, in total 213 households have been studied (number of population is 960) which include 45 Chakma households, 115 Tripura households and 53 Bangalee households respectively.

I have further mentioned about the composition of male and female population in the households of the villages. Among the total 960 populations in the village 502 are male and 458 are female. The breakdown of the number of populations in terms of the three *paras* and three communities as well are given in a separate table.

However, following table-2, table-3, and table-4 show the classification of households and population by residence, by community and religion, and also the male-female distribution of the study *paras* respectively.

Table-2: Households and population by residence of the study *paras*

Paras (Administrative Units) Residence/Community	Total Households	Total Population	In Households
Beltali <i>Para</i>	83	352	352
Paltanjay <i>Para</i>	77	385	385
Singinala <i>Para</i> ¹⁶²	155	711	711
	(Bangalee 53)	(Bangalee 223)	(Bangalee 223)
Khagrachari <i>Sadar Upazila</i>	24,316	1,11,833	1,11,586

Source: BBS 2012. Community Report Khagrachari Zila-June 2012, Population and Housing Census 2011. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Table-3: Households (HH) and population (PP) by community and religion

Paras (Villages)	Ethnic Community	Religion by Household and Population								Total	
		Buddhist		Hindu		Muslim		Christian			
		HH	PP	HH	PP	HH	PP	HH	PP	HH	PP
Beltali <i>Para</i>	Chakma	16	66	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	66
	Tripura	-	-	67	286	-	-	-	-	67	286
Paltanjay <i>Para</i>	Chakma	18	73	-	-	-	-	11	45	29	118
	Tripura	-	-	48	267	-	-	-	-	48	267
Singinala <i>Para</i>	Bangalee	-	-	33	132	20	91	-	-	53	223
Total		34	139	148	685	20	91	11	45	213	960

Source: Fieldwork at Khagrachari, 2012; BBS 2012. Community Report Khagrachari Zila-June 2012, Population and Housing Census 2011. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Statistics and Informatics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Table-4: Male-female distribution by community and *para*

Paras (Villages)	Ethnic Community	Male-Female Distribution		Total
		Male	Female	
Beltali <i>Para</i>	Chakma	36	30	66
	Tripura	145	141	286
Paltanjay <i>Para</i>	Chakma	65	53	118
	Tripura	138	129	267
Singinala <i>Para</i>	Bangalee	118	105	223
Total		502	458	960

Source: Fieldwork at Khagrachari, 2012.

3.2 Study People (Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura): Tracing their History, Origin and Identity

I have conducted fieldwork among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities residing Singinala, Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* respectively. As I have already

¹⁶² The numbers for households and population mentioned within brackets of each column belong to the Bangalee people and these are the Bangalee households studied.

mentioned, selected households of each *paras* have been reached for data collection. One of the main objectives of my study is to understand the nature and multidimensional aspects of the interrelations operating among these communities¹⁶³. In so doing I have elaborately discussed about the historical background to the origin and identity of my study people. It has been realized that these communities are not any isolated whole from their true history of origin and identity. Thus for any understanding of the origin and identity of the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura communities (along with the information received from the field), it is necessary to trace their common origin and identity formation. I have to mention that the people of this study have a long historical background (during fieldwork my study people also referred to their history) and so following discussion of the study people has been organized in a way to reflect their origin and identity with an in-depth understanding as well as analysis of their past history and present scenario. Accordingly following the diffusional perspectives it can be said that the people of Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura have created a culture area by exhibiting significant degrees of similarities and dissimilarities with culture of each other.

Again it has been identified various indicators or elements of culture (which include art, religion, ethos, philosophy and similar other aspects of intellectual life) deeply embedded in the characteristics of all the ethnic communities of this study. All these refer to their cultural intensity where the communities have a contact of their cultures. Therefore, it is like a geographical region with an intermixing of various cultural elements, but maintaining true distinctiveness in terms of their cultural intensity and cultural practices. In other words, all these cultural practices and sense of culture area reflect the history to the origin and identity of Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities separately.

Moreover, it has been realized during fieldwork that all these ethnic communities follow a categorization process based on ascription, identification by themselves and others, interaction with various community's' people, and following specific strategies to maintain boundary. Through these the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have idealized their identity based on historical background, fundamental cultural values (common but specific to each community), definite membership, and communication and interaction among others. I have found and organized the following discussion illustrating their nature of identity reflecting these perspectives.

However, according to Captain T. H. Lewin, "the inhabitants (tribes) of CHTs may be classified as- the '*Khyongtha*' or children of the river (considered as of pure Arakanese origin; the Chakmas have been grouped in this category), and the '*Toungtha*' or children of the hills (considered as of mixed origin; the Chakmas have been grouped in this category). On the other hand the Bangalees distinguish hill men into two classes: '*Joomabs*', friendly tribes living close along the Chittagong District border; and '*Kookies*'¹⁶⁴, all other hill men unable to speak the vernacular of Bengal. The origin of the tribes is a doubtful point. Pemberton ascribes to them a Malay descent. Colonel Sir A. Phayre considers two of the principal tribes of Arracan, who are also found in these hills, to be of Myamma or Burmese extraction. Among the tribes themselves no record exists, save

¹⁶³ For more see the 'Objectives' section of the first chapter of this Thesis.

¹⁶⁴ According to Hutchinson (1909), "the CHTs were originally occupied by the different tribes belonging to the Kuki group...the Chakmas invaded the Northern section of the District of Chittagong, but who, in the times of Burmese wars, were ousted by the Moghs from Arakan and forced to enter the Hill Tracts".

that of oral tradition, as to their origin. The general physique of the hill tribes is strongly Mongolian” (Lewin 2011 [1869]:34-39).

Bangalee

The Bangalees have a long history to their settlement in Bangladesh starting from pre-British period to the independent state after the Liberation War of 1971. But the history of the settlement of the Bangalees in the study village or Singinala Para as well as in greater Khagrachari District (also in the entire CHTs) is not that old. During the course of my fieldwork and long term discussion with not only the Bangalees residing there but also the Chakmas and Tripuras it became clear to me that the Bangalees are classified into two categories depending on their settlement pattern and these are:

- a) normally migrated Bangalees (notably during the British period); and
- b) the settler Bangalees (notably during independent Bangladesh and brought by the Government through the armed forces agencies).

However, before going to elaborate the status of Bangalees in terms of their origin and identity, I have found it significant to discuss in few lines about the nature of origin, development and identity of the nation Bangladesh and the Bangalee people. Because the Bangalees residing in the Singinala *para* consider that an understanding of the processes to their settlement, origin, development and identity is not any isolated whole and need analyzed in relation with the development of Bangladesh and Bangalee people. Keeping this in mind I have organized the discussion with an understanding of the origin of Bangladesh with historical facts (facts lying in pre-British, British, post-British and Bangladesh periods respectively) and then the Bangalees which initially has given way to the status of Bangalee people living in Singinala *para* in particular.

Considering the growth of Bangalee nationalism during pre-British period R. C. Majumdar has mentioned that the Eastern Bengal or at least the greater part of it probably remained an independent Kingdom or probably a confederacy of independent Kingdom till the middle of the fourth century A.D. (Majumdar 1925). While Rapson identified that the Hindu Aryans subsequently moved toward the Southwest (moved from Indus plain to make the Upper Ganges Valley the heartland of Brahmanism), but their influence never spread much beyond the modern West Bengal (Rapson, ed. 1922). In the East the influence of Tibeto-Mongolians was more prominent and the invaders (belonged to the Southern group of the Mongolian race) came into India, partly from Tibet, down the valley of Brahmaputra, and partly from China through Burma by the Mekong¹⁶⁵.

However, in the eighth century Bengal suffered prolonged anarchy and the Bangalee Chiefs then elected¹⁶⁶ one Gopala as their King who founded the Pala Dynasty of Bengal, and between the Pala Dynasty and the Muslim conquest (1201 A.D.) Bengal was ruled by the Sens (Ali 2009:46). These Sens were orthodox Hindu Brahmins coming from Deccan (India)¹⁶⁷ and introducing caste rigidities in Bengal, and the religion of Islam found a relatively favorable climate for its acceptance in Bengal by the Buddhists and the lower

¹⁶⁵ For more on this see E. J. Rapson, ed. (1922).

¹⁶⁶ For more see Smith, Vincent A. 1958. The Oxford History of India. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

¹⁶⁷ For more on this see Vincent A. Smith (1958).

caste Hindus; after conquering Delhi, the Turkoman Muslims entered Bengal in early thirteenth century and conquered part of Bengal¹⁶⁸.

I have found it relevant to point out here that racially the Bangalees are largely non-Aryan (except perhaps the high-caste Hindus)¹⁶⁹ and it is also admitted that the Aryan and the Dravidian influence was greater in West Bengal, while the Tibeto-Mongolian is greater in East Bengal, and a number of people from South East Asia had come to Bengal¹⁷⁰. The early advance of the Aryans was heroically resisted by the Pundras and hence Bengal was not totally overrun by the Aryans. However, Aryan influence can be observed in the dominance of *Shanskrit* language over Bangla and the structure of the Hindu society in Bengal (Muhit 1992:5). Accordingly the Muslim conquest in Bengal brought the Turkomans, the Persians, the Afgans, the Abyssinians, the Arabs and the Mughals¹⁷¹.

However, according to Muhit, “from recorded history it is known that the history of Bangladesh is the history of whole Indian subcontinent with three thousand years of old territories known differently at different times, the Aryans settled in India about thirteen hundred years before Christ when the Bengal continued to be inhabited by its original settlers, and Gandaridai was a fiercely independent Kingdom in the fourth century before Christ. Then Bangladesh was known as Bonga. The Mauryans, the Kushans, and the imperial Guptas ruled over Bengal, and independent states consisted in many parts of Bengal during these periods. The Tibetan Kingdom made forays in Bengal in the sixth and seventh centuries, and from the middle of the eighth century for nearly three hundred years Bengal was under the Buddhist Pala King who expanded towards the West. This was followed by a hundred and fifty years of Hindu Sena Kingdom. The Muslim slave Dynasty of Delhi conquered Bengal in the twelfth century. The Khiljis and Tugluqs from Delhi continued to rule Bengal up to the early part of the fourteenth century. In 1338 A.D. an independent Muslim Kingdom was established in Bengal. The Mughal victory in Delhi in 1526 drove much of the Afgan aristocracy to Bengal where most of the Muslim Dynasties in Bengal were of Afgan origin. From the Mughals the power passed on to the British in 1757. Thus the rise and fall of various Kingdoms in Bengal had lot to do with the racial mix and religious beliefs of the people of Bangladesh.”¹⁷²

On the point of the growth of Bengal as a territory produced an ideological dimension where it has been quoted that “the area called Bengal was divided into a number of smaller territories and Shans al-Din Ilyas Shah was referred to as the Sultan of the Bengalis and the King of Bengal for the first time in history” (Eaton 1994). Ultimately the independent Muslim Sultans of Bengal helped as well as patronized to the development of Bangla language as a medium of communication between the rulers and the ruled¹⁷³. In addition to the Bangalees, Bengal also has a number of ethnic communities mostly belonging to Mongolian race and living near the border of Burma and Assam in India, in CHT's and in the uplands of Sylhet and Mymensingh; on the other hand the Bangalees are differentiated on the basis of religious approach as Hindus and

¹⁶⁸ For more on this see Sheikh Maqsood Ali (2009:46).

¹⁶⁹ For more see M. A. Rahim (1963).

¹⁷⁰ For more on this see Sheikh Maqsood Ali (2009:47).

¹⁷¹ For more on this see Sheikh Maqsood Ali (2009:47).

¹⁷² For more see A. M. A. Muhit (1992).

¹⁷³ For more on this see Sheikh Maqsood Ali (2009:48).

Muslims¹⁷⁴. It has been identified in the historical events that the Bangalees, in the 1940s and also after the independence in 1947, approached for economic development, justice, equity and social mobility to demonstrate their distinct identity.

However, during the British period the British attitude towards the Muslims of Bengal changed which eventually led them to divide the greater Bengal into Eastern and Western parts. It is believed that this partition was necessary for administrative expediency. This attitude, in other words, reflected the British policy of divide and rule. Whatever the policy taken by the British rulers for partition of Bengal, a critical understanding of different events of the then Bengal suggested two things or reactions among the Bangalees (broadly speaking):

- a) on the one hand the Bangalee Hindus regarded it as a British conspiracy to destroy the Bangalee identity that had achieved new meaning and significance with the development of Bangla language and Bangalee consciousness; and
- b) on the other hand the Muslims welcomed the British division and regarded the Hindu attempt to undo the partition of Bengal as a big conspiracy to perpetuate the hold of the caste Hindu dominated West Bengal over the agricultural hinterland of Muslim East Bengal (Ali 2009:64-65).

This sense of identity got further development from East Bengal (East Pakistan¹⁷⁵) to independent Bangladesh. Thus the exclusion from Pakistani identity led the Bangalee population to develop their separate identity on the basis of secularism, culture and language (Brubaker 1998:277).

Here I am not elaborating the underlying aspects of the War of Independence of Bangladesh because this demands different attention. Rather the establishment of Bangladesh as an independent state denotes the identity of the people of East Bengal or East Pakistan as Bangladeshi with people of various ethno-linguistic origins where the Bangalees are majority in terms of number of population.

In the course of the development of Bangalee sentiment, the Bangalees started to settle and spread in various parts of the country. As I am concerned with the Bangalees in the CHTs, particularly in the Singinala *para* or village of Khagrachari District, I have tried to focus on the processes of their settlement in this area along with their identical background. The historical facts presented so far for the emergence, settlement and background of the Bangalees is related to these Bangalee peoples' origin and identity i.e. they are not any isolated whole from this historical record.

Therefore, it has been done by comparing the primary data with the historical records available. It has been identified that the most recent of the peaceful invaders of the area are the Bangalees who have infiltrated into most of the market towns and large villages where they have built houses, and mosques or temples; since 1947, there has been an appreciable settlement of Muslim Bangalee refugees from India¹⁷⁶. These Bangalees are recognized as the peaceful migrated and settled people who have come to the study *paras*

¹⁷⁴ For more on this see Sheikh Maqsood Ali (2009:50).

¹⁷⁵ During 1947 the country of Banga has been divided into two parts- West Bengal of India and East Bengal of Pakistan. Later in 1956 the name East Bengal has been changed to East Pakistan and after 1971 an independent country evolved with the name 'Bangladesh'. For more see Jafar Ahmad Hanafi (2011).

¹⁷⁶ For more see Lucien Bernot (1953).

as well as in the greater CHTs for hundreds of years. It is significant to mention few things to the settlement history of the outsiders or other communities in the Hill Tracts regions. Historical records suggest that the CHT Regulation-1900 enacted during the colonial period laid down specific rules on rights of entry, residence as well as land settlements and transfers in the CHT. This regulation made it difficult for people from outside of CHTs to acquire rights to land and settlement in the CHTs.

Later, during British rule, few of these restrictive measures on outsiders were withdrawn, and also during Pakistani and Bangladeshi periods (through a series of legislative amendments and executive orders) the remaining restrictions on outsiders were lifted gave way for the outsiders for easy entry and settlement in the villages and towns of the three Districts of the CHTs¹⁷⁷. In other words this practice has legalized the settlement of people from plain lands of Bangladesh. It has been found that most of the Bangalees of Singinala *para* are living here for generations and their intention have been to do business and related other activities for their livelihood. It has been further identified in support to this that these Bangalees have introduced the plough cultivation to this area in the eighteenth century and they were invited by the then tribal 'Rajas' to settle on the lower parts of the hills where irrigation was possible¹⁷⁸.

It has been found significant to mention here that (this has been heard locally, found in the literatures and I have mentioned in previous section of this chapter) at the time of the Kaptai dam construction, the Pakistan Government announced its intention to open up the area for economic development, encouraged poor Bangalee families to settle there, and the entire CHT region has been kept open for migration of outsiders since the beginning of 1950s; this policy was pursued by the Bangladesh Government after the independence in 1971; and later in 1979 Bangladesh Government relocated thousands of poor Bangalees into the Hill Tracts¹⁷⁹. I have mentioned these Bangalees as the settlers in the CHTs, and they are not found in my study village. Therefore, the Bangalees residing in the *paras* are the descendents of these early settlers who bear the similar physical features with those of the plain land Bangalees.

These Bangalees are well known for good gesture and in these days they have engaged themselves in several other activities such as trade other than only engaging in agricultural activities (like plough cultivation). In relation to these practices I have found Bernot (1953) stating that consequently the hill-men depended, in part, upon the non-tribal populace (Bangalees as craftsmen and traders as well) who live among them; the Bangalee plough cultivators supplied certain products to the hill people, while the craftsmen and traders imported other materials through waterways from Chittagong among whom the most important was the blacksmith and these Bangalee blacksmith became the essential element in the economic life of the Hill Tracts. Through these processes, as the Bangalees of Singinala *para* mentioned, they have not only entered the local market areas but also into the villages¹⁸⁰ and in course of time settled and made their living in the hills.

¹⁷⁷ For more see S. Adnan (2004). Also see L. G. Loffler (1991).

¹⁷⁸ For more on this see T. H. Lewin (2011[1869]).

¹⁷⁹ For more see Amnesty International (2000).

¹⁸⁰ In this regard and according to Bernot, "marketing is not restricted solely to the bazaars, for there are many itinerant Bengali hawkers who plod the footpaths from village to village with their baskets of cloth, alarm clocks, combs, costume jewelry, salt, fish, umbrellas, spoon, plates, glasses, cups and similar merchandise" (Bernot 1953).

Historically (also from the knowledge of the village Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras), thus, two factors played crucial role for the settlement and spread of Bangalee in Singinala *para* as well as in the CHTs:

- i. one is the exchange of food and other commercial materials in between the Bangalee and the other ethnic communities of the hills; and
- ii. the other is the development of Chittagong port and expansion of the city that established the practice of exchange economy in place of subsistence economy (this type of economy has been practiced by the hill ethnic people for thousands of years, though the subsistence economy is not fully replaced).

Taking this commercialization process and economic practices in view it has been found in the villages that the Bangalees have found their place of peaceful living and acceptance among the hill ethnic people. Accordingly the hill ethnic communities are very comfortable with these Bangalees.

In search for root these Bangalees do so by tracing it to the Bangalees of the plain land from where they or their ancestors have migrated to the village. In terms of migration and tracing their origin it has been found that the Bangalees of the village have come from different parts of the country which include Noakhali, Feni, Chittagong, Comilla and Dinajpur. It is important to note here that the Bangalees are also coming here in the Khagrachari District from various other districts of Bangladesh. But in Singinala *para* the Bangalee people have come from the above mentioned five districts. It can be measured that the concentration of the Bangalees in the village belongs to the greater Chittagong District and the other adjacent districts. One of the major causes of this is, as I have come to learn, the distance. Noakhali, Feni, Chittagong and Comilla are very close to the Khagrachari District and the Bangalees of the four districts have found it easy to come here in search for new opportunities and making livelihood. In case of the Bangalees of Dinajpur District, the previous generations of the Bangalees of this village have found it a good place for a better living than their place of origin and because they have been uprooted from their place of origin.

Therefore, with the name and identity as Bangalee, the village people trace their origin back to their ancestors' previous settlement following the ancient history of Bangladesh and the Bangalees. They do this by following both of their Hindu and Muslim invaders in Bangladesh. Various reasons acted for their settlement in this village which include agriculture (introducing new types of agricultural practices from the plain lands known as plough cultivation), business (trade and others), over population at their birth of origin, and in search for new places to begin with new livelihood with family and neighbors.

It has been learnt from the Bangalees that the usage of *pahari*, settlers or outsiders are not appropriate terms to identify or address them, rather their one and only identity (common identity as well) is that they are Bangalees. According to them there is no way to avoid the fact that identity is historically determined following their ancestors' beliefs, religion, and linguistic origin. Overall taking all the factors into account the Bangalees in Singinala *para*, in particular, and in Khagrachari District, in general, consider their culture and language to uphold their Bangalee identity and this gives them the pride to be a part of the 'hill culture' as well. Here not only the Bangalees but also the Chakmas and Tripuras used the term hill culture to refer to a certain type of values and norms that the hill offer to all its inhabitants irrespective of age, gender, and community identity.

Chakma

The Chakmas of the Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* or villages consider themselves (taking their entire community living in the CHTs) as the major ethnic community in terms of number and at the same time identify them to be the indigenous resident of the area. I have identified that the origin to their name has a mixed historical orientation. While introducing themselves within their community they address them as ‘Changma’, but literally and to the outsiders they are known as ‘Chakma’. Questioning the origin of their name I have found that (both in the field and literature) the Burmese, Rakhains or Arakanians called the Chakmas as ‘*Sak*’, ‘*Thak*’ or ‘*Thek*’; they were also called as ‘*Takam*’ or ‘*Aieng*’ meaning ‘yellow’ or ‘fair’ (according to the Pangkhua language); and the Tripuras also called them as ‘*Kurmu*’ in the same sense as ‘fair’¹⁸¹. This is a simple description that the Chakmas mentioned during discussion and it leads to their origin and identity in terms of their habitation, settlement, traditional religious practices, believing in common ancestor, places of origin, common beliefs and practices, and language among others. I have seen the Chakmas distinguishing themselves from others by their language. They used to speak a Tibeto-Burman language, but their present language is Indo-European which is closely related in structure to *Chittagonian Bangla* from which it differs by a distinct vocabulary; being bi-lingual (speaking both their own and *Bangla* language) the Chakma language has its own script, although today this is not commonly used and Chakma is now usually written in *Bangla* letters¹⁸².

The Chakmas are residing in the Khagrachari District and also in the Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* for centuries and generations. According to their oral history their ancestors had come from the Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal and Assam regions of Eastern India i.e. from Indo-Aryan group. Both locally and historically (though there no clear explanation to the ancient history of the Chakmas) I have come to learn about two legendary stories of their origin (these are known as ‘*palagaans*’¹⁸³ which means ‘narrative operas’): one is ‘*radhamon-dhanpudi*’ and the other is ‘*chadigang-chhara*’. In the *palagaans* the *gengulis* mentioned the ancient settlement of the Chakmas as Champaknagar¹⁸⁴ from where the Prince of Champaknagar Bijoygiri conquered many regions including Chittagong (its name mentioned as *Chadigong*), Arakan (mentioned as *Maghland*), Khiyangland, Kanchanland, Kuki territory, Sapreikul, etc. Today these Chakma people believe that they are the descendents of those of Bijoygiri’s soldiers who conquered Arakan (Kamal et al, eds. 2007:38)¹⁸⁵. Along with these the Chakmas recall as well as address their ancient history as ‘*Bijog*’ or ‘*Bijok*’ and some historical events indicating their origin goes to the Burmese and Rakhain writings indicating also to those Chakmas living in greater CHTs near to Arakan since the twentieth century. It has been identified that the first written reference to Chakmas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts dates from about 1550 AD when the Portuguese map maker Lavanha indicated on the earliest surviving map of Bengal that

¹⁸¹ For detail on this see Sugata Chakma (2011:33-35).

¹⁸² For more see Sirajul Islam, ed. (2006).

¹⁸³ According to Chakma history (in the past), a group of bards called ‘genguli’ or ‘gengkuli’ used to sing these palagaans playing the violin or the flute in return for honorarium in the rural areas of Chakma society, although today their numbers have decreased significantly, expressing historical events (Kamal et al, eds. 2007:38).

¹⁸⁴ By some it is said to be near Malacca; this would ascribe to them a Malay origin. While on the other hand there are many they assert that Champaknagar is situated far to the North-Western Provinces of Hindoostan (Lewin 2011 [1869]:62).

¹⁸⁵ Also see Ashok Kumar Dewan (1991:38).

Chakmas lived in a settlement on the river Karnafuli (Islam, ed. 2006). Thus I have come to learn about two (main) theories put forward about the earlier history of Chakmas (both assume that the Chakmas have migrated to their present homeland): one links Chakmas with central Myanmar and Arakan, and with groups such as the *Saké* (*Thek*) who live in the Chittagong Hills and Arakan; and the other, for which historical evidence is lacking, assumes that Chakmas migrated to the Chittagong Hills from Champaknagar in northern India. However, in the late eighteenth century, Chakmas were found not only in the Chittagong Hill Tracts but also in other hilly areas of the present day districts of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar¹⁸⁶. Overall due to the absence of historical elements there has not been any concrete written history of the Chakmas found until seventh century¹⁸⁷.

At this stage it seems relevant to discuss about the origin of the Chakmas and their settlement in the Beltali and Paltanjay *paras*. Whenever I have asked them to trace their root to ancestor or to trace their origin most of the elder Chakma men and women have elaborately argued that they have a long history of settlement in the *paras* (also in the CHTs) which goes back to the way past. It is well known among the Chakmas that during mid-tenth century (in 953 A.D.) the King of Arakan Sultoing Chandra conquered Chittagong by inscribing a pillar there and after his death in 957 A.D. the Mro leader Amrathu captured the Throne of Arakan. Later Ngatu-Mang, the son of Sultoing, ascended the Throne of Arakan with the help of the Rakhains and the Saks. Historically the 'Saks' (Chakmas) and 'Kolas' (Bangalees) were against Arakan and from the writings of the Rakhain chroniclers it has been identified that the 'Saks' (Chakmas) had their settlement in greater Chittagong, the Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the adjacent areas in the tenth century (Rizvi, ed. 1975). In this regard and according to W. W. Hunter (1876:142):

“...Mr. Rabon (Jadhandhah), an ex-collector of Chittagong, considered the Chakmas to be the first settlers in Chittagong, and in 1870 he reported that till then they were found in the lower hills on the Northern bank of the river *Karnafuli*”.

Another historical account suggests that it was only after the annexation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts by the British (1860) and the promulgation of rules (which forbade hill agriculture or *Jhum* cultivation in Chittagong District) that these Chakma cultivators (and other hill cultivators such as the Marma) moved east to the Chittagong Hill Tracts; in the pre-colonial period, the Chittagong Hill Tracts had not been part of any state, although they had long been influenced by the waxing and waning of power centers in Tripura (to the North), Arakan (to the South) and Bengal (to the West); in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Mughal empire collected tribute (cotton) from the area through local intermediaries and one of the most prominent of these intermediaries was the Chakma chief residing in an elevated landmass in the *Karnafuli* river channel¹⁸⁸. As I have come to learn from the local Chakmas, particularly those of older generations, that they have a deep root history to their ancestorship. In course of time i.e. throughout the British period, Pakistan ruling and also after the birth of Bangladesh, they have spread out in different parts of greater Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts. Following this they have also settled in Khagrachari District.

¹⁸⁶ For more see Sirajul Islam, ed. (2006).

¹⁸⁷ For more on this see Jafar Ahmad Hanafi (2011:16-18).

¹⁸⁸ ¹⁸⁸ For more see Sirajul Islam, ed. (2006).

The historical facts that has been discussed regarding the origin of the name and settlement pattern of the Chakmas, eventually indicates their identity and tracing of ancestors. The Chakmas of Beltali *para* and of course of Palnatjay *para* are not separable from this historical background and they recall their historical events with great tribute and delight. Along with these and in terms of actual history of identity the village people believe that their identity is Chakma and the other names used for them such as *jumma*, hill men, minority or backward have not only inaccurate their true identity, but also have different interpretations for different groups both locally, nationally and internationally. Thus they feel proud to identify themselves by their community name, because this is where their original root and identity remains. It has been observed that these reflect their demand of indigenous identity in the hills.

Every time during my discussion with the Chakma people in the locality I have tried to cross-check the historical facts written in different documents and searched for their settlement in the *paras*. Differences have been identified regarding their history of origin, but in many respects they consider Arakan as their place of origin and from where they have migrated to the hills of Chittagong. Historically these Chakmas divide them into twenty one clans, which are known as 'Gozas' (the *Gozas* are – *Molima*, *Wanza*, *Danyin*, *Toynya*, *Phaksa*, *Larma*, *Koora Goytia*, *Phey-dang-sirri*, *Loskra*, *Khambey*, *Borsejgey*, *Seygey*, *Biing*, *Boga*, *Darjea*, *Poa*, *Burbora*, *Ranyeen*, *Boongza*, *Sadonga* and *Amoo*) each of which has a 'Dewan' who represents the head of the family and they usually identify themselves not by physical appearance but by the *Gozas* that they belong. Traditionally they professed the religion Buddhism. But in recent times a number of them have converted to Christianity along with some Hindu superstitions. They consider these changes to their traditions due to the process of Christianization and continuous contact with the Bangalee neighboring Hindus.

Linguistically their dialect is Chakma, a corrupt for of *Bangla* written in corrupt Burmese. However, these Chakma people consider Shermost Khan¹⁸⁹ (he invaded CHTs during 1737 A.D.) as their aborigine King¹⁹⁰. With these historical facts following features have been identified about the Chakmas of the Beltali and Paltanjay *paras*:

- i. they belong to Mongoloid class in terms of their physical features;
- ii. they use various types of names which belong to Islam, Hindu and other religious origin;
- iii. they were basically Buddhists, but recently many of them have been converted to Christians (they have integrated their older religious elements such as worship of the powers of nature, thus, maintaining a belief in their traditional religious cults and practices); and
- iv. they depend on *Jhum* cultivation, but for many years they are residing in the village with permanent houses and also learnt to use plough cultivation (plain land cultivation practices).

These Chakmas have been asked about the locations of Champaknagar and accordingly they referred to three areas where it belonged and these are- Bihar, Tripura, and Feni. But in most respects they trace their root to Champaknagar of North-Western provinces of India through Arakan to the Hill Tracts of Chittagong. However, their view point has

¹⁸⁹ According to A. M. Serajuddin (1971:3), "by degrees Shermost Khan extended his influence and came to occupy the position of the Raja of the Hill Tracts".

¹⁹⁰ For more see Biraj Mohon Dewan (1971).

been compared further with the previous writings and found that they are of Arakanese origin and immigrated into the Chittagong District (Hutchinson 1906:21), undoubtedly in the main descended of Magh women (Mag-Marma) and Moghal soldiers (Mils 1931:15-18), the union must be traced to union between soldiers of Nawab Shaista Khan (about during 1670) and Arakanese immigrants and subsequently with the hill women (Lewin 2011 [1869]:63), or most of them were living at the mouth of the *Naf* river and were considered as one of 101 Burmese Nation (Bernot 1960:146).

In many occasions the local Chakmas maintained that the greater number of hill ethnic communities have come from Arakan¹⁹¹. This oral history has also been justified with the records in the Chittagong Collectorate. In terms of their anthropological identity I have quoted two statements here:

firstly, the Chakmas are ethnically different from the plainsmen of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and appear to have some racial link with the primitive tribes of the vast belt extending from Tibet to Thailand; they are mostly what colored, sometimes brownish in complexions, and have straight black hair; with medium height and strong build, but unlike the Tibetans or the Mongoloids, they mostly have straight noses, with cheek bones not very prominent, nor eyes so narrow (Rajput 1905); and

secondly, they are usually of fair complexion and their physical features influenced by the climate and intermarriage with the Mongolian tribes have assumed, more or less Mongoloid characteristics; however, in some instance Aryan features are to certain extent apparent (Bessaignet 1985).

Taking these background histories into account I have tried to understand some of the current aspects related to Chakma identity and origin. This included issues such as language, religion, changing pattern, involvement of politics, invasions of different rulers, Bangalee intervention, role of community leaders and state to gain a comprehensive picture. It appeared that the Chakmas urged for identifying themselves by the community (ethnic) origin and in terms of engaging political (it can be of any pattern) motivations in determining their identity two issues came in front:

- a) one is based on how they organize their actual identity; and
- b) the other is based on political motivations relating to national level politics taking rights based issues.

In other words this clarifies that identity must be determined with the belief that it is the root to one's ancestorship and feeling of originality, and from where the descendents have spread out in various areas for habitation and settlement. Another thing that plays crucial role in forming, tracing and understanding the individual and community identity of the Chakmas is the belief in traditional religious practices. The list is not exhaustive, but these Chakmas consider them distinct from others in terms of language, life style, beliefs and practices, and cultural patterns among others. Whatever the outsiders perceive of their origin and identity, the Chakmas have a common understanding for this as has already been mentioned in the historical analysis. Overall these reflect the origin and identity of the Chakmas of the study *paras*.

¹⁹¹ For more see T. H. Lewin (2011[1869]:146).

Tripura

The Tripuras, another ethnic community of this study, consider them to be one of the major and ancient ethnic communities living in the Indian subcontinent and CHTs for centuries. While residing in Khagrachari, these Tripura people have a long historical background with name, places of origin and settlement in the CHTs. They recall their place of origin to the Tripura State¹⁹² of India where they are the dominant group (i.e. main segment of this group). Like the Chakmas, the Tripuras also have a mixed history to the origin of their name. The Bangalees sometimes call the Tripuras as ‘*Tipra*’, the common people of India know them as ‘*Tripuree*’, the Chakmas call them as ‘*Tibira*’, and the Marmas and Rakhains call them as ‘*Mrong*’. The Sanscrit term ‘*Tripoorardana*’ is used to indicate the sun; as judging by the remains of a temple dedicated to the sun, the worship of the sun seems to have formed part of the cults of Hill Tipperah. It is not an improbable hypothesis to suppose that the name Tipperah is derived from ‘*Tripoorardana*’ (the Sun God). The name of Tripura is an appellation of purely Bangalee derivation. The people themselves in their own tongue recognize no generic term by which their race may be designated; speaking Bangalee, a Tripura man will use the generic term Tripura to identify his identity, but in terms of race he will use the name of his clan (Lewin 2011[1869]). I have not found it difficult with the formation of identity of the Tripuras despite the variations in their naming. But whatever the others say these people have their own reasoning in determining their identity. In this regard and according to Baren Tripura, “many think that the name Tripura originated from ‘*Toi-Para*’/ ‘*Toi-Brofa*’ (language located/ situated at the river bank) and to some extent the Tripuras use the term ‘*Borok*’ or ‘*Boro*’ to address themselves within their common sharing” (Tripura 1975:4).

These are some common views learnt also through coming in close contact with the Tripura people. But this is not the final history to their identity. I have tried to look for more information regarding their origin and identity. I have found that the tracing of their origin and identity is not separable from an understanding of establishment of their ancient Kings, their rules and invasions in different parts of the subcontinent. Accordingly their name as Tripura was first found in the coins of King Dhannamanikka where he used the name ‘*Tripurendra Dhannamanikka Dev*’ for an introduction. This King conquered different areas from 1490 A.D. to 1514 A.D. In this process his military troops entered the CHTs, particularly the Thanchi of Bandarban, and till today many of the Tripuras trace their ancestors belonging to those military troops¹⁹³. However, I have given a short historical record here to follow the background of the Tripuras. It is known that the Tripura raj existed as an independent kingdom for centuries and according to legend its territory was extended from the Garo Hills down to the Bay of Bengal; the kingdom was first partially annexed by the ruler of Bengal Tughral Khan (1268-1281 A.D.), later Sultan Husain Shah conquered larger part of plain Tripura in 1513, and finally the whole of Tripura was conquered by the Mughal Governor Ibrahim Khan (1689-1698 A.D.) who made it a vassal kingdom under the Mughal Empire; during the regimes of Murshid Kuli Khan, the Tripura raja was declared a *zamindar* for his plain land territory which was named as Pargana Roushanabad (Islam, ed. 2006). The Manikka Kings of Tripura were recognized as a vassal king for the Hill Tripura and Pargana

¹⁹² According to the report of the Trigonometrical Survey, Hill Tipperah is situated between the plains of the British district of Tipperah and the Tripura people have four major canals: Pooran, Nowuttea, Osuie and Reeang (Lewin 2011 [1869]).

¹⁹³ For more see Sugata Chakma (2011:83-84).

Roushanabad was formed with an area now constituting largely the Bangladesh districts of Habiganj, Brahmanbaria, Comilla and Feni where Comilla was the *zamindari* headquarters of the Raja; the *zamindari* part of the Tripura Raja became the core of the new district of Tippera created in 1790 A.D.; since then the nomenclature of 'Tippera' continued until it was renamed as Comilla in 1960¹⁹⁴.

It has been identified that (both from their oral history and few literary documents) the Tripura has a long historical background of their settlement in the study villages or *paras* as well as in the CHTs. There is no clear document available about their past history, but it is known to all that the Tripuras are living here from the very past, especially to the Northern part of the CHTs. Their ancestors came from the Tripura State of India. Whenever the Tripura Kings came to CHTs, they used to live in the Northern part of the CHTs. Earlier the Kings of Tripura State used the title 'Fa' like the 'Shan' of North Burma and the 'Abom' of Assam and the inhabitants of Tripura have been ruled by the *Shans* (during 777 A.D.) of North Burma¹⁹⁵. It is very popular among these Tripuras that when the King Ratnamanikka imposed extra tax on the 'Reeang' clan of the Tripuras in their State, they began to move towards the valley of Karnafuli river, the hills bordering on Hill Tripura are principally inhabited by the *Pooran* and *Nowuttea* clans, and the Osuic clan settled near the Fenny river and on the hills near the *Karnafuli* river as well (Lewin 2011 [1869]:80). According to Hutchinson, it has been identified that the *Reeang* Tripuras made their settlement in the hills situated to the Southern side of the river Matamuhuri (1909). During fourteenth to seventeenth centuries several Tripura Kings made their settlement in the CHTs. During the British period lot of Tripura people lived in the present Khagrachari District. As a proof to this I have found it significant to quote few lines from T. H. Lewin's writings:

"...the Chief men among the Tripuras in this district are Kisto Chunder Thakoor and his brother Modho Chunder, who live in the country bordering on the river Fenny. They are the near relatives of the present Rajah of Hill Tripura, and in 1860 seemed to think that they had some claim to succeed to the Raj, as at that time, owing to the dissensions between them and the Rajah, they fled hither, and obtaining the assistance of the Kookies, committed the outrages of 1860, which led to Major Rabon's expedition against the independent tribes" (Lewin 2011 [1869]).

These Tripuras argued that due to some parts of Bangladesh being under the province of Tripura, a significant number of Tripuras acquired the citizenship of Bangladesh after the partition in 1947. In search for their origin and route to the ancestors I have found it relevant with the findings of Dalton (in connection with the local people in the *paras*) that the people of Tripura are said to have the same origin as the Kasharis (similarity of religion, customs, and appearance) who, living in the Brahmaputra valley, had emerged from barbarism. Dalton further maintained that the Tripuras (Tipperahs), or inhabitants of the Tipperah hill ranges, are said by some to be colonists from Munipur, from which

¹⁹⁴ It has been recorded that the former princely State of Tripura was ruled by Maharajas of Manikka dynasty which claimed its descent from the ancient Hindu kings. After the partition of India in 1947, an agreement of merger of Tripura with the Indian Union was signed by the Regent Maharani on 9 September 1947 and the administration of the state was actually taken over by the government of India on 15 October 1949. Tripura became a Union Territory without legislature with effect from 1 November 1956 and a ministry was installed there on 1 July 1963. On 21 January 1972 Tripura attained Statehood. For more see Islam, ed. 2006.

¹⁹⁵ For more see Edward Tuite Dalton (1978 [1872]).

place they were driven by a Burmese invasion; but there can be little doubt that the opinion of those who assert them to have inhabited this part of the country from time immemorial, is equally well founded; nothing is known about the ancient history of these people, but tradition names as their first King Asamgo, who is said to be the ancestor of Trilochun mentioned in the *Mahabharat* as King of Tripura (Dalton 1978 [1872]:109-111). It has been further mentioned that these Tripuras are of Mongoloid origin where their ancestors reached to the Eastern territories of India from Mongolia by crossing Tibet and Siberia of Central Asia five thousand years ago; a portion of them was known as 'Bodo' or 'Boro' who established their domination efficiently before the Aryans came to the Indian subcontinent; it is known from the Ramayana and Mahabharat that the *Bodo* or *Boro* Kings ruled the Northeastern provinces of India; the Aryans called them *Kirat* (savage), *Danab* (giant), and *Asur* (monster); it has been identified that a powerful group of the *Bodos* or *Boros* started its settlement to the expanded territory of the basin of the rivers *Ganga*, *Shitalaksha*, *Brahmahputra*, and *Dhaleshwari*; later they were capable of renaming a province as Tripura in this subcontinent claiming to be a non-Aryan community and original inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent (Tripura 2007:202).

With this historical background to their origin and identity the Tripuras profess themselves as Hindus (observing Hindu religious practices and rituals, worshipping the God Shiva, Goddess Kali and 14 other Gods and Goddesses, and believing in a number of evil spirits, incorporeal beings and demons) and lives with other communities in the Hill Tracts. Historically these Tripuras divide themselves into 36 clans which are known as 'Dafa' and these are- *Gurpai*, *Reeang*, *Khali*, *Jamayia*, *Nayitong*, *Kewoa*, *Kema*, *Dendak*, *Gubbing*, *Asblong*, *Tongpai*, *Anok*, *Fatong*, *Gorjong*, *Khakulu*, *Kaloi*, *Mokchak*, *Muiching*, *Ushui*, *Gigra*, *Berri*, *Rikkini*, *Molsom*, *Hapang*, *Harbang*, *Rangcher*, *Bong*, *jantong*, *Charai*, *Dampa*, *Mongbai*, *Halam*, *Koli*, *Murashing*, *Makhra*, and *Mypala*¹⁹⁶. Among these they have 16 Dafas in Bangladesh, particularly in the study *paras*, some of these *Dafas* have a number of sub-groups (sub-clans), and all of these groups and sub-groups (clans and sub-clans) have their own dialects. I have learnt from the Tripuras that they use to name their clans and sub-clans after an incidence they encountered or occupation they practice. This, again, follow their historical orientations.

Considering these I have been able to understand the nature of their origin and identity in terms of changes, politics, religion, relationship with Bangalees, and role of community people. These Tripuras also follow the similar situations to that of the Chakmas and in so doing the Tripuras always recall their long history to trace their origin and identity owing to their places of origin and migration to the CHTs. The Tripuras are living in Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* for more than a century and in case of coming to Greater Chittagong it is a matter of thousand years. Accordingly they measure their identity taking two common issues into account – one is their place of origin, and the other is their community name. These two aspects bring them not only their fellow feeling but also to trace their root. Therefore, taking these as their base of forming identity, most of the Tripuras do not consider politics to be the major issue for their identity formation. In this regard I have brought the ongoing debate of politics of identity formation to their attention. In reply to this they have mentioned that if others (outside of their community) do anything with their identity formation is a misinterpretation and is not their concern. Thus believing in their historically determined identity the Tripura people in the villages consider that this gives them the true sense of belongingness to what they are as Tripuras.

¹⁹⁶ For more see Tripura 2007; Chakma 2011.

Coming to the point of their ancestors' belief in terms of their origin and identity they have had a very cultural and historical understanding with some common factors (these can be identified as the determining factors in defining their origin and identity) such as:

- i. religion;
- ii. belief in and tracing of common ancestors;
- iii. places of origin;
- iv. use of actual/common community name; and
- v. traditional beliefs and rituals among others.

With these identifying factors the Tripura people differentiate themselves from others notably through their distinct culture, tradition, religion, identity and language among others. It is significant here that the language of the Tripuras, known as '*Kokborok*', belongs to the *Bodo* group, which has its origin in the Assam branch of the Tibeto-Burma language under the Sino-Tibetan family; the script of the Tripura language has some similarities with that of the Chakma language, but although the alphabet appears to be similar, the two languages differ very much in pronunciation and the reading procedure (Islam, ed. 2006). Despite the case of present day limited use, the Tripuras recall the wide usage of their *Kokborok* language in the field of writing letters, demonstrating magic, and preparing lists of indigenous medicine.

However, these practices have generated that their identity should be (and actually is) determined from within the community (keeping their ancestors' view) considering historical background as real value. Eventually the Tripuras of Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* have a common understanding for their origin and identity (follow the facts that I have already discussed) which is based on what they believe in common, expecting their future generations to follow their ancestors' beliefs and basic value orientations.

Throughout the discussion in this chapter I have outlined the historical background of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, study villages, and origin and identity of three distinctive ethnic communities Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura of Beltali, Paltanjay and Singinala *paras*. Here I am summarizing the significant aspects of the processes involved in determining the history and identity of the study areas and people. It has been identified that the South-Asian and Southeast-Asian cultural models have met in the CHTs and these have been expressed in different habits related to dress pattern, origin of language, religion and outward appearance (van Schendel 1992:106). Again all the historical records and local people's perspectives and understandings indicated that their identity is determined in a socio-historical way taking the pattern of interrelationship and distinctiveness both within and outside the communities (conceiving self and community identity in terms of their historical time). In relation to this globalization is playing important role to produce renewed values with a trans-local flow of people (people of different cultures mingle and mix), capital, and technology. Here they have argued that globalization is making greater cultural contact among different ethnic communities for ethnicity and identity to be dealt with multidimensional aspects of human interaction.

Starting with the Chakmas, they recall their history of living in the Chittagong area from ancient times and spread to different parts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (including my study villages), initially making the present day Rangamati as their headquarter (behind the first mountain-range of the CHT-region). The Tripuras also recall their status of living in the greater Chittagong as well as in different parts of the CHTs (including my study villages) dating back to thousands of years. And in case of the Bangalees, they have been migrated and settled in the CHTs (including my study village) dating back to pre-

British period when they were invited by the Rajas of the CHTs for cultivation in the plain areas beneath the hills and beside the rivers. Historically all the other ethnic communities also involved in huge migration movements during these times. It has been argued that the different ethnic communities were at least semi-independent during the period of Mughal rule and the different communities:

“...was a self-sufficient unit as well as a self-administered political entity with intertribal relationships regulated by tribal customs” (Aziz-al Ahsan and Chakma 1989:959).

The situation of the ethnic communities and their origin and identity further illustrate that a broad variety and complexity of boundaries exist among all the communities and this goes to their pattern of self-ascription. Eventually the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras included few things relating to their identity: language, outward appearance, clothes and religion. Today lots of people with differences in their ethnic background are living in my study areas, but the situation was not the same earlier. It has been mentioned in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900 that the CHTs were closed to outsiders; no person other than a Chakma, or a member of any hill tribe indigenous to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, or the State of Tripura shall enter or reside within the Chittagong Hill Tracts unless he is in possession of a permit granted by the Deputy Commissioner at his direction¹⁹⁷. I have come to know from the village Chakmas and Tripuras that once this system was practiced to ensure that no outsiders or especially the Bangalees or the alike communities residing in the plain lands (for example money lenders, traders and commercial farmers) might enter the CHTs with the fear that this would not only exploit them but also destroy their age old traditional beliefs and traditional. But arguments also exist against this understanding and as I have already mentioned the Circle Rajas in the CHTs, before and during British rule, have invited the outsiders (particularly Bangalees) to enter and settle in the CHTs for agriculture, business and trade purposes¹⁹⁸. However, taking these historical evident into account, today, people residing in these *paras* shared their view for identity focusing distinct cultural characteristics, religion, life style and cultivation process. This has been reflected in their own voices as:

“...our culture is everything that determines not only our separate but also our true identity”¹⁹⁹.

This illustrates that differences in culture cannot be denied and every single village people has given importance to their culture in determining their distinctive identity. One thing that I have not given much priority in the discussion of this chapter is the politics of identity formation because this demands illustration in other discussion. But the local people recognized the terms ‘*Jhumma*’, ‘*Jumma land*’, ‘*Pahari*’, ‘*Adivasi*’ or ‘*Tribal*’ as a political process to express and unify their cultural distinctiveness. The question raised is where the Bangalees would fit their status and identity? It has been realized from the field that in these days the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras, for example, have made their living together in a way that a common cultural ground has developed which has been

¹⁹⁷ For more on this see Annexure-III (Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation 1900).

¹⁹⁸ Going to historical records it has been identified that in 1959 the Pakistani Government abolished the special status of the CHTs as “excluded area” and changed it into a “tribal area” by a Constitutional Act 46; the consequence was that the power of the traditional leaders further weakened and at the same time a higher influx of plain-land people started (Gain 2000:18).

¹⁹⁹ This has been quoted from the field. During discussion with one of the oldest member of a Tripura household, he uttered this with great significance.

termed as 'hill culture' keeping in mind that all the people of the CHTs are maintaining their own true and distinctive culture and identity²⁰⁰.

Not only differences in their cultural background but also language and clothes (as already mentioned) are boundary markers for distinguishing different ethnic communities in these *paras* and this has been reflected in the discussions on the three communities that has been made before. In this regard the Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* showed that traditional clothes, for example, are utilized to expressing their own identity despite being fashionable and modern, and throw the message that it is traditional norms and values which still remains and will remain forever as their core concern in determining their identity. Along with these religion has been identified as a feature of demonstrating their believing in common origin and identity. Thus it has been found that:

- a) the majority of the Chakma people in the village adhere to Buddhism, though now-a-days many of them have converted to Christianity²⁰¹;
- b) the Tripuras are traditionally Hindus; and
- c) the Bangalees are divided into their traditional religious practices as Hindus and Muslims.

Therefore, religion is a good example to understand the nature of ethnic features and identity. Accordingly food habit also reflects the distinctions among different ethnic communities and this is also related with the religious beliefs and practices of these people. Ethnic identities are, thus, constructed through a process of describing and re-describing one's own collectivity (Werbner 1997:229). However, it has been learnt from the field that whatever the identities the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras uphold have come from their true sense of belongingness to their ancestors' beliefs and practices despite different interests, ascriptions, characteristics, and entities exist among them. As an anthropologist I have learnt and always believe that identities should come from within the communities and it is up to their strategies (combining beliefs, values, norms and practices) to determine their true identity. The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras also shape their identity in the same way. In this regard it has been found significant to quote the statement of Manobendra N. Larma in the Parliament of Bangladesh Government:

“I am a Chakma. A Marma can never be a Chakma, a Chakma can never be a Bangalee ... I am a Chakma; I am not a Bangalee; I am a citizen of Bangladesh-Bangladeshi; you are also Bangladeshi, but your national identity is Bangalee; they (tribals) can never be Bangalees” (Shelley 1992:110).

Following this statement it can be concluded that identity along with ethnicity or nationalism²⁰² always implies the combination of various factors such as cultural, religious, economic and political ones. Thus following the nature of identity on the basis of their historical records it appeared that the structure of ethnic diversity in Beltali, Paltanjay and Singinala Paras for the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in particular, and in the CHTs in general, is a complex setting, but understandable through realizing the nature of multidimensional integrations processes operating among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities.

²⁰⁰ In this regard I have found Prashanta Tripura's comment significant where he puts it as “one must understand the dynamics of culture and identity of the people of CHT (or of any other region for that matter)” (Tripura 2000:97).

²⁰¹ For more on this see Amena Mohsin (2002).

²⁰² For more on this see Eva Gerharz (2000).

Religion can be viewed both as an ideological construct and a practical frame of reference for the day-to-day activities (Patra ed. 2010:XV); Real culture is not a dead mask. It is alive, but not like an organism which is born, grows old and then dies: it is more like the weather, which is always there and never disappears and can show a thousand different aspects in the course of a day or a year (Corry 2011).

CHAPTER-4: RELIGION, RITUALS AND CULTURAL FESTIVALS: NATURE OF SOCIAL RELATIONS AND INTERACTION

4.1 Religion and Culture for Ethnicity and Identity

4.2 Beliefs and Rituals: Connecting People

4.3 Observing Cultural Festivals: Composition of Interrelations of Ethnic Communities in the Hills

4.4 Patterns of Social Relations and Interaction: What Counts?

4.1 Religion and Culture for Ethnicity and Identity

Religion²⁰³ and culture are the two most significant aspects in determining or dealing with the ethnicity and identity of the ethnic communities in the hill tracts. Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic people of the study *paras* consider religion to be an integral part of their lives and believe that for every options of their livelihood strategies religion offers them a suitable solution. I have observed that they maintain their relationships with one another (both within and outside the community) where religion plays crucial roles. I have not found any one of the three communities to disagree with the fact that religion has the power to bring peace and happiness among the humans of the hills.

Culture²⁰⁴, on the other hand, has been viewed by these people as integrated with both individual and group relations. Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have their own cultural practices which are related to their community origin and identity²⁰⁵. Moreover, now-a-days, most of them consider that each of the communities have well established cultural phenomena. But by living in close proximity for a long period of time in the hill *paras*, they have respected as well as participated in their different cultural practices. I have elaborated the nature of respects and participation in the cultural practices or events of different communities in later discussions. As the main focus of this study has been to unfold the nature of ethnicity and identity considering the multidimensional pattern of interrelations among these ethnic communities, I have found that people think of religion and culture to be the most significant aspects, among others, for maintaining ethnicity and identity. In this regard it can be said that the processes of social solidarity and the multidimensional aspects of cultural interaction of the communities tend to go together and it is the main theme where religion and culture play significant roles. I have always tried to configure out the internal meaning of this type of thinking in assuming the question as 'how are ethnicity and identity patterned in the presence of boundary maintenance' (as Barth mentioned in his thesis) among the three communities.

Religion and Culture for Social Relations and Interaction

The Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura people living in Singinala, Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* have their own deep values connected with their religion and culture. All of them consider religion as a way to peace, happiness and a place for common interaction. Accordingly they judge religion as a basis for social relations, interaction and building social solidarity²⁰⁶. But in the context of the study *paras* it has been identified that these

²⁰³ Religion can be viewed both as an ideological construct and a practical frame of reference for the day-to-day activities (Patra, ed. 2010:XV); and a system of religion is associated with the following existential dimensions of mankind- God, world, man, evil and suffering, life after death, human destiny, ethical virtues, conduct and practices (Singh 2010:51). However, Durkheim defined religion as a unified set of beliefs and practices to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, - beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community – all those who adhere to them (Durkheim 1964 [1915]).

²⁰⁴ I have already defined the term 'culture' in 'Chapter-1' of this thesis.

²⁰⁵ In this regard I have found the following statement very significant: real culture is not a dead mask. It is alive, but not like an organism which is born, grows old and then dies: it is more like the weather, which is always there and never disappears and can show a thousand different aspects in the course of a day or a year (Corry 2011).

²⁰⁶ In this regard I have found Radcliffe-Brown's approach to religion relevant where he maintained that an orderly social life amongst human beings depends upon the presence in the

people have developed a strong social bondage. However, this does not mean that there are no conflicts of interests among these communities, but they try to minimize the conflicting interests. At this stage I have found it significant that despite the separateness in religious functions and cultures of each of these communities, both religion and culture play crucial role to unify the social environment of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the study *paras*. In this regard I have found it relevant to mention Godelier's perspective where he viewed the genesis of religion arising from two sources: the effect in consciousness of a specific type of historical relations of humans being with each other and with nature, and the effect of analogous thinking itself on the content of its representations (Godelier 1977).

To understand more about how religion and culture help in building social relations and interactions it is important to unfold the nature of each of these communities' attitudes towards their religious values and cultural practices embedded in their historically determined community feeling. And eventually they consider common language, culture, rituals and shared religious beliefs (or in a broader sense religion) for a feeling of ethnic affinity (based on an ethno-symbolic approach) despite differences and mechanism of boundary maintenance.

It has been obvious that living in the hill environment the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras hold onto their religious and cultural understandings and find solutions to any unwanted problems that take place both within and among the communities. I have seen the nature of social relation and interaction processes among these people and eventually organized the discussion from the perspectives of these communities. As I have already mentioned both Muslim and Hindu Bangalees are living in Singinala *para*, Buddhist and Christian Chakmas in Paltanjay *para*, and Hindu Tripuras in Beltali *para* respectively. What is the most striking feature is that living in close proximity for long, at one stage, they have established a fellow feeling at least in the context of religious and cultural practices. And in all the cases the members of these communities have a feeling and faith to devote their life and ways of living to the service of the God. This belief and faith, ultimately, organize not only their life but also their pattern of interaction and socialization processes attached to the hill environment.

From the point of view of their religious perspectives and cultural parameters it has been possible to identify the dimensions of interrelations among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. Therefore, following paragraphs a categorical analysis of the nature of social relations and interactions determined by the religious values and cultural understandings of these communities.

Contextualizing Social Relations and Interaction: Bangalees

There are two religious groups among the Bangalees of Singinala *para* in Khagrachari and culturally both these groups belong to the Bangalee cultural practices. In terms of religion they are the Muslims and the Hindus and their cultural practices, as mentioned above, are also centered around their religious values and beliefs, though linguistically they are Bangalees. Members of both the Muslims and Hindus (Bangalees) are living in this *para* for about 50-60 years and have developed a pattern of relationship to establish a

minds of members of a society certain sentiments, which control the behavior of the individual in relation to others; rites can therefore be shown to have a specific social function...(Radcliffe-Brown 1952).

unified society and social bondage. According to Jainal (35), one of the Muslim Bangalees of the *para*:

“...the main aspect of this social bondage and social relations is religion along with culture. Some of the factors for this (based on religion and culture – particularly through an understanding of Islamic traditions, beliefs and values) are – subjugation, obedience, submission, faith, believe in punishment, reward, judgment and peaceful living among others.”

The observance of different religious rituals and cultural festivals (these are discussed in the later sections of this chapter), as I have identified among the Muslim Bangalees, offers a great understanding and comprehensive interactive features not only within themselves but also among other ethnic communities (especially the Chakmas and Tripuras). In the words of Md. Yusuf (41), one of the eldest members of the Muslim Bangalees of the *para*:

“...religion is a broad aspect of our life, it gives us a lesson for peace, happiness, trust and respects towards humans being, its main thrust is the concept of ‘Din’²⁰⁷ which indicates a comprehensive system of life, and culture is our way of living and thinking which is displayed by various festivals through incorporating people from every religion, ethnic community and cultural background, and these help us to cooperate with others to enhance our social relations and bondages.”

Similarly, despite some grievances that took place during the unstable situations in the hills, all the Muslim Bangalees of this *para* have agreed that true believe in religious traditions and respects of culture have helped them to foster a good understanding with the Chakmas and Tripuras of the other two *paras*. Accordingly following aspects have been identified from the understandings of the Muslim Bangalees which they believe to be responsible for enhancing and maintaining social relations and interaction not only within themselves but also with the Chakmas and Tripuras based on religion and culture.

- a) *Cooperation*: The Muslim Bangalees’ religious beliefs and values as well as cultural practices teach them to develop a feeling or sense of cooperation and enhancement of social relations.
- b) *Searching for peace*: They consider religion and culture as broad aspects of real life and believe that it is religion which gives them path for a peaceful living.
- c) *Inter-ethnic relations*: They perform different religious rituals and cultural festivals such as different rites of passages (birth, marriage and death rituals), and Eid and New Year festivals among others. Through these religious and cultural practices they consider two things for ethnicity – it helps for a sentiment of common ethnicity for the Muslim Bangalees, and despite boundary maintenance they invite the other ethnic people (Chakmas and Tripuras) with different religious beliefs and cultural traditions which help them to develop a feeling of inter-ethnic relationship and social solidarity.
- d) *Participation*: In addition to their religious practices, different customs and traditions help them to come together with the Chakmas and Tripuras where both these

²⁰⁷ It is mentionable here that by the word ‘Din’ Yusuf has referred to the religion of Islam, its traditions, beliefs and values.

- communities have come to participate in various religious festivals. This, in other words, help to enrich a strong relational bondage in the hills.
- e) *Feeling of belongingness*: From their cognitive understanding the Muslim Bangalees consider that their sacred myths, sacred languages, religious orientations and articulations – all these do two things for their group solidarity. At one hand these reinforce ethnic differences, and on the other hand provide areas for ethnic cohesion by bringing in all the religions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity in the *paras*) and their practitioners into a sharing and feeling of belongingness both within and among the ethnic communities.
 - f) *Self-consciousness and self-esteem*: The Muslim Bangalees further illustrated that religion and culture cover their sense of self-consciousness as well as self-esteem which not only show their separate identity but also their mode of interaction with the Hindu Bangales, Chakmas and Tripuras. This does not necessarily mean that only religion is responsible for determining their identity, rather it helps them to carry on a faith in eternal aspects of human mind and emotion. Thus it appears from their understanding that this type of emotional engagement, to some extent, helps them to realize that humans are the first and foremost valuable resource of the nature where there is the need for cooperation and interaction for bringing social solidarity. This exemplifies that apart from culture, religion is one of the features associated with ethnic categories²⁰⁸.

Taking all these aspects of the Muslim Bangalees into account, obviously, it can be said that there are specific religious myths, symbols, rituals, cultural practices and traditions as well as memories of emotional attachment which help to maintain the pattern of relationships among these three communities.

But there is another factor which cannot be overlooked. This is concerned with the nature of conflicting relations that have occurred among the Muslim Bangalees and the Chakmas of the adjacent *paras* (Singinala and Paltanjay). One of the Muslim Bangalees of the *para*, Asad Rahman, has mentioned about an unpleasant event that took place during 2011 in a Muslim marriage ceremony over a conversation between two male guests invited to attend the party: one of them, Monir Hasan, belonged to the Muslim Bangalee of the *para* and the other person, Anup Chakma, belonged to the Chakma community of Paltanjay *para*. The conversation was based on a marriage that took place between a Muslim Bangalee male and a Chakma female in the year 2010. At one stage of their conversation both of them blamed each other's community responsible for this event which they believed to destroy their community feeling, emotion, and religious and cultural values. Accordingly and quite unexpectedly tension increased centering on the religious beliefs and values of the Bangalees and the Chakmas. For certain period of time none of them wanted to realize that, according to Asad, it was a case of affair marriage where both the families have settled the matter through a common understanding. However, before the tension goes creeping high Asad and other elder members of both the communities interfered and managed to control both Monir and Anup. Finally it was possible to control the situation before any further misunderstanding.

In natural settings or regular interactions I have seen both Monir and Anup to be good friends and regarding the unwanted situation, as described above, they have informed me

²⁰⁸ This type of example can be referred to as an objective understanding and according to Paul R. Brass, "the distinguishing cultural features that separate one group of people from another can be language, territory, religion, color, diet, dress or any of them" (Brass 1996:85).

later that it was nothing serious. It was a debate of their differences in cultures and traditions, but they maintain good connection with each other. It tells me another factor of ethnicity and identities (determined by culture or religion) that people in these *paras* like to present their differences and at the same time feel proud that these differences show their distinctive community belongingness.

Actually on this issue both the Bangalees and Chakmas now think that religion has a global aspect and human relations cannot be controlled or measured by any fixed parameter. Rather due to the impact of modernization and globalization, people of these communities, have started to accept and respect each other's religious and cultural values and practices. This further illustrates that the Muslim Bangalees believe that religion and culture have specific social functions to maintain social order, social relations and social attitudes. The following case study of Asad Rahman shows the understanding of the nature of social relations and interaction maintained among the Muslim Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities on the basis of religion and culture.

Case Study-1: Religion and culture for social relations and interaction

Asad Rahman (55) is a Muslim Bangalee resident of Singinala *para*. He has been living in this *para* for the last 45 years. When he moved to this area he was a boy of 10 years. Going back to 1968, Asad's father Torab took his family from Feni to this area consisting of four members (Asad, his father, mother and younger brother). They have migrated to Khagrachari and resided at Singinala *para* just before the liberation war of 1971 of Bangladesh. According to Asad the reason for this migration has been due to the competition for resources in the village of origin at Feni and offer from the Chakma Raja to do cultivation in the plain land of the hills. In course of time they have developed their livelihood in the village where both the bothers have received primary education. But their main concern is agriculture through which they have survived and still surviving. Asad got married in 1981 and now he has two children (one boy and one girl). His younger brother got married in 1989 while his mother died in 2004. Today he and his brother are living in the same compound but with separate households.

Asad has a long experience of observing the situations that took place both before and after the liberation of Bangladesh. He considers his identity both as a Bangalee and as a Muslim. This sort of identity refers to both cultural (taking linguistic origin as well) and religious identification. Apart from ethno-linguistic origin and identity, according to Asad, religion and culture play crucial role in addressing his daily affairs and in maintaining social relations. Asad considers religion and culture as strong weapons to bring peace in human life. In this case he and his family try to uphold the basic values and principles of the religion Islam and Bangalee culture which Asad believes to maintain not only his family life but also his social life through integrating people from various ethnic origins, particularly the Chakmas and Tripuras living around him and his village. It is not a mere fallacy, but various religious rituals and cultural festivals, as Asad believes, have brought the different categories of people towards an understanding of respecting each other. Asad thinks that considering the number, Muslim Bangalees are majority religious group in Bangladesh, but in case of Khagrachari (in other words in the CHTs) the Muslim Bangalees are minority where the majority groups are the Chakmas and Tripuras. Asad has not faced any difficulty or conflicting situations in performing his religious and cultural activities. Rather he thinks that all the religions and cultures in the hills have something in common which

addresses peace and harmony among humans being.

In the religious occasions such as birth, marriage and death rituals, *Eid* as well as in cultural festivals such as observing *Bangla* new year, various seasonal festivals, etc. Asad tries to invite not only the other Muslim Bangalee neighbors but also the Hindu Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. But Asad also mentioned that all the people from these communities are not equally eager to participate in all the religious and cultural functions. The thing that these religious and cultural functions (or in a broader sense religion) do is to establish a pattern of social network, interaction, connection and communication among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in the *paras*. According to Asad, whatever the tension exists in the *paras* of the hills in Khagrachari is centered on the issues like identity, traditional land rights and politically motivated interests.

Asad thinks that these problems are needed to be resolved by taking into account interests and thoughts of all people and community. Nothing can be imposed upon here. Initially Asad has been living peacefully with his family, children, and neighbors of different ethnic communities where religion and culture play significant role to establish a sense of social relation irrespective of age, sex, and ethnic identity. Asad further identified that globalization has brought changes in the patterns of religious and cultural functions. Whenever he meets with his other family members, relatives and members of other ethnic communities, they bring together new ideas which help them to be free from complexities and avoid conflicting interests.

Asad feels to see his family and the society in the hills to show respect to every cultures and communities. His family members, particularly the children, are growing up in an environment designed and displayed by the hills. His children are mixing with the children of the neighboring Chakmas and Tripuras and observing and participating in various religious and cultural activities in the hill *paras*. This, as he believes, is helping to develop a sense of belongingness and interrelations among different ethnic communities. In any situations Asad and his family members find themselves to be interlocked by the religious beliefs and values and staying for a long period of time in the hill *paras* they have learnt to respect all the people coming from different religions, cultures and ethnic communities. Overall Asad has identified religion and culture of every ethnic community as the most significant aspects for building and maintaining social relations and interactions at different stages of life.

The other group of the Bangalees living in Singinala *para* is the Hindu Bangalees who have their own religious understandings and cultural pattern to maintain their group solidarity and pattern of interactions with other Bangalees and ethnic communities. These Hindu Bangalees are less in number and they have settled in the village during the Pakistan period. They recall their history of settlement in the village about 60-65 years ago when their grandparents had come from Noakhali and Comilla regions to do jobs like cultivation, shop keeping and black smiths. In course of time they have come in close contact with the Chakmas and Tripuras with whom they have developed a relationship of sharing of thoughts, values and ideas (this ultimately takes on their religious and cultural articulations).

They believe that among many other aspects religion and culture are strong factors in determining a peaceful relation with all humans being. But they are not the only ones who follow the religion Hindu, the Tripuras are also the followers of Hindu religion. At this point the Hindu Bangalees have something common with the Tripuras at least in the

context of religion. However, in the context of culture they are different from the Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras and they consider their cultural distinctiveness very much connected with their religious understandings and Bangalee orientation. Also language plays important role in this case. According to Rajib, one of the eldest members of the Hindu Bangalees of Singinala *para*:

“...our religion has a deep value orientation for us, it helps us believing that we are humans and we should love and respect each and every creatures on earth that God has created, it is something eternal and sets our mind towards a peaceful living, believing common understanding for every humans; our culture has distinct nature attached to religion, language and our ancestors’ beliefs, values, knowledge, and customs that we are practicing for centuries; though we have distinct cultural orientation, it also helps us to interact with other ethnic communities of inside and outside the *para* through our cultural activities.”

They have never come into a conflicting relation with the Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities after settling in this *para*. Through the course of my living in the *para* during my fieldwork I have always found that these people consider religion and also culture to bring a tolerable relationship with all the people in the locality. They also believe that it is their belief in religious values and cultural traditions that strengthened a good relation with the Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. However, just like the Muslim Bangalees, I have figured out following key aspects which the Hindu Bangalees think noteworthy in maintaining and developing good social network and interaction among various ethnic communities and groups of people linked with religion and culture.

- a) *Beliefs, values and traditions*: The Hindu Bangalees give importance to Hindu religious beliefs and values (they always practice these and keep their children attached to these) and cultural traditions, and initially think that whatever they have to maintain good relation with their *para* neighbors as well as the Chakmas and Tripuras, these have sprung from their religious beliefs and values.
- b) *Interactions*: They believe that religion offers a superhuman or supra-empirical authority in constructing explanations and judgments to shape their behavior for a peaceful living and understanding with other people. At the same time culture helps them to offer their traditions to others and inviting people of Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities help them to develop interaction and learn about every culture of the hills.
- c) *Performance and observation of rituals and festivals*: Through performing different religious rituals and festivals (they commonly observe a number of *puja* festivals throughout the year) the Hindu Bangalees believe that religion brings few things for inter-ethnic dynamics and relationships – helps develop a communal package for the ethnic groups, determines the boundaries for all the ethnic communities (thus helps shaping a separate identity), and finally elaborate their nature of mixing with other people who have different religious identity.
- d) *Social bondage through openness of customs and traditions*: They consider that Hindu religious customs and their cultural traditions offer a broad and open invitation for the people of any ethnic, religious and cultural identity and accordingly help develop a strong social bondage within the people (Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras). They further think that this has given them a special understanding in the hills.
- e) *Collectivity*: Though religions differ in approach they think that it is their religious sacred myths, language, and cultural practices which are theologically and organizationally elaborated and explicit. They further believe that these features of

their religion and also their ways of thinking not only indicate the nature of differences in ethnicity but also show that ethnicity and interactions in the hill paras are expressed and maintained collectively.

- f) *Cohesiveness*: Finally they see the religious and cultural differences not merely as a source for ethnic boundary maintenance, but most importantly as a source for group identity. They think that identity is closely associated with religion and culture and these show paths for group cohesion. Thus respecting every religion and culture plays decisive role for social bondage. Historically, according to them, the situations in the hills differ from that of the plain lands of Bangladesh. Because of this it is their religion, as they perceive, which has kept them to instigate a cohesive relation with other ethnic communities of the *paras*.

All these aspects of these Hindu Bangalees indicate that in maintaining social relations and interaction with the people of different ethnic communities they give preference to religious activities and these are related to their emotional attachment and cultural atmosphere. This can be referred to as the bottom line of ethnicity for the Hindi Bangalees where they put emphasis on religion and culture for maintaining relations and identification²⁰⁹. Religion, as I have observed among these people, is the beauty of their life and according to them principles of religion, faith in it and believing in God show them the path for a peaceful living in the society. In other words they put religious rituals, beliefs and activities, and also their ways of thinking, customs, knowledge and behavior (i.e. their culture) as the determinant factors, among many others, in the processes of ethnicity and identity; more specifically teaches them how to maintain social relations.

It has been found significant among the resident Hindu Bangalees of Singinala *para* that they give preference to the practice of teaching their children the various religious norms and values, and their cultural values as well which in turn (according to their understandings) develop a sense of respect towards other people, their cultures and religions. At the same time these help to format an attitude for common understanding and interacting with others in the community and society. They believe that all these senses and attitudes grooms up from within the family. They maintain a good relation with the Chakmas and Tripuras, and they think that various religious occasions are good events for establishing cohesive relations with every community both within and outside the *para*. They do not consider their patterns of relation as conflicting ones and one of the main reasons for this, according to their perspective, is religion. Many more times I have heard from the elder members of the Hindu Bangalees that the hill offers them such a nice environment where all the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura peoples take religion for the following three things:

- i) it shapes their nature of identity to some extent (they think that different religions have different beliefs and values which, in turn, are taken as some aspects of determining their identity in the society);
- ii) it is an indicator for their boundary maintenance in the sense that at some level of their interaction with the people of other religions, cultures and communities they give priority to religion (in recent times and I have also

²⁰⁹ In this regard it can be mentioned that when assessing what religion adds to ethnic identification and inter-ethnic relations, it is essential to note that there are critical differences among religions which bear directly on how ethnicity is expressed and maintained collectively (Enloe 1996).

observed in the *para* that despite this boundary marker intermarriages are taking place between the Bangalees and Chakmas, and Bangalees and Tripuras); and

- iii) it helps to maintain a good social relation and interaction with others (they believe that the dynamics of interactions among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras bear some connection with religion).

However, the following case study of Pijush Saha shows the nature of social relations and interactions of the Hindu Bangalees with the Chakmas and Tripuras based on religion and culture.

Case Study-2: Ways to maintain good social relations

Arjun Datta (58) is a Hindu Bangalee resident of Singinala *para*. He has been living in this *para* for the last 44 years. Actually when he was at the age of 16 years his father Brajamohan migrated from Noakhali in 1966 with his family members (Arjun, his father, mother, a younger brother and a sister). Initially they settled in Rahgarh, but during 1968 they moved to this *para*. The reasons for their migration and settlement in this *para* have been in search for better opportunity for livelihood and they also came to know from other people back in Noakhali about better opportunity in the hills. His father started working as a day laborer in the land of the Chakma circle chief in the plains of the river Chengi. Later he started a small business which was a grocery shop in the town market. Till now Arjun is running this business. Arjun has not been able to continue his education further. Being the eldest son he had to look after his father's business. At the same time he had to look after the agricultural activities which his father used to do. His younger brother Prashad now lives in Dhaka with his family where he is a bus driver. On the other hand Arjun's youngest sister Shirin lives in the same *para* with her husband who is an auto vehicle²¹⁰ driver in the town.

Arjun got married in 1977 and he has two children both of whom are boys. His father died in 1993 and his mother is still alive and lives with him. Arjun's wife is a housewife and their sons are at the ages of 32 years and 26 years. Arjun arranged marriage for his eldest son in 2007 and they also have a daughter and live with Arjun. His second son lives with him too and works in an automobile workshop in the town. His eldest son helps him in his business. However, the total number of his family member is 7. Though Arjun lives with his children but he never interrupts in his children's activities. Rather Arjun tries to maintain a good family bondage and according to him it has been made possible because he always tried to teach his children about social responsibilities and respect for others.

Arjun has observed so many ups and downs in the hills in the course of his long term living here. These have taught him, as he believes, not only how to live in the hill environment but also how to interact with different types of people. He has a mixed experience (sometimes bitter and sometimes pleasing) in the *para*. This is because of unrest situations that existed before the peace accord of 1997. Arjun has seen armed movement in the *para* and its adjacent areas and he regards this as a political activity.

²¹⁰ It is a kind of electric taxi with three wheels and it works with rechargeable battery which needs to be recharged by electricity every day. Now-a-days this type of motor vehicle is seen almost everywhere in the town of Khagrachari. At the same time this vehicle is available in every Upazilas throughout the country and has created a job opportunity for many people, but at the cost of consuming electricity.

But according to him two things never changed in the hills and these are religion and culture. He used the term 'never changed' in the sense that despite several unpleasant or bitter situations in the area, religion and culture or more specifically various religious and cultural activities have played significant roles to bring the people of diverse religions and cultural identity into a close interaction.

Arjun has elaborately mentioned about the nature of social relations and pattern of integration or interaction with the Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the adjacent *paras* and found it important that their beliefs and cultural practices are responsible, in many occasions, for maintaining a good social relation among them. Arjun further maintained that whatever happens in the hills, at the end of the day, it is their values, norms, customs and traditions which help to shape their good social bondage both inside and outside the *para*. Arjun sometimes feels that the Hindu Bangalees are among the most minority groups in the hills, but this does not mean that they are suffering from any hard discrimination. Rather according to him, long term staying in the hill *para* and mixing with the Muslim Bangalees and particularly with the Chakmas and Tripuras have given them ample opportunity to build good understandings.

Arjun has passed a major portion of his young age in this hill *para*, dealing with a variety of people in the *para* and also in the market areas of the town, and in due course learnt from his father a lot of things that he thinks have helped him to know and live in different situations in the hills. More importantly he believes that their religious beliefs and traditional cultural practices are very closely attached to their day to day activities and he used to teach his family members, particularly his children, about the importance of religion and culture. Because Arjun thinks that people having good religious orientations and respects for own culture can never do harm to others. To a certain extent these things together bring a wealth of good social bondage and affordable behavior. These, in turn (as Arjun believes), show the nature of how people used to classify themselves and go for admirable group relationships. At the same time people become aware of their origin and formation of identity.

The places for peoples' interaction are various religious activities where Arjun invites the Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras to marriage ceremonies, birth related ceremonies, and all the puja festivals. At the same time he takes part in organizing various cultural programs such as observing new year festival, arranging feasts during birth days of children, assembling together for sharing community traditions, and representing their customs and traditions of food, dress, and ornaments among others. These initiatives create such a warm environment where participating people get an opportunity to know each other. Similarly Arjun and his family members also participate in other community's programs. The main theme of these participations is to know each other more closely, respect each other's culture and religion, and adapt to the changing aspects of human relations.

Finally Arjun mentioned that globalization, marketization and incorporation of modern goods and technologies have brought some changes to the structure of the society and test of the people in the hills. Like the other parts of Bangladesh, CHTs and particularly the *paras* and towns of Khagrachari have gone through these changes. Eventually in Arjun's terms:

"...we are now closely attached to one another, we share our feelings and

emotions, we participate in all the activities in the hills and particularly those which we think important indicator for group cohesion, we also share our sorrows and joys; ethnically we are different, we are also different in terms of religion, culture and physical appearances; but still maintain a good social relation and we believe that this is possible because of respecting ourselves as humans and every aspects of our lives.”

Contextualizing Social Relations and Interaction: Chakmas and Tripuras

The Chakmas and Tripuras live in Paltanjay and Beltali *paras*²¹¹ respectively and they display their own pattern of social relations, identity formation and cultural interaction or human social integration. Both the communities are living in these *paras* for hundreds of years and they consider themselves as the earliest inhabitants of the area. Though they have a definite historical origin to their identity as well as coming to these *paras*, but in course of living for hundreds of years they have developed a special type of livelihood pattern. As the historical records²¹² declare the Chakmas and Tripuras are the early settlers of this area. However, in discussing about the role of religion and culture for maintaining social relations and processes of interaction, they have their own ways of understandings. This is further reflected in the following agreement of the ‘Peace Accord of 1997’:

“...the government and elected representative shall make efforts to maintain separate culture and tradition of the tribals. The government in order to develop the tribal cultural activities at the national level it shall provide necessary patronization and assistance²¹³.”

At this stage of discussion I have elaborately mentioned about the ways through which both these communities maintain their social relations and interactions. I have organized the discussion with separate examples taken from the Chakmas and Tripuras. Thinking of power relations the Chakmas are the dominant group in the para as well as in the area, and then comes the Tripuras. But here my concern is the pattern of ethnicity and identity of these communities through an understanding of their preferences to religion and culture in the society. It is mentionable here that the Chakmas are the followers of both Buddhism and Christianity, while the Tripuras are the followers of Hinduism. But along with these their main identity is that they are the ethnic communities with the name Chakma and Tripura, and they consider that they have their identical ways of thinking.

Though the Chakmas and Tripuras have differences in their religion but they think that it is their cultural traditions which play vital role in determining ethnic categorization, group relations, social solidarity and processes of interaction. Through the course of my living with them I have learnt that they are more responsive and their ways of thinking and cultural practices differ from the Bangalees to a marked extent. But to some extent both the Chakmas and Tripuras think of themselves as the children of the hills and rivers and their religion and culture (especially) are the ornaments of the hills.

²¹¹ For more about their areas of living see Chapter-3 of this thesis.

²¹² I have elaborately discussed about the historical records of the origin and settlement of the Chakmas and Tripuras in this area in Chapter-3 of this thesis.

²¹³ For more see Annexure-IV: ‘Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord (Treaty)-1997’ of this Thesis.

According to Subal Chakma of Paltanjay *para*:

“...we think of ourselves as the children of the hills, our culture as an identical one with offerings for all humans, and our religious beliefs and practices as more humanistic one; we have our separate identity as Chakmas and historical origin and development as residents in the hills of this area which displays our boundary maintenance as well; still we have a good social relation and cultural interaction not only with the Tripuras and Bangalees but also with the other ethnic communities of different *paras* as well as of the CHTs.”

At the same time according to Bibhuti Tripura of Beltali *para*:

“...we have a long history to our religious and cultural identity; we believe that our religious beliefs, rituals, values and norms are guided by our cultural traditions and all these together shape our meaningful communication and interaction with the Bangalees, Chakmas and people of other ethnic communities; we have differences in our ways of thinking, but still respecting each other’s religious and cultural values and norms has given an environment for creating an amicable social solidarity and cultural interaction in general.”

Taking these two perspectives into account I have found it crucial that both the Chakmas and Tripuras think that among many other factors religion and culture are the significant ones for establishing and maintaining good social relations and interaction among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras*. And in practical I have observed that all these communities have developed such type of relations despite the fact that they maintain their boundaries in some aspects to uphold their identity. However, following are some of the factors that I have learnt from the Chakmas and Tripuras where they recognize religion and culture responsible for enhancing social relations and interaction.

- a) *Cooperation*: The Christian Chakmas believe that their religious beliefs, rituals and cultural traditions give them the learning to cooperate with other people for a good social relation; the Buddhist Chakmas have their spirit of respecting all creatures on earth and responsive cultural traditions which, in turn, teaches how to develop a cohesive relation with the other community members as well as the members of own community²¹⁴. On the other hand the Tripuras are the followers of Hindu religion but their beliefs and religious practices are different from caste Hindus²¹⁵; their religious understanding and dynamic cultural practices enable them to enrich their relations with the Bangalees and Chakmas, in particular, for a better living.

²¹⁴ The vast majority of Chakmas are Buddhists, and they form the largest Buddhist population in Bangladesh. Integrated in their Buddhist practice are older religious elements, such as worship of the powers of nature. Culturally, the Chakmas are in many ways more Southeast Asian than South Asian. They know neither the dietary restrictions nor the strict gender segregation of their Bangalee neighbors (Islam, ed. 2006; van Schendel 1992).

²¹⁵ The Tripuras worship the God Shiva, the Goddess Kali and 14 other gods and goddesses. They also believe in evil spirits, incorporeal beings and demons, who have their abode in jungles. They sacrifice animals and birds in the name of their gods and goddesses. They believe that rivers, lakes and canals were once human beings and but sacrificed their lives and turned into nature bodies to serve mankind. Like Hindus, Tripuras believe in life hereafter and consider that those who have done good work will live in ease and comfort in the next life but that wrong doers will face ceaseless toil and constant harassment (Islam, ed. 2006).

- b) *Believing in religious beliefs and preservation of cultural traits*: Both the Chakmas and Tripuras think that believing in their respective religious beliefs and practices from generation to generation as well as stabilization and preservation of their own cultural traits or in other words their cultural processes (despite changes and developments due to modernization and globalization processes) have designed their way of life in such a fashion to lift up a sustainable interactive relation with other peoples' beliefs, values and understandings.
- c) *Dynamism*: Both these ethnic communities consider that their religious beliefs, rituals and cultural practices are very close to their daily life and observances of all the religious programs and cultural festivals such as Christmas, *Pujas*, new year festivals (locally known as '*Biju*' for the Chakmas and '*Bwisu*' for the Tripuras) offer them to maintain a dynamic relation with all the people both inside and outside their *paras*. These, in turn, do two things for them: firstly it shows their nature of cooperativeness in order to establish a comprehensive social relation in the hills; and secondly it determines their individual community identity or ethnic community with distinct religious and cultural aspects.
- d) *All about traditions*: Altogether they think that they have learnt to live in peace with every community members in the hills which they have achieved from their age old norms, values and traditions.
- e) *Markers of ethnicity and identity*: It is their religious myths, language pattern²¹⁶ (they consider language as the crucial marker of ethnic identity and medium for interaction) and explicit theological understandings as well as indigenouness of their cultural practices which help to maintain a collective social bondage in the society.
- f) *Respects*: Finally they put forward the idea that for a good social relation and peaceful living people of every ethnic community needs to respect all the religions, languages and cultures. Through these processes, according to the Chakmas and Tripuras, a tolerable environment has been made possible in the hills. However, they have not forgotten the fact that their traditional rights should not be interrupted through some unexpected and irresponsible political interventions from any inside or outside actors (or through their activities).

All these features reflect that both the Chakmas and Tripuras consider their religions and cultures as marked indicators for ethnicity and identity. Throughout my interaction with them during fieldwork both the ethnic communities shape and reshape or design and redesign their self-consciousness and interest in other peoples' cultures and religions. On top of these they place humanity and believe that this humanity sprang up from their core beliefs and cultural practices (or community traditions). They try to forget the past

²¹⁶ Chakmas distinguish themselves from surrounding groups by their language. Although there are indications that Chakmas used to speak a Tibeto-Burman language, their present language is Indo-European. It is closely related in structure to Chittagonian Bangalee from which it differs by a distinct vocabulary. The Chakma language has its own script, although today this is not commonly used and Chakma is now usually written in Bangla letters. Chakma literature runs from the oral traditions of the *gengkhubli* singers through literary periodicals (the first of which was *Goirika* started in 1936) to modern poetry. On the other hand the language of Tripuras (*Kokborok*) belongs to the *Bodo* group, which has its origin in the Assam branch of the Tibeto-Burma language under the Sino-Tibetan family. The script of the Tripura language has some similarities with that of the Chakma language, but although the alphabet appears to be similar, the two languages differ very much in pronunciation and the reading procedure. *Kokborok* was widely used in writing letters, demonstrating magic, and preparing lists of indigenous medicine (Islam, ed. 2006). However, most of the Chakmas and Tripuras are bilingual and speak Chakma/ Tripura and Bangla; many know other regional languages as well.

incidences of conflict only if their traditional rights are not harmed and to go ahead for a cohesive and comprehensive relationship with every ethnic community in the *paras* and hill areas. According to these two communities there are some marked differences between the Bangalees and themselves and some of these are – religion, culture, traditional rights, rituals, habits, norms, values and social and political issues. In other words these are said to be the differences between the mainstream populations and the small ethnic communities²¹⁷. According to them these differences further determine their identity and pattern of boundary maintenance. In this regard Barth's conceptualization of boundary maintenance as well as group relationship becomes visible where both these communities expressed that despite clear boundaries among various communities they try to develop an environment of inter-ethnic relations of communication and interaction.

The Chakmas are the dominant groups in the *para* and town and the Tripuras are less dominant than the Chakmas. On the other hand the Bangalees find themselves here as dominated groups. This has a historical background and before the peace accord of 1997 several incidents made the Chakmas, Tripuras and several other ethnic communities to develop distrust towards the state and the mainstream peoples. But, as I have found in these days, things have changed. Not only the Bangalees but also the other people (both inside and outside their *paras* in the hills) have come to know more about the religion and culture of the Chakmas and Tripuras. Many of the Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* now think that these types of believing and respecting in their religion and culture have played significant roles to create an environment of good relation among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. There are many other issues which come in connection with the ethnic communities and these are no less important to show the dynamic interrelations, but I have discussed about the ways through which religion and culture of every community have been given priority.

It has been already mentioned that religion and culture are broad terms and in later sections of this chapter I have elaborated the same terms with some examples. The Chakmas and Tripuras believe that humans cannot live or survive without interaction and their religion and culture provide a ground for all humans in the *paras* or in the hills to come and share their traditions. However, here two case studies have been presented (one from the Chakmas and the other from the Tripuras) which show their nature of social relations and interaction through religion and culture.

Case Study-3: Chakma's identical nature of social relations and interaction

Sushomoy Chakma (75) is a Buddhist and lives in Paltanjay *para* with his wife and son. His ancestors have come to Khagrachari more than 200 years ago and his father came to Paltanjay *para* during 1930s. He can remember so many things that took place in Khagrachari and in the CHTs. Among the Chakmas living in this *para* he is considered as one of the most knowledgeable persons with lot of experiences during the course of his living in the CHTs. He has two sons and one daughter. His elder son lives in town with his family and has converted to Christianity, while his only daughter lives in

²¹⁷ Here I have intentionally used the lines 'mainstream populations and the small ethnic communities' to refer to the fact that now-a-days not only the state but also various other institutions and persons are using these lines. In most of the cases these types of comments are made to undermine those ethnic communities who are less in number. But number is not the only indicator on the basis of which differences should be made. It is their community identity and cultural traditions which are the major factors to recognize them in the society.

Dhaka with her husband. On the other hand his youngest son lives with him in his house and looks after the family business. Sushomoy Chakma has two younger brothers who have settled in the towns and whenever they find time come to visit him. He has a large amount of land (both in the hills and in the plains of the hills) where he cultivates various seasonal crops along with turmeric and tobacco. He is doing well with his business. And at this age he looks to the changes that took place both in the village and in the town.

With his vast knowledge and experience he always put emphasis on the community's traditions. He thinks that this tradition is designed by the Chakma religion and culture. He also considers that Buddhist beliefs and practices have given him and his community an independent status and attitude to establish a separate identity. At the same time Sushomoy believes that the Chakma culture is so fabulous that it invites people of any age, sex, religion and culture to the world of Chakmas. To some extent he thinks of himself to be more focused on traditions and that is why his identity as Chakma is very significant for him. Despite the fact that modernization and globalization are forcing changes in the community and society, he considers that people should not forget their ancestors' beliefs and values.

Sushomoy organizes religious and cultural activities or programs in his house where he invites not only his relatives but also other community members such as the Bangalees and Tripuras. At the same time he participates in other community's programs. He puts his community identity and culture at the first place. At the same time he thinks that one cannot avoid the pattern of social interaction taking place among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in these days. At this point he mentioned that one of his brother's sons married a Muslim Bangalee girl and at the same time his brother's daughter married a Muslim Bangalee boy. With this example he pointed to the fact that things are changing and today the Bangalees (particularly those who are living here for more years than the settler Bangalees), Chakmas and Tripuras are coming into close contact with each other. This is reflected most, according to him, in the case of observing various religious and cultural festivals. In case of his interaction with the Bangalees and Tripuras he has experienced both conflicting and tolerable situations: he addresses the conflicting situations associated more with political and land based (right based) issues, and the tolerable situations associated with religion and culture. These are expressed through new year festivals, annual prayers and cultivation as well as harvest based rituals. Among others he identifies marriage ceremonies, birth and death rituals, and name giving ceremonies.

Accordingly Sushomoy feels that when the members of different communities (Bangalees, Chakmas or Tripuras) live together or side by side for a long period of time, interact with each other for daily matters, meet in the market places and offices regularly, and interact in the *paras* during family programs or different festivals, they start to believe in a cooperative relationship. He also thinks that conflicting relations exist despite this cooperativeness and one of the major strengths of both religion and culture is to minimize the conflicting relations. This is how Sushomoy has lived and mixed with the Bangalees and Tripuras throughout the years. In other words his experiences illustrate that the dynamic relations among the three communities operate with ups and downs in their day to day interaction and no one can deny the importance of religion and culture for a better relationship among these ethnic communities of the *paras*.

Case Study-4: Tripura's believe in healthy relations through good attitudes

Bina Tripura (40) is a resident of Beltali *para* and she lives with her husband. She has two children and both of them are girls who are at the ages of 12 and 15 years respectively. Her parents live in Dighinala and after marriage she came here with her husband. Bina does agricultural works in their own land beside the *Chengi* river, looks after the children and also does the household activities. Her husband has a boutique shop in the town market. Bina also works with her hand loom to produce the cloths needed for her family members. Some part of her production also goes to the market for sell and from there she gets some money for her family need. So Bina is a responsible, self-employed, hard working and successful women and represents the strength of Tripura women in the hills. Regarding religion and culture she has a good understanding and she thinks that the Tripura community is very rich in its religion, culture and tradition. In fact I have found her to be the most responsive and responsible women with a wealth of knowledge about various social, political, religious and cultural aspects of her community as well as of other communities.

Bina expressed that the Tripuras of Beltali *para* have the wealth of religious and cultural traditions and they are preserving and practicing their religion and culture for centuries. She elaborated that she has learnt to live and interact with the Bangalees and Chakmas in different conditions from her parents and other members of the community. She thinks that religion has provided her with good spiritual beliefs and values and with this wealth she finds herself in a good position to interact with other members of the society. In case of culture she considers that the Tripura culture is a wealth of fabulous songs, literature, drama, dress, ornaments, traditions and language. All these together make them natural in interacting with the Bangalees and Chakmas. But she also remembers how her community and members of other ethnic communities have been exploited in the past through torture, unwanted intervention by the state authority and inter-ethnic conflict over their rights based issues.

According to Bina things have changed and are changing every time in the hills. She now finds even within her family and neighbors that they are mixing with most of the people of Bangalees and Chakmas at many places and in many occasions. She realizes that two things are responsible for such understandings: it is religion or more specifically performing the religious rituals and festivals with a global mind setup; and it is the colorful culture and tradition or more specifically observing Tripura cultural festivals by inviting and incorporating in, and sharing with other community people. Thus she puts forward that the main force behind this is the 'Tripuras' culture of recessive nature, openness and accommodating of other people and their culture.

She further maintains that despite these social and cultural interactions, especially through religion and culture, she clearly marks her Tripura origin and identity, and this is where a sharp boundary is maintained. However, while thinking about social relation and integration with the Bangalees and Chakmas she identifies religion to play significant role. Bina has oriented her family members with the cultures of Bangalees and Chakmas and in course of participating in these communities' festivals they have learnt about others too. Taking all these into account Bina maintains the following views:

“...we believe that no one of us wants to live in a conflicting environment and for the Tripuras, Bangalees and Chakmas it becomes obvious that living in close proximity and interacting for many years we have really get to understand

each others' norms, values and emotions; this is the process through which a tolerable social bondage and interactive pattern of social relation have been possible in these *paras* of the hills."

4.2 Beliefs and Rituals: Connecting People

So far I have discussed about the roles of religion and culture of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of Singinala, Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* of Khagrachari for maintaining their social relations and interactions. Through this discussion it has been identified that different myths, rituals and festivals of religion and culture of these communities are considered for maintaining the multidimensional interrelations. In this regard Smith argued that we need to pay more attention to the subjective elements of ethnic survival, such as ethnic memories, values, symbols, myths and traditions (Smith 1996:189). At this stage I have analyzed the role of religious beliefs and rituals, in particular, of these communities to understand the nature of interrelations further with some examples. It is quite obvious that religious rites and doctrines are seen as simply the codified form of an original religious experience (Morris 1987:167) and I have observed that the religious experiences of these three community people help them to foster their interrelations as a sustainable and understandable one.

It has been also found natural among the people of these *paras* that they give special importance to religious rites, rituals and festivals to create a platform for communication and interaction. At the same time these communities work as social organizations where their religious beliefs, rituals, and values and norms justify their identity as well determined by their community origin and historical background. For any kind of interaction all these communities do not forget to maintain their basic differences, too. Before going to unveil the nature of religious beliefs, rituals and festivals for dynamic interrelations, I have found it relevant to mention the following few lines from Leach's conception of religious rituals, behavior, social action and communication:

'...social action fall on a continuum with sacred and profane which indicate aspects of almost any kind of behavior; thus ritual is a symbolic statement that says something about the individual or event and Leach conjoins, under the heading of ritual, behavior that is considered simply communicative such as magico-religious behavior; however, ritual action represents a social structure (ritual action and belief are alike to be understood as forms of symbolic statement about the social order) where ritual makes explicit the social structure...the structure which is symbolized in ritual is the system of socially approved proper relations between individuals and groups' (Morris 1987; Leach 1954, 1976).

From this perspective of Leach on the point of maintaining proper social relations between individuals and groups it has been identified that to some extent the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras represent a social model of communication and interaction through religious beliefs and rituals. These, in other words, signals their identification. Irrespective of their origin and identity these, on the other hand, guide as well as direct their patterns of interactions. Moreover, these patterns of social interactions lead to emotional attachment among various communities which, in turn, refers to their nature of ethnicity. Following is a discussion on various aspects of religions of Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras through which they maintain their social relations in the hill *paras*.

I have mainly analyzed the beliefs and functions attached to the most three important aspects of their life: birth oriented ceremonies, marriage and death rituals.

Birth: How Life Begins?

Every community's people, whether he or she is a Bangalee, Chakma or Tripura, give special importance to birth related rituals and ceremonies. I have observed the birth rituals functionally among the three communities where a lot of people assembled together to wish the new member of a family. It brings joy and happiness not only to the family but also to the entire community. There has not been seen any differences in the joyful and smiling behavior of these three community people on the occasion of the birth of a child. But definitely there are significant differences when it comes to their way of performing birth rituals associated with their religious beliefs and practices:

- i. the Muslims (Bangalees) have their ideological standpoint;
- ii. the Hindus (both the Bangalees and Tripuras) do the ceremonies with great emphasis on what their religion directs; and
- iii. the Christians and Buddhists (Chakmas) have core aspects of religious perspectives.

Differences of performances do exist with these categories which, in turn, also indicate their separate identity. But in these three *paras* and among these three communities I have found one thing common where all of them are very much eager to invite others (people of each of these three communities) to observe the birth ceremony and to pray for the new born baby of the family. Thus the areas of interaction among these three communities have been outlined here in order to understand how they consider their interrelations despite few conflicting situations.

Muslim Bangalees

For the Muslim Bangalees of Singinala *para* the ceremonies of birth starts when the family, particularly the mother of the husband, declares that the wife (daughter-in-law) is pregnant. They share the news with other members of the family and all the family members pray for the better growth and health of both the child and mother. Special cares are given to the wife. Certain religious rules and regulations (also myth) are followed by the family such as keeping prayers regularly, restrictions on the pregnant wife from going outside or mixing with the strangers, if needed to go outside (for example to visit the doctor for regular health checkup) it is exclusively done during day light, and covering her hair with a piece of cloth among others. When the time of pregnancy reaches to seven months, the family offers a feast known as '*saat kbawa*' (seventh feast) which they consider highly religious and where they invite not only their other relatives but also some of their close neighbors. I have participated in such a feast of a family of Sirajul Alom in the *para*. They are living in this *para* for nearly 40 years. In this feast I have seen a number of Hindu Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras who are very close to the head of that family. I have been introduced to all the guests once again, though I have already met with them in Paltanjay and Beltali *paras*. One of the most striking features of the feast has been to pray for the mother for a safe delivery and better health of both the mother and child after delivery. The participant guests prayed from their own religious views. But this type of participation is not widely practiced in all the Muslim Bangalee families. There are exceptions where there are many families who

usually organize this feast entirely restricted within the family and close relatives. Again this practice of inviting people of Hindu Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras indicates that despite ethnic boundaries, it canalizes a pattern of social life operating in the hills with an understandable social relation. With this I have found these Muslim Bangalees believing that this helps them for a peaceful living in the society. Similarly when the child is born they inform all the people of the *para* and it brings them an extra privilege for further exchange of feeling and emotion with the others. They offer sweetmeat to the relatives and neighbors and think that with this new life they see the beginning of a new social life with much sharing of ideas, religious values and respects for others.

Hindu Bangalees

For the Hindu Bangalees of Singinala *para* giving birth to child in any family is a special one. Like their neighboring Muslim Bangalees of the *para*, they also bear significant religious rituals during women's pregnancy, child delivery and rearing up of the child. There are lots of rituals and myths followed by them. According to Pijush Saha, one of the respectable persons of the *para*:

“...it is very common for us to maintain all the rituals and myths; at the same time we give special priority to follow certain religious rules and regulations, and we consider these exclusively family centered”.

They also call the program of seven months of the pregnant mother as '*saat kbawa*' (seventh feast). Due to some religious barriers they do not dine with the Muslim Bangalees, but at the same time they give it special preference to invite the Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras to have a visit in the occasion and pray for the mother and her baby in the womb. I have observed it very closely that now-a-days these Hindu Bangalees do not maintain a rigid boundary in observing such programs and accordingly after the birth of the child they find it a great pleasure and opportunity to make the event a global one. Global in the sense that they consider this as a long journey of the new baby and hope that with the blessings of all relatives and neighbors, the baby will have a good fortune. During these times, i.e. from pregnancy to delivery and thereafter, they arrange several *pujas* (prayers) both in the house and at the temple for the wellbeing of the mother and her baby. This shows the persistence of interaction of these people with others and this, in turn, indicates both interaction and identification of the Hindu Bangalees with the Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras respectively. Not only the Muslim Bangalees but also the Chakmas and Tripuras are invited in these types of functions. It seems quite similar to that of the Muslim Bangalees, but the basic difference is in the religious understandings. Another important aspect of the birth related rituals for them is that they consider the beginning of life of an individual of their community to be started with the blessings of all the community people surrounding them which, in turn, shows the interactional feature or inter-ethnic relations of the people of the *paras* in the hills. These Hindu Bangalees, thus, give a lot of importance to these types of interactions through the courses of life beginning rituals.

Chakmas

When it comes to the Chakmas of Paltanjay *para*, they have their own easy of performing the birth related rituals. These differ from the Bangalees in every aspect. It is

full of life, full of joy and happiness with blessings. At every stage of birth related rituals they follow their community rules, norms and values. Some of the rituals they follow are:

- i. 'ghila-kojoi' – a kind of water mixed with wild tamarind;
- ii. 'vaatmoja-dena' – serving the pregnant mother with rice and curry tied in a banana leaf; and
- iii. 'kerenju-dhulon' – one kind of rocking cradle made of especially designed bamboos.

During these birth ritual performances, as I have observed among a Chakma family of Jitendra Chakma, they strictly maintain their traditions. It is mentionable here that these ritual practices are commonly followed by all the Chakma families, whether they are Buddhists or Christians. This indicates that to some extent they maintain their Chakma traditions or combine these with their new religious status (for the Christian Chakmas). As I have learnt from them during my regular interaction, for every rituals observed, these Chakma families (most of the families in the para) try to invite the people of other ethnic communities (Bangalees and Tripuras) and in this regard they consider their closeness with them. In other words they do not invite every people to every birth ritual performances. This further indicates that the Chakmas have interaction with the other community members, but at the same time a clear boundary is maintained by them to direct their self-consciousness, self-esteem and expression of a separate identity as well. In case of delivery of a child this is strictly maintained that no outsider is allowed in the delivery place or places adjacent to it. But after 10-15 days of child delivery the family arranges a feast where all the female relatives, friends, and neighbors bring different types of cooked food for the mother and children. This gathering of women from the Chakmas, Bangalees (very few) and Tripuras is given very serious importance for the better health of both the mother and child. After a month or so both the male and female relatives, friends, and neighbors come to see the child and bless the child with prayers and gifts as well. However, despite the boundary maintenance with others, I have found it very identical that though the Chakmas are the dominant groups in the area, they always try to develop this pattern of inter-ethnic relation for peace and livable environment for all in the hills.

Tripuras

Finally the Tripuras of Beltali *para* have their distinctive mode of observing the birth rituals and practices. It means that these Tripuras also try to maintain an amicable social bondage through building good relation and interaction with the Bangalees and Chakmas. As I have mentioned earlier the Tripuras are very friendly by nature and this is also maintained during the performances of birth rituals. From the very beginning of my fieldwork I have been observing their cultural and behavioral pattern and came to realize that the Tripuras follow what their ancestors have taught them. These Tripuras also see the beginning of a life as the beginning of a journey in a world of differences. But it brings full happiness to their entire community. From the very beginning they take care of the pregnant mother of their family very intensively. One such case that I have witnessed was the family of Bivuti Tripura of Beltali *para*. Going back to their social structure the Tripuras are divided into several 'Dafas' (clans)²¹⁸ and every 'Dafa' has its

²¹⁸ As I have already mentioned that the Tripuras are divided into at least 36 clans (*Dafas*), but there are only 16 of their *Dafas* remain in Bangladesh. Some of these clans have a number of sub-clans with their own dialects, and traditions. The Tripuras believe that each of their clans and

own way of performing birth rituals. After five months of pregnancy the Tripuras observe the worship of '*tal bakla*' where a feast is arranged and all the relatives and few neighbors are invited to attend the feast. In general they keep it very much at home during delivery and do not allow people of other communities to enter or interact with the mother and new born baby at that time. But the family, where the baby is born, invites few relatives, friends and neighbors from the Bangalees and Chakmas to come and pray for them. The Tripuras call the impure condition after the birth of a baby as '*abukathang*' (during this time in a Tripura family the mother has to observe days of impurity and she is not allowed to cook) and they arrange a worship festival to remove this impure condition and make everything pure and clean which is known as '*katharak*'. During '*abiak suman*' (name of a ceremony arranged when the new born baby's naval cord dries up; it usually takes 5 to 7 days) the family arrange a feast where they invite those people who were present during the time of delivery including the midwife. Similarly they arrange feast during the name giving ceremony of the child. Thus during these occasions they arrange prayers to God in the house, keep the house clean to maintain the purity and offers their guests to have meal or at least sweet considering their ethnic and religious identity. All these together indicate that the Tripuras see the interaction with the Bangalees and Chakmas from their own as well as neighboring *paras* as a crucial one with the belief that these types of interactions bear the testimony of good relations with others.

Thus the above mentioned events and practices show how group relationship is maintained in the hill *paras* among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras on the basis of birth related rituals and ceremonies.

Marriage: What makes Life more Interactional and Dynamic?

Marriage is one of the most significant aspects of life of these people and the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras follow certain religious rules and regulations in arranging marriages. Apart from religious rules and regulations for marriage, every community has its own customs and traditions as well which indicate its distinctiveness and difference further. At the same time all these communities find marriage as a special occasion to have the privilege to invite people of different ethnic communities in the hill *paras*. To some extent these people believe that not only invitation to marriage ceremonies, but also during the procedures of arranging marriages by negotiating between the marriage parties, they have the opportunity to enhance their interaction and interrelation with the people of other communities. Thus like the birth rituals here I have analyzed the processes of interaction and social relations maintained by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras through marriage rituals and ceremonies. In response to the community interest all the people of the *paras* focused on the long term processes of arranging marriages through involving various responsible people. These people are considered to be playing significant roles during marriage.

Muslim and Hindu Bangalees

The Muslim and Hindu Bangalees of Singinala *para* have commonly maintained that they follow all the religious rituals, rules and regulations in arranging marriages. In

sub-clans has been usually named after an incidence they encountered or occupation they practice. But these are closely attached to their traditional values and norms.

addition to these they have their respective customs and community traditions. Two types of marriages are seen among the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees of the *para* – one is arranged marriage and the other is love marriage. In both the cases they prefer the decisions of the household head, community leaders and religious leaders (*Imam*²¹⁹ or *Priest*²²⁰).

There are no differences seen in the processes of arranging marriages in between the Bangalees of Singinala *para* and those of the other areas (particularly the plain lands) of Bangladesh. In search for the pattern of engagement of the Bangalees with the Chakmas and Tripuras, I have come to identify that in course of living with the Chakmas and Tripuras in the hills for a long period of time the Bangalees have developed an understanding of sharing with their friends and neighbors for a better solution to the problems raised during marriage negotiation and marriage ceremonies. When it comes to arrange marriage, the first category in the locality, the Muslim and Hindu Bangalee families follow certain rules which are attached to their religious beliefs and practices. Some of the aspects of this type of marriage, which in turn show the nature of social relations, and interactions, are:

- i. maintaining and showing full respect to religious rules and regulations;
- ii. giving priority to the elder members' opinion;
- iii. incorporating the opinions of community leaders, relatives and neighbors (where needed);
- iv. searching for a good match and for this having or showing community pride;
- v. giving priority to the background history of the two parties (both the bride and bride groom's family) engaged in marriage negotiation;
- vi. observing the position of both the parties in the society;
- vii. closely understanding their behavior and attitude; and
- viii. finally finding clues to the ways they maintain their relations with other members of the society.

And in case of love marriages (this is the outcome of a relation developed between a male and a female), now-a-days, both the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees of this *para* take the matter seriously at the guardian levels of both the families. Though the male and female chooses each other, but at the end of the day it comes to the decision of both the families. Here especially the parents of both the male and female sit together to come to a decision. A few decades earlier these Bangalees have not been so liberal to accept this type of marriage. But in course of time and with the changes in society (these are mainly changes in the mentality of the people where people are getting involved in different types of relationships), some changes are also seen in the attitudes of the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees towards affair marriages and to accept their children's affections. In conducting this type of marriage I have found the following aspects that are in practice among these communities:

- i. binding the male and female or the boy and girl involved in affairs into family bonding and responsibilities;

²¹⁹ Usually Imam belongs to the Mosque where he arranges prayers and represents himself as the religious leader for the Muslim Bangalees.

²²⁰ For the Hindu Bangalees a Priest is a person who belongs to a Hindu Temple and responsible for organizing all the religious matters of the community.

- ii. taking necessary steps to avoid any miss happening conducted by the male and female;
- iii. developing a sense of realization among the male and female that they are not alone and that they should respect their respective community sentiments;
- iv. discussing the matter with the elder members of the family and if needed with the community leaders to come to a peaceful solution; and
- v. finally understand each other's sentiments and emotional attachments.

Whatever the types of marriages take place in the Bangalee community it has been identified that it is up to the family's decision about what to do, how to organize everything, whom to invite and how to follow all the religious rules and regulations. Moreover, it has been observed that there are no cases of marriages that took place in between the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees, at least in Singinala *para*. These Bangalees strictly follow the rules of endogamy in the sense of religious identity.

However, two case studies have been presented bellow, one from the Muslim Bangalees and the other from the Hindu Bangalees, to evaluate the nature of ethnicity or group interaction among these communities through an understanding of marriage rituals.

Case Study-5: Muslim Bangalee's traditions of conducting marriage: processes of gathering to enhance social relations

Masum Ali (42) got married in 2001 and this was a case of arranged marriage. His father searched for the bride for his son for two years and finally got one. According to Masum Ali the search for bride is the first step of arrange marriage and his parents engaged a number of people to look for a suitable bride. Engaging other family members, relatives, friends and neighbors including the Hindu Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras is a common practice for them. Masum believes that this practice not only helped to find out an appropriate bride for him but also make it a socially approved case. He figured out that everybody in the *para* as well as his neighbors from Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* wished him to have a better life partner.

This, according to Masum Ali, is a good social norm which, in turn, helped to establish a good social relation. He figured out that finding out a good match is tough and assistances from relatives, friends and neighbors made it an easy one. Masum Ali's father found the suitable bride from Ramgarh Upazila of Khagrachari and she is a daughter of a local political leader. The bride's father is also a businessman in Ramgarh with good reputation and status in the locality. Masum Ali's father thought for a good future of his son and hoping that this relation would bring good status in his own society too.

Masum Ali experienced that during the first step of arrange marriage many aspects of both the families have been observed such as reputation, status, family background, property, behavior, relations with other community people and neighbors, bride's and bridegroom's physical appearances, bridegroom's educational background and job or business ability, religious and cultural mentality, etc. All these are considered by them as the variables indicating an aristocratic family orientation. He further figured out that information has been also collected from his neighbors and Chakmas and Tripuras. The reason for this, to him, is that these people have certified him and his family as well. Similar approach has been also taken by Masum Ali's father to find out all sorts

of information about the bride and her family.

This, in other words, indicates that maintaining good social relation with the people of own as well as the neighboring *paras* is very crucial in case of arrange marriage. When everything has been checked and both the families have agreed a date to arrange the marriage, Masum Ali's father invited 150 people to attend the marriage ceremony. Most of his relatives, friends, neighbors from Singinala *para* and few Chakmas and Tripuras from the Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* have been invited to attend the ceremony. Both the families have followed all the religious customs and traditions in this marriage including conduction of marriage by a marriage registrar, prayers headed by the Imam, giving 'salam' (salutation in Islamic way) to all the guests, exchange of gifts, giving a set of 'Al Quran' (religious pious book of the Muslims) and 'Jainamaj' (a type of (usual size: 4.5' x 2.5') cloth on which the Muslims stand for prayers), and organizing a feast where all the 'halal' food (foods that are usually acceptable in Islam or the religion Islam justifies the foods to be eaten by the Muslims²²¹) among others.

According to Masum Ali:

"...marriage is the beginning of a new and beautiful life started with all the religious rules and regulations; it is a kind investment, too in the sense that it binds two families together, enhances social relationship, widens kinship and social network, involves a number of people from different communities (including the Chakmas and Tripuras) for a better living in the society, etc."

At the same time, Masum Ali mentioned that through every steps of marriage (selecting bride and bridegroom, making the final decision, organizing the marriage ceremony, marriage registration, reception, entry to the new house, etc.) there has been the engagement of the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of his own and neighboring *paras*. This practice indicates the nature of maintaining a good social relation operating in the hill *paras*. Masum Ali, thus, considers this a big social gathering. A gathering which brings an opportunity for all the people in the hill *paras* to know each other's customs, traditions, similarities and differences showing community identity, religious understanding and cultural practices for a group relationship.

Case Study-6: Hindu Bangalee's marriage: a process for social relation and expression of identity

Mihir Lal Saha (30) has chosen his life partner Mrinali by himself. In other words he fell in love with her and it took almost 4 years to marry her with the full consent from both the families. Thus this is a case of affair marriage. Mihir Lal's wife is 6 years junior to him and they got married in 2010. Mihir Lal mentioned that he fell in love with her in a family program where he has seen her first. He also mentioned that among them he was the first to propose her. He has not found it difficult to settle

²²¹ The opposite of 'halal' is the term 'haram' which refers to the foods that are prohibited to be eaten by the religion Islam for the Muslims. Some of these foods are pork, snake, frog, alcohol or anything that is harmful for human body. This is an ideological standpoint (in other words taboo) set forth by the religion Islam for the Muslims of the entire world. But I have observed that, now-a-days, many of the Muslim Bangalees (particularly the males) consume liquor (which is very popular among the Chakmas and Tripuras and a part of their community traditions) in different occasions or simply in gathering with their friends and neighbors. Thus the notion of 'halal' and 'haram' is not always considered by them significant to control their lives.

down the matter at the family level as he has maintained the caste²²² rules and all the religious regulations. After settling down the matter all the religious rituals have been followed during marriage. According to Mihir Lal whether it is arranged marriage or affair marriage, they follow all the religious rituals and cultural functions chastely.

Keeping the bride and bridegroom in separate households (in this case both the bride and bridegroom belonged to the same *para*, a few minutes away from each other's house), religious priest is given all the charges and authority to perform the rituals, arranging a special prayer where the members of both the families participate, uttering sentences from their religious holy book to complete the marriage and legally declare that the male and female are husband and wife, inviting not only family members and relatives but also the neighboring Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras (particularly those with whom they have a close connection, sharing of thoughts and helping as well as joking relations), exchange of gifts – all these have been strictly maintained during this marriage. In addition to these aspects Mihir Lal further mentioned that in these hill *paras* anything happened to any person, family or household touches the heart of each and every member of all the communities.

He argued that religious ceremonies like marriage are of special importance not only to his family but also to all the members of the *para*. Mihir Lal thinks that living in close contact with all the people in the *para* as well as with the people (including Chakmas and Tripuras) of other *paras*, going through various situations in the hills (including political crisis and discriminations), supporting each other during crisis moments (both economically and politically), and respecting all the religions and cultures are some of the root causes for a heartfelt participation in the rituals and functions of marriage. In other words, according to him, this is how relation is maintained in the hills which can be seen to develop a pattern of social relation and at the same time to show the separate identity of their community.

Mihir Lal has full respect to his religious rituals, and origin and background of his community. He thinks that when it comes to basic rites of passage of life i.e. marriage, they follow their community traditions incorporating every practices of Hindu religion. At the same time there is a definite way to expose their community and religious traditions to others with whom they have regular interactions. Mihir also thinks that

²²² The Hindus strictly maintain their caste based rules and this is evident in their day to day affairs. In this regard I have found it significant to mention few lines, basically conceptual understandings, about the caste system in general. Very often caste system is seen as a pan-Indian phenomena or style of life. According to the observation of Bouglé (1958, 1971) caste system can be seen from three principal characteristics: occupational specialization, hierarchy and repulsion; on the other hand Louis Dumont (1970) emphasized hierarchy for caste system and elaborated that hierarchy is the all embracing principle behind the caste system and caste hierarchy is determined by the principle of purity and pollution (Gupta, ed. 1993:25-26). Thus in an attempt some of the features of caste system have been identified which included segmented division of society where caste groups are determined not by selection but by birth, hierarchy, civil and religious disabilities and privileges of the different sections of individual castes indicating segregation, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, restrictions on marriage, etc. (Ghurye 1993:35-48). Accordingly Andre Beteille has viewed caste as a status group where a status group is a collection of individuals who share a distinctive style of life and a certain consciousness of community; status groups have been distinguished from classes according to the patterns of consumption, scale of honor, etc.; and the caste system is commonly viewed as an extreme example of an hierarchical system (Beteille 1977:59-65).

these procedures have given life to their peaceful living in the hills. Despite having separate identity (on the basis of religion, culture and community origin and background), Mihir and his family have maintained a good relation with the Chakmas and Tripuras and accordingly they have always tried to maintain this relation by inviting many of them to their family programs. Finally Mihir Lal tries to see these sorts of relations in a positive way to bring peace and happiness in the hill *paras*.

So far I have analyzed the patterns of marriages among the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees, and their nature of social relations, interactions and social bonding operating among them based on marriage rituals. It has been identified that for the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees of Singinala *para* marriage is an option to show their identity, distinct category, position in the community and society, most importantly approaching their neighbors (especially the Chakmas and Tripuras) a friendly relation by not only inviting them in these occasions but also showing respects and honor to them and to every aspects of their cultures and traditions.

At this stage an in-depth analysis has been made about the marriage rituals operating among the Chakmas and Tripuras of Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* and also the ways through which they maintain their social relations and integration with each other and with the Bangalees of Singinala *para* in particular.

Chakmas

The Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* have their own traditional way to observe their marriage rituals. As I have mentioned earlier these Chakmas are the followers of two religions: Buddhism and Christianity. Therefore, they have both Buddhist and Christian ways of observing their marriage ceremonies. But despite these religious distinctions they have not forgotten their Chakma traditions in this regard. I have identified in the Chakma *para* that, like the Bangalees, they have also two types of marriage arrangements: arrange marriage and affair marriage. They believe that a Chakma can never change his or her tradition and culture. He or she bears Chakma belief and tradition in his or her heart and soul till death. With a long historical background the Chakmas have become the indigenous community of the *para* and the hills. As history tells these Chakmas consider themselves the children of the hills and rivers. As the early settlers of this area the Chakmas have developed their settlement closely attached to everything of the hills – the hill, river, hill rocks, cave, varieties of flora and fauna, and to a large extent all the humans being belonging to different ethnic communities.

But I have found it quite significant that the Chakmas have some reservations regarding the settler Bangalees, while they consider those Bangalees very friendly who are living in the hill *paras* for a long time and have been invited by the Chakmas Rajas for cultivation purposes. Initially the Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* have close contact with the Bangalees in Khagrachari and they maintain special relation with the Bangalees of Singinala *para*, too. This is reflected in observing various religious ceremonies of the Chakmas and marriage is a crucial one of these.

The Chakmas are the dominant groups in the CHTs with their multidimensional relationship with others. They maintain a good relation with others and I have marked several areas where they have clear boundaries to indicate their separate identity. Thus two types of relations are maintained by the Chakmas with the Bangalees and Tripuras:

- i. an openness with a mentality of acceptance and building interrelations; and
- ii. a restricted one where they have clear-cut boundaries with the other communities.

It has been found that their tendencies important here as these are reflected in their ways of interacting with the Bangalees and Tripuras. This implies that these Chakmas have certain characteristic features which are meaningful through two aspects: one is interaction with others and the other is interpretation of ethnic identities through self-ascription and public behavior. Thus the marriage ceremony is a kind of signal to their categorization as Chakmas and also their way of interaction with other people. My concern in this discussion is the marriage ceremony of the Chakmas with reference to their pattern of ethnicity, social relation and identity. However, some of the important aspects of their marriage ceremony²²³ (or rituals) are as follows:

- i. keeping matchmaker or in Chakma language ‘*Sabala*’ to find matches for bride and bridegroom;
- ii. ‘*mod-pilang*’ or a ceremony to fix the date of marriage through offering a liquor drinking party;
- iii. settling of ‘*dava*’ or bride price for the bride;
- iv. ‘*Agpanikum Tulana Panpada Vajey Dena*’ or a type of ritual performed at bridegroom’s house where during the dawn breaks six young ladies along with a married woman go to the river to fetch water, and take bath with betel-leaves-nuts on two pieces of banana leafs (although this ritual is not performed in these days in all the Chakma families);
- v. ‘*Bou-Tulana*’ or the ceremony where after the bridegroom’s companions reaching his home the bride is received;
- vi. ‘*Jora-Banaana*’ ceremony where the bridegroom and bride sit side by side on a mat and all the people present there bless the new couple;
- vii. ‘*Chungulang*’ ritual where social recognition of the marriage is ensured with the presence of a ‘*Ojba*’ or Shaman; and
- viii. ‘*Bisut-Vangana*’ ceremony where the bridegroom stays at least for one night at his father-in-law’s house within the first three days after marriage.

These are some identical features of Chakma marriage ceremony where people of different ethnic communities participate. These Chakmas follow most of their marriage rituals with full religious orientations. At the same time they agreed that, now-a-days, the Chakmas living in the town areas of Khagrachari do not observe every customs and traditions of marriage. But one of the common things that they try to maintain is to incorporate the Bangalees and Tripuras (with whom they have developed good economic, social and political relations) in these ceremonies. They believe that this practice has helped them to develop a good social environment within these three communities and at the same time a relation of trustworthy. However, through following case study I have shown the nature of social relations maintained by the Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* based on their marriage ceremonies, and beliefs and rituals related to this.

Case Study-7: Crossing the boundary: marriage can create cross-boundary ethnic relations

Jiten Chakma (28) lives in Paltanjay *para* and with him I have had a very good friendly relation. Jiten is considered, in his *para* as well as in the locality, as an extreme case of

²²³ For more on this see Kamal et.al, eds. (2007:59-62).

marriage. Jiten Chakma is a Buddhist by religion and lived with his parents until he got married. The reason for considering him as an extreme case of marriage is that he married a Muslim Bangalee girl Mala whose parents live in Feni town. Jiten's case refers to two dimensions of marriage: firstly it is a case of affair marriage, and secondly it indicates that human relation can cross many boundaries – ethnic, religious and cultural among others. But this was not easy for Jiten to manage both the families. And after everything has been settled down, Jiten mentioned, the marriage ceremony followed both the rituals of Buddhism and Islam (at least in a limited way). According to Jiten:

“...I met Mala in Feni where both of us were students of the same college. Love has no boundary and I fell in love with her even knowing that she belongs to different ethnic and religious community. At first she refused my proposal but after some times (notably few months) she also responded positively. From there we have decided to marry each other, but with the consent from each other's family.”

I have come to know from Jiten's father that now-a-days they do not oppose the choices made by their children with a view to keep their relations within their community. After deciding to marry Jiten and Mala informed their parents and then it went to the hands of the family members²²⁴. Both the families made several visits to each other's house where, as Jiten mentioned, a number of family members, relatives, friends and neighbors were present. Jiten's father invited the Muslim Bangalee leaders, Chakma community leaders and some other friends to discuss the matter and come to a solution.

According to Chakma culture and tradition this was not a normal marriage and hence a number of community people and Chakma leaders assembled in the house of Jiten's father. After several visits at the family levels and long discussions in these sittings things have been settled down (considering the better future life of Jiten and Mala) to organize the marriage ceremonies following both the Buddhist and Islamic traditions. According to Jiten, the Chakma tradition of '*Timpur*' (i.e. visiting the bride's family three times with variety of fruits, nuts, betel-leaf, etc.) has been followed. But as the bride is a Muslim so they did not take any liquor to her family or presented in front of them during marriage ceremony (the Chakmas term for marriage is '*Mela*').

In his marriage some of the Chakma rituals followed are – keeping odd number of guests during the journey of the bridegroom (in this case Jiten's family members, few relatives, friends and neighbors belonging to his own community, Bangalee and Tripura have been invited to attend the bridegroom journey) with the view that it is always good for the marriage and brings happiness to the newly married couple, before the start of the journey they dine together with rice, mutton, fish, egg, pork, drinks and many other sweet items with the hope that this would help to have

²²⁴ It is a common practice among the Chakma that when a boy and a girl loves each other and decides to marry they flee away. Because, initially, their parents do not agree for the match. And this way of elopement is known among the Chakma as '*Dhabnaanna*'. During this time both the boy and girl try to convince their parents. If both of their parents agree, the marriage follows all the rituals. And if they do not agree, they are separated where the girl goes to her family and the boy is punished by sacrificing pigs and disseminate the meat to every house in the para. For more see Chakma (2011:55-56).

blessings from all the guests, '*Chep-bor dena*²²⁵' or a special way to bless the couple, receiving the bride at the house of the bridegroom with a ritual they call '*Jadan-banana*' or '*Jora-bana*' which means the kind of ritual through which both the bride and bridegroom are declared as couple, '*Cunglang-gorana*' or a ritual through which the couple is given a legal status and approval (and the Chakmas call this as '*Sudom*' or legal relation), offering a feast at the bridegroom's house which is known as '*Mela-khana*' where they invited all the members of his own community, few Bangalees and Tripuras (this is considered by them as one of the most significant aspects of their marriage ceremony which ensures the participation of the whole society), and finally '*Bisat-vangana*' or a certain ritual of visiting the bride's (father-in-law's) house just within three days of conducting the marriage.

On the other hand, as Jiten mentioned, the bride's family prayed and blessed their daughter by arranging a prayer with the Imam of local mosque. In this prayer his family also participated. At the same time the registration of marriage has been done with proper legal way through a marriage registrar. On the day of marriage the bride's family offered a feast to all the guests with full social and religious attitudes.

Jiten argued that he had to go through a procedure to complete this marriage and have both the community and social legality. He thinks of himself to be grateful to the society, especially to the members of his community and *para*, and few of the Bangalee and Tripura neighbors from the Singinala and Beltali *paras* with whom he has good relations and shared everything. Jiten and his wife further added that their marriage is not a common case, but they received all sorts of support from the society and this has helped them to complete everything properly and legally. They think that despite many turmoil situations in the hills there are something significant lying behind building a good social, cultural and also political relation among different ethnic communities. They have seen the development of good social relations and integration process among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras for instance, and this is also reflected in their marriage rituals and ceremonies.

This is a special case and indicates that religion (in this case marriage) has very important role to play to bring peace and harmony in the society. Understanding of each and every community's pattern of social position and culture is important to bring peace in the hills. The Chakmas are dominant in the *para* as well as in the hills, but at the same time they have built an amicable relation with other ethnic community members of the society and during last decade the situations in these hill *paras* have given proper environment for living well through cooperation and integration as well.

Tripuras

In comparison to the Bangalees and Chakmas, the Tripuras of Beltali *para* have a very long historical background. As mentioned earlier the Tripuras are living in Beltali *para* and in other areas of Khagrachari district for centuries and they are considered as the second highest and dominant ethnic community in Khagrachari after the Chakmas. I

²²⁵ This is a special type of ritual to be played by the Chakmas when the time comes to hand over the bride to the bridegroom. During this time they arrange all the ornaments, some rice and cotton on a '*Kula*' (winnowing fan) and all the eldest members of the family bless the new couple by uttering the word '*pua:pua*' and this process of blessing is known as '*Chep-bor dena*' among the Chakmas. For more see Chakma (2011:48-50).

have found these Tripuras friendlier than any other communities in the area. The main reason for this is that they place respect and human relation over and above anything. At the same time they are very hospitable and fond of love and emotion. In any case they also place their culture, customs, traditions and religious beliefs, values and practices at the front stage. All these aspects, according to the Tripuras, are the sources of their good spirit. Living in these hills for many centuries they have developed a relation close to their heart and soul. And accordingly they have established a rural social system which is the main social system of the Tripuras in the *para* and in the CHTs. These Tripuras are Hindus (followers of traditional religion), but they have their own Gods and Goddesses. With their identical religious status they maintain to follow all the religious rules and regulations during marriage, just as they did in case of birth practices. Tripuras also give especial importance to marriage and in their society, just as observed among the Bangalees and Chakmas, there exist following three types of marriages²²⁶ (on the basis of choices made):

- a) '*Kajjalai Kwchang*' or '*Prajapattya*' (arrange marriage): where the guardians select the bride and bridegroom through discussions and observe all the religious rituals required;
- b) '*Kajjalai Bochong*' or '*Gandharba*' marriage (love marriage without any formal ceremony): where the bride and bridegroom have affair with each other and get married in temples, village councils, and administrative courts, but not in their houses; and
- c) '*Kajjalai Kasur*' or '*Asur*' marriage (marriage by payment and bride capture): where two things take place – if the bridegroom completes the formalities of marriage in the bride's house by receiving money from the bride's family as aid then it is called '*Kajjalai Kasur*' marriage, and if the bridegroom picks up the bride and marries her in the presence of at least three witnesses then it is called '*Kajjalai Asur*' marriage. In both the cases it is bridegroom who is responsible for the marriage.

Generally the Tripuras follow two ways of conducting these marriages, on the basis of religious values and traditions, and these are²²⁷:

- a) '*Tantrik*' way: here an '*Achai*' or '*Chontai*' (priest known as a '*Tantrik*') conducts the whole marriage. Two *pujas* or prayers are done – one is '*Chemlai puja*' which is observed within the house and the name of the God is '*Lakkehi Narayan*'; and the other is '*Katbarak puja*' which is observed outside the house (usually in the courtyard) and the name of the God is '*Kattik-Ganesh*' (both of the Gods are known as '*Katbarak*' among the Tripuras); and
- b) '*Vedic*' way: here the religious priest conducts all the procedures of the marriage ceremony. Fasting is needed during this way of marriage but there is no need to sacrifice animals. The name of the guardian deity of worship in this marriage is '*Prahapati*' or butterfly. All these things together complete the '*Vedic*' way of marriage.

According to Bivuti Tripura (82), one of the most eldest members in the *para*:

“...I have seen so many things around me in the society in these days. Things have changed a lot. Earlier, about 20 to 30 years ago, arrange marriage was practiced heavily. Parents played every role in selecting as well as deciding whom

²²⁶ For more see Kamal et.al, eds. (2007:206).

²²⁷ For more see Kamal et.al, eds. (2007:206-208); Sugata Chakma (2011:91-95).

one should marry. But now boys and girls are falling in love and in most of the cases parents have nothing to do. We only wish them and pray for their happy life. To me this reflects the changing nature of the society as a whole with the impact of modernization and globalization among others. It also appears to me that in these days 'there is fire on water' because more and more women have now left their house with their own decision and to some extent breaking the traditional social norms. But whatever the patterns of marriages, we strictly follow all the religious rules and regulations and community traditions and try to teach our children to maintain these even after our death."

From the words of Bivuti Tripura it appears that in a changing world most of the Tripura boys and girls of the *para* are getting married with their own choices. But at the same time it is mentionable here that they have not forgotten their past, their ancestors, and also their customs and traditions. According to the young generation of the Tripuras of the *para* one of the most significant changes that took place among them is increasing communication and interaction with other people, particularly the Bangalees, and other places, especially Dhaka, Chittagong, etc. Thus this has raised their opportunity for good social network globally and reflected in their marriage ceremonies. Overall these Tripura people consider marriage ceremony as another opportunity to enhance their social relations by incorporating as many people from various communities as possible.

In course of time these Tripuras have developed a good relation with the neighboring Bamngalees and this is also reflected in the way they incorporate their friends and neighbors from other communities. All these imply the nature of ethnicity where the Tripuras maintain a group relation with the Bangalees and Chakmas, but at the same time they uphold their ethnic identity where marriage is an example only. In the following case study I have showed the nature of interaction of these Tripuras with the Bangalees and Chakmas and also the way they maintain boundary with others to express their distinct identity through marriage.

Case Study-8: Interaction and identity – marriage creates another option to strengthen social relations

Piasi Tripura (30) is the eldest daughter of her parents and she lives in a separate household in Beltali *para* with her husband Koibak Tripura (36). The total number of family member is 3. Piasi Tripura's parents selected the bridegroom for her marriage and so this is a case of arrange marriage. She mentioned that during her marriage all the religious rituals and practices have been followed along with maintaining their community traditions. Piasi explained that as they are the followers of Hindu religion (also with traditional beliefs and values), therefore, both of their families maintained their traditional values on the basis of their culture as well.

Piasi got married in the year 2009 and the proposal first came from her husband's family. Piasi remembers everything regarding her marriage. When the proposal came she felt shy and her parents took it seriously and continued discussions with the bridegroom's family. According to Tripura tradition her husband's parents brought various items to her house including two bottles of liquor, varieties of cakes and a pair of coconut. This was their first visit and Piasi's parents accepted the gifts. Then in the second visit the bridegroom's parents and some of their relatives (usually considered as guardians) brought the similar gifts. During this visit both the families sat together and fixed the required ornaments and dresses for the bride (among the Tripura there is the culture of 'bride price' which they call '*dafa*') as well as the date and required

expenses of the marriage. When everything has been settled down, as Piasi mentioned, the bridegroom's family came on the marriage date and all the religious rituals have been maintained which included prayers offered to 'Katharakmatai God' (bridegroom's family starts their journey to bride's family by offering this prayer), conducting the marriage through *Tantrik* way, and inviting all the family members, relatives, friends, and neighbors to a dinner party which they call '*pana*', among others. Thus, according to Piasi, their marriage has been completed after maintaining all these procedures.

Piasi has observed many of her relatives' and friend's marriage ceremonies, but when it came to her own marriage she realized the significance of every rituals and traditions of their community as well as engaging the other community's people to the procedures or formalities of marriage. Accordingly her parents invited few Bangalee neighbors and Chakmas with whom they have a close attachment. Particularly the dinner party of the marriage is very crucial for the Tripuras because they believe that this party (which they call '*pana*') is a symbol of joy, happiness, inspiration and impetus (a gathering of people from various communities).

Thus Piasi considers her case as a typical marriage of the Tripuras where all the rules and regulations of the Tripura culture and tradition have been followed properly. Piasi also identified that this marriage ceremony has done few things for her community – expression of Tripura identity, demarking of boundaries operating among different ethnic communities through their expression of traditions, entitlement of her name and identity with the foundation of new family, and elaborating their pattern of social network and processes of interaction with the Bangalees and Chakmas through their invitation culture to this type of ceremony or community program. In other words, according to Piasi, all these procedures show that their social relations are strengthening day by day through the performances of their religious rituals and community traditions (as mentioned above).

Death: End of a Body of Cultural Resource with Sorrow but Source of New Inspiration to Life

Birth is considered as an auspicious event as this brings new life or new entity to a community. It has a meaningful and religious importance among these three communities as this helps them not only to be happy but also to extend their family. On the other hand marriage is recognized by them as a transitional stage of their life where they find themselves attached to new members of society and a world of joy, happiness and responsibility too. The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras believe that marriage bridges two separate families within an ethnic community and sometimes between two ethnic communities through the ties of kinship relationship. These two ritual practices, observed with due religious understandings and community traditions, do two things for them:

- i. indicate their nature of group relationship; and
- ii. directs the way they demonstrate their separate identity.

But when it comes to death, all the three communities consider this as one of the saddest events of their life. They referred death as the final stage of a person's life which leads them to an eternal world where the departed person's soul rest in peace. Perhaps, irrespective of religious differences, death is such an event which is observed in the most

religious fashions maintaining all the rituals, customs and traditions. For the people in these *paras* death is not only the departure of a person's body and soul from earth (they also believe that everything on this earth has life and an end to it), but also the departure of lots of memories, ideology, customs, traditions and most importantly relations.

They consider the departure of relations in the sense that the departed soul of a person has been attached to hundreds and thousands of people of the community and society, and he or she has had a place in their heart. At the same time the dead person belonged to a strong social network with multidimensional social bondages and interactions. This belief indicates that the dead person is not only detached from his or her own family but also from the ties of social network. As I have observed and learnt from the people of Beltali, Paltanjay and Singinala *paras*, they share the sorrows and pains with the dead person's relatives and pray for the betterment of the departed soul. But surely there are differences in observing death rituals for the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. I have analyzed the processes of death rituals performed by these communities along with how and why they try to incorporate the other people of their communities and society to pray for and blessing of the departed soul.

Whatever their ethnic origin, identity, religious or cultural traditions, the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras believe that when a person dies he or she leaves behind a lot of memories and relations: memories that the person stored during his or her life, and relations that the person built although his or her course of livelihood. Despite this common aspect all the three communities have their own ways to perform the death rituals. In this regard they follow every condition of their own religions. I have attended a death ritual of a Tripura family. One of their family members Jainab Tripura (89) died due to old age and they followed their religious and cultural traditions for the betterment of the departed soul. However, when a person dies the news spreads rapidly among the dead person's relatives, friends and neighbors, and all of them feel very sad for the person.

Muslim Bangalees

Following the ways of performing death rituals I have learnt from the Muslim Bangalees that they maintain all the customs, traditions and rituals of their religion Islam. They keep praying and recite from the Holy Quran (the Holy religious book of the Muslims) for the dead person's soul so that he or she can live in peace in the heaven. According to this Muslim Bangalee community's traditional practice, they announce the name and address of the dead person through a loud speaker from the local mosque. At the same time, depending on the financial condition, they announce this death news through loud speaker by hiring an electric three wheeler motor vehicle in the *para* as well as in the town. But this is not practiced by all the families. These Bangalees think that this practice helps them to disseminate the news with an ease.

Zakir, one of the Muslim Bangalees of Singinala *para*, elaborated his experiences in the case of his father's death. His father died at the age of 79. He was a well known person in the society through his business in Khagrachari town. Among the Muslim Bangalees he has had a good relation and at the same time many of the Chakmas and Tripuras of Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* (including town people) knew him as a well reputed person. So hearing the news of his death many people came to see him and wished for the peace of his soul. Initially this made Zakir to realize that maintaining good relation with others in

the society brings a lot of support and good wishes. His father belonged to a circle of life surrounded by a number of people including the Chakmas and Tripuras. After completing the religious rituals such as bathing, prayer (it is known as '*janaja*' where the Muslims gather together to pray to God for placing the dead man's soul in the Heaven) and citing from the Holy Quran, his father's body was taken to the central graveyard in the town and buried. Three days after burial Zakir and his relatives arranged a small feast which is known as the feast to pray for the dead man's soul where most of his relatives, friends and few Chakma and Tripura neighbors participated. According to Zakir this is considered as a social program with full religious orientation and a prayer gathering headed by the Imam (a Muslim religious leader) of local mosque where only his Muslim relatives, friends and neighbors participated.

Later after 40 days from the date of death of his father Zakir and his relatives organized another feast for the relatives, friends and neighbors from Beltali, Paltanjay and Singinala *paras*. This feast is known among the Muslims as '*Collisha*' and a very common or mandatory religious function to end up the rituals related to death. The Muslim Bangalees believe that from the birth to death a person continues to interact with many people and perform various rights and duties. In this course he or she becomes attached to a circle in the society. During many stages of human life, particularly in the hills of Khagrachari, they have had to face many ups and downs, threats and opportunities, and sadness as well as happy moments. These, in turn, let them fall into a pattern of interaction and communication with the Chakmas and Tripuras as well. The Bangalees also identified cleavages among the ethnic communities, but at the same time there exists a relation of cooperation among these three communities which is reflected at the times of difficulties and different moments of their life. Birth, marriage and death are the most crucial stages where these are expressed most and the Bangalees consider religion (culture as well) to have deep value and attachment with these. Moreover, as I have observed, this cooperation does not indicate that there are good social relations operating or existing within and among all the people of the *paras*. But again death brings realization among the Bangalees (and they also think that the Chakmas and Tripuras have similar beliefs and understandings) that group relation are needed to be generated to foster and enhance a peaceful living in the hills.

Hindu Bangalees

Hindu Bangalees of Singinala *para*, on the other hand, strictly maintain the religious rituals and formalities to observe the death ceremony. There are basic differences in performing death rituals from the Muslim Bangalees and also there are caste barriers within the Hindu Bangalees. These Hindu Bangalees are *Khatrias* and *Sudras* and usually, as in the Hindu community, no one participates in the death rituals of the *Sudras*. This does not mean that people of other religions, caste, class and ethnic community always avoid the *Sudras*. Rather the *Sudras* also live in separate areas (concentrated) with few interactions with others in other occasions like *puja* festivals and '*Biju*' or *Bangla* new year festivals and separate arrangements are made for them in case of dining together. However, this difference is not so crucial among the people of these *paras* in the hills. Because they are very limited in number in Singinala *para* and they have some roles to play during death rituals. If anyone of the *Sudra* caste Hindus dies they perform all the rituals according to their caste rule but with Hindu religious customs and traditions. But in their ritual performances people from other communities do not participate. In case of the *Khatriyas* the scenario is something different. It is due to their engagement in

various business and occupations through which they have developed a good connection with the other Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras.

I have briefly described the nature of their class and caste differentiation to understand how the Hindu Bangalees are living in and interacting with other community people in these *paras*. The Hindu Bangalees consider life as a drama on this earth where a person takes birth to perform different types of rituals, follows the customs and traditions of the community and religion, goes through various phases of life (i.e. rites of passage), forms various identities, and finally comes to an end when the body remains motionless and the soul moves out of the body to an eternal world. During this living that person performs a number of roles with his family, relatives, friends and neighbors and also becomes an important member of the community and society. Whether a *Sudra* or a *Kbatriya*, when one dies they announce the news of death through loud speaker by hiring an electric three wheeler motor vehicle. Previously they used to do this by hiring a rickshaw puller, but due to the availability of motor vehicle in the locality they now use it for the announcement. With this announcement the *para* people come to know that someone of their community is dead. According to their religion the dead body is cremated in the '*vita*' or 'pyre' after following ritual purification of the body through several prayers which they think help the departed soul to live in peace in Heaven (this funeral or death ritual has two aspects: 'cremation' – where the dead body or corpse is decorated and cremated in '*chita*'; and '*sraddha*' – which is considered as a ceremony in honor, and for the benefit, of the dead person's relatives). The ash of the body is preserved by them and after a certain period of time they drop the ash into the river. During various stages of performing the death rituals these Hindu Bangalees do not allow people of other religions or communities to participate. But after the prayer is over they let the other people of the *paras* to see the dead person's body for the last time. This is a common practice for the Hindu Bangalees in the *para* of Khagrachari.

The Hindu Bangalees believe that it takes a lot of effort and strategies to build relations within and among the communities. At the same time death brings them together and that they try to rebuild confidence among the families where the death occurs. As I have mentioned earlier that these Hindu Bangalees do not consider that everyone has relation with them. But in practice they have very strong connection with some of the Muslim Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras (I have observed their pattern of social bondage and realized that it takes two not only to create difference but also bondage) and these people are always invited by them during various occasions. And in case of the death of any member of their family they have both mental and physical support from the above mentioned peoples. As I have found it this helps them a lot to increase their level of confidence during this hard time or one of the most shocking moments of their lives. But it is also a fact that they consider death as one of the most important aspects of their lives because, to some extent, it brings solidarity (both community and social) both within and among the communities in the *paras*.

Chakmas

Apart from the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees, the Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* have their own religious and cultural traditions and customs to observe their death rituals. As I have mentioned earlier these Chakmas are the followers of two religions: Buddhism and Christianity. Whether Buddhists or Christians, usually they follow their cultural traditions and customs to observe their death rituals. According to Chakma tradition when any of

their community dies it is very common for them to cover the dead body with white cloth, special musical note is created by beating a drum, this musical note or sound declares to others that someone is dead in the *para*, and the family members place small earthen bowls at the front door of the house full of bran with burning coals over it among others²²⁸. However, all the Chakmas of the *para*, Bangalee neighbors and Tripuras, well known or well connected people, come together at the dead person's house to have further information and also to show their condolence. During this moment the neighbors bring food for the members of the dead person's family. During cremation of the dead body a Buddhist monk (for the Buddhist Chakmas) or a Christian priest (for the Christian Chakmas) is invited to arrange the prayer for the dead person's soul.

Despite religious difference among themselves the Chakmas do not forget to follow their community traditions. According to their community rules they take the dead body to the crematorium placed on a carriage made of bamboo (they call this carriage as '*aalong*'), the relatives and *para* people prepare a pyre with five layers of fuel wood (if the dead person is female then the pyre is made with seven layers of fuel wood) collected from the jungle, place the dead body on the funeral pyre (along with the bamboo carriage), keep fire on the funeral pyre and burn the body. After the burning of the dead body, the Chakmas again call the monk or priest at home and listen to religious Sutras and instructions wishing for the welfare of the family. These Chakmas also observe the death anniversary which is known as '*Bojori*' and they observe this death anniversary for three consecutive years. Generally these Chakmas follow these ritual performances during the death of a member of their community. The key aspect of this observation is that from the beginning to the end of this death ritual they receive full support from their relatives, *para* people and other neighbors. This is evident in the fact that when a person dies it is forbidden for the family of the dead person to cook any food in the house (this is also practiced among the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees) and it is their relatives and closely connected neighbors who bring food to them. People from the Bangalees and Tripuras also come to see the dead person, wish for the best of the dead person's soul and family members. Eventually this becomes a social gathering with full of sorrowness and during the '*Bojori*' the dead person's family invites all their relatives, friends, *para* people and neighbors who assemble together and pray for the family as well.

In other words, as the Chakmas believe, this gathering also helps them to regenerate their strength and to receive support from other relatives or friends in case of any difficulties. This further ensures two aspects of their community traditions: one is the fact that they are Chakmas with their traditional beliefs and values, and the other fact is that they show their distinctiveness as well as the way of communication and interaction with the other community peoples in general.

Tripuras

Finally the Tripuras have their distinctive way to observe death rituals. There is no difference in the fact that death is considered as the saddest even of a person's life and family. As the Tripuras are Hindus, therefore, they divide the funeral or death ritual into two parts: one is 'cremation' where the dead body or corpse is decorated and cremated

²²⁸ For more see Kamal et.al, eds. (2007:62-63).

in '*chita*' (funeral pyre for the cremation of the dead according to Hindu rite); and the other is '*sraddha*' (observed after 13 days of death) which is considered as a Hindu ceremony in honor, and for the benefit, of the dead person's relatives²²⁹. These two practices are very significant in Tripura's life.

I have observed the death ritual or funeral of Jainab Tripura (as I have mentioned earlier) who died due to old age. When he died his sons declared the message by phone calls and person to person interaction. They mentioned that previously this type of message was used to be declared by playing the '*dbol*' or a musical instrument known as drum. But this is not in practice now. However, in the cremation part of death ritual the family members of Jainab Tripura have built the crematorium. Here the Tripura term for the crematorium is '*Mangchowk*' and two types of crematorium are seen among the Tripuras: one is '*Mangchowk Chala*' which is made for the male (it consists of five stages of firewood), and the other is '*Mangchowk Bura*' which is made for female (it consists of seven stages of firewood).

Thus according to Tripura tradition as well as religious norms and practices the eldest son of this deceased Tripura had set fire to the '*Mangchowk Chala*' and at the end of the cremation ceremony and rituals they announced the day of '*Sraddha*' (the second and final part of their death ritual) orally. In this case they did not issue any invitation letter, but they informed their relatives, friends and neighbors (para people, the Bangalees and Chakmas, too) to have a visit to the '*Sraddha*' and pray for the departed soul along with the dead person's family members. They arranged the '*Sraddha*' on the thirteenth day after the cremation²³⁰. During this '*Sraddha*' they lightened an auspicious lantern for the salvation of the dead in the life afterworld. They call this lantern as '*Shimtung*'. Not only the family members but also the invitees take part in a singing and dancing ceremony played with musical instruments. These Tripuras believe that this dancing and singing ritual, which they call '*Shimtung Dance*', is a very emotional one and they perform this ritual with lots of devotion to pray for the betterment of the dead person's soul in the life afterworld. In this emotional and pleasant '*Shimtung*' dancing everybody sings the following song (I have translated it into English keeping the meaning same and this song is very common during '*Sraddha*' among the Tripuras of Beltali para)²³¹:

“Who does not die? Who does not die?
Everybody will die.
Nobody is immortal.
He who dies saves himself.
Be merry, be merry.”

They also believe that their father or the dead person can see them from the place in afterworld and the arrangement of '*Sraddha*' saves and places the dead person's soul in the Haven. And that is why everybody takes part in this singing and dancing ritual performances, especially the Tripura family members, relatives, friends and neighbors, while few of the Bangalees and Chakmas (with whom they have close interactions) come to observe the ritual and at the same time pray for the deceased person and his family.

²²⁹ For more see Kamal et.al, eds. (2007:220).

²³⁰ According to Tripura customs and traditions they arrange the '*Sraddha*' on the seventh or thirteenth day: '*Sraddha*' of the priests, the honorable persons and the kings is arranged on the seventh day; and for the general people on the thirteenth day (Tripura 2007:221).

²³¹ For more on this see Probangshu Tripura (2007).

All they believe is that the participation of different people from different communities not only give them the strength and further inspiration during this sad moment or difficult times but also strengthen their social bondages with others for a better future in the para and society as well.

4.3 Observing Cultural Festivals: Composition of Interrelations of Ethnic Communities in the Hills

According to the analyses made in the previous section I have been able to identify that for these Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras religion and various religious rituals, values, norms, customs and traditions have played significant roles not only in organizing their day to day affairs but also in shaping, designing and redesigning their patterns of social relations and integrations. Now it comes to their cultural aspects (their cultural aspects have also been reflected in their religious rituals related to birth, marriage and death). There is no doubt about the fact that each of these communities has their own cultural traditions. These cultural traditions and practices are learned and shared by each of the members of these communities and the different aspects of their cultures have been passed down from generation to generation. Although it appears in theoretical understanding, but in practice all these Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras consider that language has a close connection in categorizing their natural and cultural world. It is quite obvious for each of these communities to maintain that their cultures are viewed as a system of communication or signs, product human interaction, and system of mediation among others. But due to living in close proximity in the hills for more than hundred years these three communities and their cultures and traditions have come into close contact or interaction. It seemed quite obvious that through a long term and continuous interaction the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras think that they have become a part of a hill culture or have developed a culture area. This does not mean that there are no boundaries among their cultures and traditions. They do maintain clear differences in their ways of living. But despite these differences they try to develop a composition of cultures through which they express the nature of hill culture. In later part of this discussion I have elaborated how their cultures mix and in what way they participate in various cultural festivals in the hills.

The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras also maintain that their cultures are presented in two different ways:

- a) through observable elements or sensitive indicators²³² such as art, music, religion, ethos, philosophy and similar aspects of their intellectual life; and
- b) through concrete elements such as their patterns of hierarchy, social classes, traditional law, etc.

Whatever the ways of expressing their cultures, it seems quite obvious that, now-a-days, these three communities place their cultures to be attached with each other where globalization plays crucial roles. But the question raised is how globalization plays this role? Even the people living in the hill *paras* consider that globalization embraces all human relations and institutions. Thus it leads us to think that for cultures of every community in the study *paras* globalization has touched culture by bringing increasing interdependence, integration and interaction among different peoples. In other words it

²³² For more see A.L. Kroeber (1939).

enhances the cultural exchanges among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. I have observed as well as heard from many of the eldest members of each of these communities that with the impact of modernization and globalization, many elements of their cultures have been changed. However, some of the common aspects of their cultures (whether material and non-material or tangible and intangible) are: knowledge, belief, art, literature, laws, customs and traditions, language, dress pattern (including ornaments, tastes and attitudes), cultural festivals, etc. According to them all these elements of culture together show their present cultural pattern in the hill *paras*. There is no doubt about the fact that all these people are culturally different, but at the same time they think that due to their long term and frequent interaction with each other in daily activities their cultures have come into close observation and participation of all.

This practice indicates that cultures are changing with the introduction of various elements in the society. But this is not my intension here to discuss about the cultural changes in general, rather to indicate the nature of interaction developed among these communities over the years in the field of culture through these changes. All these people believe that culture is at the core of their community's beliefs and traditions and they uphold their cultures from generation to generation. Another most important aspect of their culture is that, as they believe, it indicates the boundaries among different ethnic communities (this boundary maintenance show their separate identity and according to them there is nothing than culture which shows the differences in identity of these communities as well). Regular and free-flow interactions among different communities have increased than that of the past, but according to them this does not mean that their total cultural systems have been changed due to this.

Bangalees

Considering the cultural aspects both the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees have their own cultural practices. One of the most important aspects of their culture is Bangla language and this is common for their community identity as well. According to their beliefs as well as understandings on one hand it shapes their total way of living (this also refers to culture), and on the other hand it shows their differences as well with other ethnic communities (this also refers to their distinctiveness and boundary maintenance). Whether Muslims or Hindus, these Bangalees try to transfer their cultural traditions (in this case language) from generation to generation and with this they uphold their cultural beliefs, values and practices. It is quite common for these Bangalees that they have come into close contact with the Chakmas and Tripuras of the neighboring *paras*, and with this process they have learnt few elements of their languages, too. But this does not mean that the Bangalees have changed their language. In fact neither of the communities in the hill *paras* has changed their languages. The only thing took place is to learn the other language for the sake of well living in the hills. Similar is also the case for the Chakmas and Tripuras and there is a practice of dual language. Culturally the Bangalees have their mother language (*Bangla*) and the Chakmas and Tripuras also have their mother languages (Chakma language and *Kokborok* for Tripura language) along with learning *Bangla*, English languages among others.

When it comes to dress and ornaments there is nothing such difference observed among the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees in these days. Only a few things can be named which make differences and mostly noted one of these is – '*dhuti*' or a piece of cloth wore by the Hindu Bangalee males (usually the elder persons) and the Muslims never wear this

cloth. Today all the Bangalee male in the *para* wear shirt, pant, shoes, sandals and various other modern day dresses that they think best suit them or fashionable for them. I have seen all the Muslim and Hindu Bangalee women wearing 'sharee' or a piece of long cloth to cover their whole body. The young girls wear 'sahwar kamiz' which is largely practiced among the Bangalees not only in the hill *paras* but also throughout the country. Ornaments are very popular among the women and girls of this *para*. Gold ornaments are not only popular but also expensive and demandable among them. This is considered as an asset too. Ear rings, nose pins, chain, etc. are very common and in addition to this they also use indigenous ornaments made by the Chakmas and Tripuras.

Despite these individual cultural elements I have observed that both the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees of the *para* maintain their traditions expressed through their exercise of various programs such as observing birth, marriage and death rituals, *eid* and *pauja* festivals, taste of art and literature, food habit, etc. In any observances they give priority to represent their own traditions and cultural practices displayed through how they dress themselves, use their tastes of art and attitudes, and decorate their houses as well. Overall it is possible to learn about their cultural practices through observing their total way of life. By observing their day to day various activities it appeared that the Muslim and Hindu Bangalees are different from each other and they are different from the Chakmas and Tripuras too. According to Ajay Kumar, one of the Hindu Bangalees of the *para*:

“...it is our ways of thinking, activities, ritual performances, community beliefs and values, our customs and traditions that we are holding and transferring to all the members of the community for generations, our dresses, costumes, ornaments, art, literature and similar other materials (designed and developed with regard to our community traditions) i.e. our culture which shows that we are a separate community full of cultural resources along with distinctiveness; this cultural pattern also indicates our nature of interacting with other community people and in turn delivering our community status and identity to others as well.”

Similarly according to Jashim, one of the Muslim Bangalees of the *para*:

“...culturally we are Bangalees, but due to living with the Chakmas and Tripuras in the hills for many years we have understood their cultures too, and now-a-days, free flow movements and continuous interactions with different ethnic communities (particularly with the Chakmas and Tripuras) in the hills have made us realize two things – when it comes to our Muslim Bangalee community we have our own ways to express our cultural identity through demarking some strictly maintained values and norms; and when it comes to interactions with the Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities there comes a presence of collective understanding as well as the making and preference of specific boundary maintenance.”

The Bangalees of Singinala *para* further illustrated that each culture has its deep value orientations with which its members have in-depth relation. According to them:

“...it is our culture through which we have a common way of living as well as interacting with others; it is a composition of several instruments which play crucial role in determining not only our distinctiveness as Bangalees but also our pattern of interactions with the Chakmas and Tripuras”.

However, these Bangalees further mentioned that the hills of Khagrachari and its environment have given them the motherly affection and thus a pattern of hill culture which is closely attached to the flora and fauna of the hill *paras*.

Chakmas

The Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* feel very proud about their society and culture. The Chakma society is based on the Chief system where the Chief of the Chakma society is the Chakma Raja. And in the *para* there is a headman who is responsible for all the activities taking place in the *para*. This headman represents the whole community in different community activities such as different religious rituals, cultural activities, birth, marriage or death related rituals, any sorts of disputes among others. As I have mentioned earlier the Chakmas of the *para* have a long historical background of living not only in this *para* but also in the CHTs. As a matter of fact they have established a strong bondage with the nature and environment of the CHTs. Based on their religious beliefs and values they have their cultural traditions attached to their beliefs, rituals, customs, art, literature, knowledge, attitude, dress pattern and ornaments among others. The Chakmas believe that their culture is embedded in their society and day to day living. They are distinct from the Bangalees and Tripuras in terms of their language, food habit, beliefs and practices. Though with the impact of globalization, in these days, many things have been changed but the Chakmas consider their culture and tradition on the top of everything. In observing their various rituals and programs such as different puja festivals, rituals of birth, marriage and death, and also the festivals related to their natural world in the hills, the Chakmas place their group (*gojha*) and clan (*gutthi*) traditions to be the controlling agents. Like the Bangalees the Chakmas also have their own dress pattern where their male wear specially designed '*kurtas*' (pant) and '*punjabis*' (long cloth) and their female wear their traditional dress known as '*pinon-khadi*' (a specially designed upper and lower cloth very popular not only among them but also among the Bangalees). In the *para* the Chakma women used to sew their own dresses on hand-loom machines. In some cases they sell these dresses in the local and town markets. But in most cases they make dresses for their own usages. I have seen it quite significant for the Chakmas to uphold their traditional dresses and due to this their dresses have become popular crossing their community boundary. But at the same time the Chakmas now think that certain changes have occurred in their society due to three factors:

- a) *Modernization* (bringing changes and to some extent forcing people to adapt to new ideas, technologies, and habits);
- b) *Globalization* (playing dominating role to spread the modern day facilities including ideas, thoughts, art, music, technologies and habits); and
- c) *Modern education* (through the introduction or enforcement of modernization and globalization bringing people, even from the most remote places in the hill *paras*, to learn modern education in order to face the challenges in a global world).

Despite these factors the Chakmas of the *para* never forget or let their younger generation to give up their culture and tradition. They think that their culture and traditions are not so easy to be forgotten with the intrusion of so called modern day facilities and their younger generations have important roles to play to sustain their culture and traditions for years to come. They are very much habituated with the hills and its rivers. They feel that they are the children of these hills and rivers and consequently they worship the nature for more than anything. These Chakmas place their culture and

tradition in every aspect of their lives such as birth, marriage, death, religious festivals and rituals. Every word they utter, every song they sing, and every moment they pass is demarcated by their culture and tradition. They pass down their culture and tradition from generation to generation. According to Memosha, one of the Chakmas of the *para*:

“...during different phases of our life we follow our cultural rules such as during the birth of a child we practice to keep the pregnant mother in the husband’s house and conduct the delivery of the child there, customary to bring the bride to husband’s house, it is propitious for a person to die at the home of somebody belonging to his or her own clan, and maintain taboos (in Chakma language ‘*khuma*’) based on our respected clans among others.”

Whatever the nature of their changes to modernity, I have not found any of the Chakmas of the *para* to forget his or her own culture and tradition. Though there are some cases where there were marriages took place in between the Muslim Bangalee boy and Chakma girl of the *para*, but they maintained their own religious and cultural traditions. The Chakmas of the *para* never disobey their culture and tradition. They also think that it is culture through which they express their identity as Chakmas, demonstrate their distinctiveness and also maintain a clear boundary with the Bangalees and Tripuras. At the same time these Chakmas respect the other communities and their cultures and never neglect the interaction with others. Rather they believe that their hill culture offers all the inhabitants of the hill *paras* an environment of going together. Therefore, on the point of culture and tradition they maintain a good social relations (though this is not the same in the cases of politics and rights based issues and these two aspects offer a striking nature of ethnic interaction too).

Tripuras

The Tripuras are the ancient inhabitants of the *para* they are living now. They bear their own traditional culture along with their long historical background. They consider their culture closely attached to their beliefs, rituals, practices, religion, festivals and also with their day to day activities. If culture means the way of life then the Tripuras of the *para* illustrated that their culture is attached to every aspect of their life. Starting from birth through marriage to death of a Tripura person, his or her entire life goes through so many Tripura cultural traditions reflected in their ritual performances of these three stages of life. Basically the Tripuras are *para* (village) living with their *para* based social structure (though in these days, as they mentioned, many of the Tripuras have migrated to the urban areas of Khagrachari, Chittagong, Feni and Dhaka as well) and this is a crucial part of their culture and traditions.

Therefore, their understandings, ways of thinking, living, believing as well as regular activities and attitudes are distinct from the other community people. Whenever I went to the Tripura *para* it has given me so elegant environment and the taste of a distinct Tripura culture that the Tripuras have got hold for thousands of years. The Tripuras are very hospitable and they consider that it is inherent in their culture to warmly receive the guests in their community. Like the Chakmas the Tripuras also have specific dress and ornaments and many of the Tripura women of the *para* sew their dresses with their handloom machines in their houses. Because of this their dresses have an indigenous art and fashion representing their culture and tradition. Usually Tripura women wear two pieces of cloths: one is on the upper part and the other is on the lower part of their body.

Traditionally they call their dress as '*Pinon-kehad*' and these dresses are very popular not only among the Tripuras but also among the Bangalees and other tourists who regularly visit Khagrachari. The traditional dress of a Tripura man include *dhuti* (a narrow piece of cloth clad round the waist and between the legs with a fringed end hanging down from the rear) and a *kehaban* (turban).

The Tripura men and women love to decorate themselves with their traditional dresses and ornaments. Both men and women wear crescent shaped silver earrings. The women wear necklace made of beads and shells, nose skewers and ornaments on the hair, neck, wrist and ankle. They believe that their culture is reflected through their everyday activities which include their rituals, beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and their total way of life. In addition to these their language is also a determinant factor to address their culture and identity through it. Historically the Tripuras of this *para* have very profoundly represented their cultural values and norms and they think that their culture is unique to demonstrate not only their distinctiveness as Tripuras but also their ways to maintain their boundary with other ethnic communities. Today many of the Tripura families of the *para* are sending their children for education to the towns and also for higher education to Dhaka and Chittagong. According to Binoy Tripura:

“...with the impact of modernization and globalization, things are changing even in our *para*; technology is playing significant role in bringing absolute changes in our society and culture; I think changes occur in a natural process, but this does not mean that we have changed every aspect of our society, culture and traditions; rather we have a strong sense of belongingness to our culture and traditions.”

Thus the Tripuras believe that their culture and traditions do few things to them:

- i. these keep them alive;
- ii. set them as a distinct ethnic community in the hills with their origin and identity; and
- iii. help them develop an understanding of establishing interrelations with the Bangalees, Chakmas and other ethnic communities with whom they have some interactions.

So far I have analyzed the values, norms, cultures and traditions of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the three *paras*. But there is another thing in the hill *paras* of Khagrachari which plays very important role to bring not only these three communities but also many other people from all over Bangladesh in this area and that is the cultural festival of '*Biju*' or '*Bwisu*' or '*Bangla New Year*' festival. It works like an umbrella or a common ground or platform where the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras come together to enjoy and celebrate the beginning of a new year with full cultural and community traditional values and norms. Altogether this cultural festival is known as '*Boishabi*' (this name is a combination of three festivals celebrated by three different ethnic communities in the CHTs: '*Biju*' for the Chakmas, '*Bwisu*' for the Tripuras and '*Sangrai*' for the Marmas respectively). This cultural festival has a different color combining all the aspects of the three communities' values, norms, traditions and cultures (decoration of the house, colorful dress, ornaments, entertainment, enjoyment with lots of food, prayers, etc.).

I have participated in two of this festival in two different years during my fieldwork and afterwards, and found it full of life, emotion, sharing and understanding each other. But

many of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras also argued that, in these days, the corporate sectors of Bangladesh (such as different cell phone companies, electronic media, etc.) have influenced the indigenous pattern of celebrating this cultural festival and they fear that these type of practices are making it a showcase one. However, at this stage of discussion I have highlighted some of the major aspects of this cultural festival to demonstrate that following three things are done through this:

- a) *Creating an environment*: to bring together the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras to celebrate the beginning of a new year from their own perspectives (this takes sharing and understanding of each other's culture and tradition along with other ethnic communities as well);
- b) *Highlighting*: that the *paras* of the hills of Khagrachari offer a tremendous color of life; and
- c) *Despite cultural differences*: hills offer a culture where all these ethnic communities find their ways to develop an understanding of cultural interaction irrespective of so many challenges in the hills (these challenges include political unrest, fighting for ethnic identity, discrimination based on majority and minority controversies, gap of understanding and uneven intervention into their rights based issues (most importantly land), and forced settlement of the Bangalees among others).

However, through following case study I have shown the nature of social relations maintained by the cultural festival 'Biju' or 'Bwisu' or 'Bangla New Year'.

Case Study-9: 'Biju' or 'Bwisu' or 'Bangla New Year' festival: Color of the hills

One of the most significant aspects of the *paras* of the hills of Khagrachari (as well as other areas of the entire CHTs) is to observe the cultural festival known as 'Biju' or 'Bwisu' or 'Bangla New Year' festival. For long the 'Bangla New Year' has been observed and celebrated with a festive mood throughout the country and in course of time this cultural festival has been given a global cultural flavor. But in what way this festival is observed and celebrated has differences in function as well as attachment to different ethnic communities. I have very closely observed this cultural festival both among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras and found two types of patterns demarking differences as well as common grounding: there are differences among these communities to observe it starting from the differences of its name to various functional elements; and it illustrates a commonness among these hill people and plays crucial role to bring altogether these communities into a common platform to share their moments with the hope to have a happy beginning of the new year. Considering these two aspects I have found it significant to illustrate the nature of celebrating the *Bangla New Year* by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras*.

The Bangalees of Singinala *para* observe and celebrate the first day of *Bangla New Year* ('*Pahela Baishak*' i.e. the first day of the first month of *Bangla* year calendar; and it occur on the 14th of April of the English year calendar) with pure Bangalee ways (this way is sometimes addressed by them as '*Bangaleeana*'). In most of the cases these Bangalees start the day with '*Panta-Ilish*' (wet rice and the fish *Hilsha-Ilisha*) and greet each other, their families, friends, neighbors and other members of the society by saying '*suvo nobo-borsho*' or 'happy new year'. For them the new day of the year brings new hopes and sense of belongingness for them. By being a member or resident of the hill *para* they have the opportunity to intermix with the Chakmas and Tripuras. For the Bangalees of this *para* they are observing the *Bangla New Year* for many years and this is a colorful event for them. They wear new dresses, the businessmen and shop keepers open new

note books (or '*Haal-Khatas*'), visit friends' and neighbors' houses and pray for the beginning of a new year with new ambitions. In addition to this they participate in the '*Biju*' and '*Bwisu*' festivals. The Bangalees further mentioned that the hill offers them a different taste of observing the new year festival and the day is mostly popular because of the ways the Chakmas and Tripuras celebrate it. Further it helps them to mix with each other, and to understand each other better. Moreover, many people from all over Bangladesh come to visit the festivals of the hills and this brings global color to it. According to these Bangalees:

“...this cultural festival does few things for us: it helps us to show our Bangalee culture (*Bangaleeana*) and thus to present our Bangalee identity, it allows us to develop good understandings with the Chakmas and Tripuras through participating in their '*Biju*' and '*Bwisu*' festivals, it gives us an opportunity to be a part of the 'hill culture'²³³, and finally it presents us a feeling of security considering the fact that there are tensions over land, resources and other related matters in the hills and building tolerable relationship with the Chakmas and Tripuras.”

Observing *Bangla* new year festival is a great one for the Chakmas which they call '*Biju*' and celebrate this festival for three days and dividing it with three different names – '*Ful-Biju*', '*Mul-Biju*' and '*Gorjyaporjya*' (the last two days of the *Bangla* month *Chaitra* – the last month of the *Bangla* year calendar, and the first day of the *Bangla* month *Boishak* – the first month of the *Bangla* year calendar)²³⁴. The Chakmas call this new year '*Nwabjhar*' according to their language. They consider this festival closely associated with their beliefs, values and cultural traditions. The Chakmas of the *para* have elaborated the cultural activities of this festival.

During '*Ful-Biju*' the Chakma boys and girls collect flowers to decorate their houses in the *para*, put the flowers on banana leaves and float them in the *Chengi* river after taking bath or put them on the river banks for deities, and play a game called '*Ghila-Khara*' or '*Ghila-Kbela*' ('*Ghila*' is a seed of a big fruit grown on a kind of creeping plants and it looks like the neck of a hen). This is one of the loveliest and happiest games in the hills where the boys and girls become divided into two groups. This game consists of two teams (one consists of boys and the other consists of girls) and is the most colorful one. They play this game in the name of their ancestors. They arrange the '*ghilas*' one after another on top, organize the team around it, and one member of a team tries to hit the '*ghilas*' and break it down. If they can break it successfully they win, otherwise the other team plays the same game. But this game has several rules and regulation depending on different clans of the Chakmas. Though the Buddhist Chakmas do not believe in killing animals, but at the same time their traditional belief is that if their meals contain meat, fish, etc. on the first day of the year there will be good food in their meals throughout the year. With this belief they practice hunting of animals in the jungle and share the meats among the community members of the *para* to observe the first day of the *Bangla* year. They also arrange other food, drinks, vegetables, fruits, etc. and one of the most favorite dishes of the Chakmas during this

²³³ I have regarded the culture of the hills as 'hill culture' which is represented by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the respective paras.

²³⁴ According to the Chakma tradition the '*Mul-Biju*' festival is celebrated on the last day of the *Bangla* year; the previous day to this is called '*Ful-Biju*' day; and the festival observed on the first day of the *Bangla* New Year is called '*Gorjyaporjya*' (Kamal et.al, eds. 2007:67).

festival is '*pajon*' or '*panchan*' which is the combination of various fruits and vegetables. In addition to this food habit the Chakma '*Gengulis*' arrange song parties in the *para* where they sing various types of '*palagaan*' or 'narrative opera' and they do this during '*Ful-Biju*' night when round-shaped full moon is seen in the sky.

The '*Ful-Biju*' day is followed by the '*Mul-Biju*' day (the last day of the *Bangla* month Chaitra). The Chakmas of the *para* perform some of their rituals on the '*Mul-Biju*' day, they (both boys and girls) take bath in the river, meet their friends and neighbors, salute their elders or superiors when they meet, and in most of the Chakma houses of the *para* '*pajon*' is cooked along with other foods from the morning. One of the most striking features of the '*Mul-Biju*' day is that the Chakmas keep their door open for the guests (the guests include their friends, relatives, and neighbors from the Bangalees and Chakmas as well) and they express good wishes to them along with the exchange of greetings.

Finally it comes to '*Nwabjhar*' or '*Gorjyaporjya*' day i.e. the first day of the *Bangla* new year when the Chakmas celebrate like the '*Mul-Biju*' day. During '*Nwabjhar*' or '*Gorjyaporjya*' day they go to the Buddhist temple (the Christian Chakmas go to the Church instead) to light lamps, offer flowers and pray for happiness, peace, long life, good health, and prosperity among others for their future life. Some of the things seen common among all the Chakma households of the *para* during '*Nwabjhar*' or '*Gorjyaporjya*' is that they perform their religious rituals, visit their relatives and neighbors' homes as well as receive guests in their homes (including few close Bangalees) to exchange greetings, and share their common but special food and drink prepared for the '*Biju*' festival.

However, throughout the course of observing this '*Biju*' festival and according to the Chakmas of the *para* (they mentioned about few things that they think significant for them):

“...'*Biju*' festival (one of the main cultural events of our life) belongs to our traditional life style and show our distinctiveness, it brings all the joys and happiness for us, it gives us an opportunity to enhance our social relations with other ethnic communities in the hills (particularly the Bangalees and Tripuras), it expresses our ways of approaching the other community people through our cultural behavior, and in this global world it also helps us to demonstrate our Chakma identity and feeling of community belongingness to the outside world.”

Like the Chakmas these Tripuras also observe the new year festival very colorfully and in their own cultural and traditional way. They call this festival '*Bwisu*'. Historically the Tripuras observe this '*Bwisu*' festival on the 30th day of the month of the *Tallang* of Tripura era and is regarded as their main national festival²³⁵. These Tripuras do not

²³⁵ Historically the '*Bwisu*' festival has three significances: firstly the annual calendar, the Tripura era, was nationally introduced on the 30th day of the month of *Tallang* (*Tallang* is the name of the last month of Tripura era). This is why it is the first day (new year's day) of the Tripura era; secondly it is mentioned in the Tripura *Tantrasha* (Tripura Holly Book) that day and night become equal in equinox (equinox is regarded as an auspicious moment of a lunar day) and this day is very auspicious; and thirdly the *Goria* dance is staged on the days of '*Bwisu*' festival (*Goria* is the God of action and love for the Tripuras) and the Tripuras acquire inspiration and strength

consider their '*Bwisu*' festival only as a festival of the celebration of new year's day, but they maintain their norms and religious values as well as cultural traditions attached to this. Like the Chakmas the Tripuras also observe their '*Bwisu*' festival for three days: '*Haribwisu*' (29th day of Chaitra of the Bangla calendar year), '*Bishuma*' (30th day of Chaitra of the Bangla calendar year), and '*Bishikatal*' (1st day of Baishak of the 1st month of the Bangla calendar year). According to them they observe each of these days with full cultural and religious fashion.

The Tripuras believe in peace and happiness and during '*Haribwisu*' (the busiest day of the '*Bwisu*' festival) they show love and reverence to the animal kingdom and creatures living within and around their households (i.e. on this day they show love affection to their domesticated animals, plants and other creatures through proper nursing and care). Accordingly they decorate their houses with the leaves of *margosa* and mango trees, grasses, flowers and betel-leaves and nuts. It belongs to their cultural tradition and they try to uphold their cultural values and norms during '*Bwisu*' festival. Initially they have special values of the materials used to decorate their houses such as they identify *margosa* or mango leaves as 'symbol of peace', grasses as 'symbol of immortality', flowers as 'symbol of respect', and betel-leaves and nuts as 'symbol of welfare'. Thus they observe the '*Haribwisu*' day of '*Bwisu*' festival with worshipping of Gods (such as '*Khumkamung worship*' – worshipping for the mercy of the creator, '*Shimtung worship*' – worshipping to wish peace and happiness to the departed souls, '*Goria worship*' – worship for agricultural activities in the hills, etc.) for peace and happiness, arrange special dance, etc. However, special food and rice beer or '*colai wine*' (homemade wine from rice) are prepared and served to the guests. It is their cultural practice and they feel honor by presenting these food in front of the guests.

During '*Bishuma*' they consider the day for restraint and sacrifice, and they do not do any physical work or tell a lie. They avoid killing or slaughtering of animals and prepare special food named '*panchan curry*' (a curry prepared by boiling of five different herbs) and drink for the family members and guests. One of the most significant aspects of '*Bishuma*' festival is that the Tripuras show love and affection to all.

And finally during '*Bishikatal*' or the 1st day of the new year they worship for both physical and mental peace for all. As I have already mentioned the Tripuras are very hospitable and like the Chakmas they also keep their door open on the new year day for the relatives, friends and other neighbors including the Bangalees and Chakmas. This is the most striking feature of the '*Bwisu*' festival of the Tripuras and they color it with full joy and happiness. However, according to these Tripuras:

“...the observance of '*Bwisu*' festival (in these days it has gained a global flavor where many of the corporate houses as well as people from various countries visit our places and take part in our festivals) has brought several things to our lives and indicates few of our core aspects in this way: it demonstrates our identity as Tripuras through our values and norms, it opens an avenue for all of our ethnic people in the hills to mix with each other in order to learn and respect each others' culture and tradition, it helps develop social relations through sharing of our food and emotion, and finally it helps to reduce the tensions existing in the hills to some extent.”

through these *Goria* dance festivals on the eve of starting their cultivation (Kamal et.al, eds. 2007:213).

In this case study I have presented one of the most colorful cultural events of the hill *paras* that touches the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. The strength of this event is so strong that it has become a global cultural festival in these days (global in the sense that people from various places of Bangladesh and different countries try to participate and share their views). But the main thrust of this case study is to demonstrate the nature of this cultural event and the ways through which it accumulates the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras into a common platform. This does not mean that there are no tensions or boundaries maintained among these communities. Rather the evidences presented in this case study indicate that these three communities of the *paras* try to share their beliefs, values, and practices with each other and also to respect each others' cultures and traditions. This refers to Eriksen's thought where he maintained:

“...for ethnicity to come about the groups must have a minimum of contact with each other, and they must entertain ideas of each other as being culturally different from themselves, ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship” (Eriksen 1993:11-12).

However, following are some key issues that have been identified by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras through the observance of New Year festivals:

- a) *Love and respect*: The 'Biju', 'Bwisu' or 'Bangla New Year' festivals offer the people and nature of the hills a sense of true love and respect for each other.
- b) *Hopes and spirits*: It colors the entire *paras* (and also the hills) with new hopes and spirits for the future days.
- c) *Special values*: The food and drink offered during this festival by these communities of the *paras* have special values to each other and that they take this festival as an opportunity to share their culture of food and drink with each other as well.
- d) *Crossing taboos*: Coming to the food and drinks given to the guests during this festival also indicate another aspect of this culture. For the Muslim Bangalees taking liquor or drinking alcohol is completely prohibited as per the Islamic tradition. But I have seen many of the Muslim Bangalees to drink alcohol during this festival with the Chakmas and Tripuras (and they also take alcohol at other times of the year) and they believe that it enhances their social bondages and has nothing to do with their religion. This further indicates that the Muslim Bangalees of the *para* (but not all the Bangalees) are not always abiding by their religious laws. In some occasions they try to go beyond it and enjoy the moments of this New Year festival.
- e) *Demonstration*: The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have different attitudes displayed through their differences in the observances of New Year festival. This, in other words, demonstrates their separate identity as well (showing their ethnic identity).
- f) *Platform for exchange*: This festival, according to these three communities, is a great platform to display their cultures and emotional attachment both to their respective community sentiment and to others' senses of belongingness. If culture means the total way of life then this cultural event is considered by these people as a huge space to express their way of living, behavior and exchange of views.
- g) *Globalizing the local*: It has a global nature today and from time to time it is opening new areas and opportunities to the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras to remain in close contact, reduce tension, and broadening the understandings for each other to share their values, norms and religious as well as cultural perspectives. To some extent this helps in changing the perspectives of these communities towards

believing that they are not competitor to each other at least in the context of their cultural and traditional values and norms.

- h) *Power of culture and religion*: Finally all the people of the *paras* consider that it is culture and religion which has the power to bring peace and happiness as well as respects among them. At the same time they feel that there are other issues such as politics over identity, forest and other hill resource management, land rights, conflict of laws over land and other related matters, etc. which are needed to be addressed with an ease for a better living in the hills.

4.4 Patterns of Social Relations and Interaction: What Counts?

In this chapter I have discussed and analyzed about the nature of ethnicity and identity through an understanding of religion and culture, beliefs and rituals, and observances of cultural festivals by the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities in the hill *paras*. There is no doubt about the fact that the nature of ethnicity and identity of these communities is dynamic and these are expressed through various aspects of their day to day life. Living in close proximity always force them to interact with each other for different purposes (as mentioned in different case studies) such as economic, social, cultural, political or simply day to day activities. But in this chapter I have especially focused on the religious and cultural festivals in order to realize the nature of social relations and integrations as well as interactions operating among these people. Considering all the aspects and cases presented in this chapter, at this stage, I have briefly presented following features of the nature of social relations and interactions among these people, to have a straight way picture of the existing scenario.

Firstly, religion offers the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* a suitable solution to their livelihood strategies and in most of the cases they place their religious beliefs and rituals over and above everything to demonstrate their ethnic identity as well. As the case studies showed in this chapter religion further offers these people the ample opportunity to invite each other on various occasions. They do so with the belief that this practice helps them to enhance their pattern of interactions and thus establish a good social relation within themselves. Therefore, these people believe in a feeling of ethnic affinity based on shared religious beliefs and rituals despite differences and mechanism of boundary maintenance within themselves. To some extent all these people consider religion as a way to provide avenues for peace, happiness and a place of common interaction in the hills.

Secondly, all these communities think about culture as a broad aspect of their lives and integrated with both the individual and group relations. They also consider their origin and identity to be determined by their own cultures. Taking culture as a complex whole including its material and non-material aspects it has been identified that this culture connotes especial value to these communities. In other words things like ethnicity or the patterns of social relations operating within these communities, formation of ethnic identity and its expression, interacting with each other in different occasions in the hills, establishing a type of hill based social bondage within these communities – all these are seen possible by these three communities due to respecting and understanding each others' cultures and traditions. In this context the people of the study *paras* believe that they have developed a 'hill culture' keeping in mind the differences of each of these communities. Apart from their political engagement these people further expressed their

heartfelt believing that it is culture which is responsible for following two things in their lives:

- i. each community expresses its distinctiveness through its culture i.e. its separate identity through clear boundary maintenance; and
- ii. it is culture which is responsible to attract each other and develop an understanding for a peaceful living as well as believing in a shared common understanding.

Thirdly, respecting each others' religious and cultural traditions (observed through distinct language and dress pattern as well) is seen as another key determining factor for establishing an affordable social relation within these communities. As revealed from the views and perspectives of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras it has become quite clear that they try to respect each and every aspects of their religious beliefs, rituals as well as cultural traditions. This is evident in the facts that during the religious rituals and ceremonies like birth, marriage, death or *eid/ puja* festivals people of these *paras* try to engage themselves in these occasions. They justify this through self respect and respects shown to others.

Fourthly, along with respects participation is another factor to determine the nature of social relations operating among these communities. I have found if one of the most significant aspects of these communities where they consider their participation in various religious and cultural festival of the three communities as enhancing their individual and group social relations respectively. There are so many occasions where the people of these *paras* participate to demonstrate that they feel each others' religions and cultures.

Fifthly, they believe that the hills, where they live their life, offer them such an environment where they remain in close contact with each other. Their close living is designed and constructed by their day to day activities. There are some evidences where I have found that there are intermarriages taking place in between the Bangalees and Chakmas. This does not mean that there are no boundaries within these communities, but it shows that there are better understandings among themselves for a better future.

Sixthly, according to them globalization (along with modernization) has played crucial role in bringing the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras into close contact more than ever before. This refers to the fact that today many more people are getting information about the life and culture of the ethnic communities of these *paras*. Today there is no way to escape or hide from others from knowing about them and all the *para* people now realize that modern education, technological advancement and related other things, brought about by globalization, are responsible for continuous cultural contact and change within these communities. Accordingly they believe that their society is culturally highly exclusive in nature.

Seventhly, despite participation in different religious and cultural festivals these people also believe that their senses of community belongingness further help them to formulate their relationship. It means that a Bangalee can never be a Chakma or Tripura and the vice-versa and this expresses not only their community identity but also the ways to mix with others. I have found it quite significant for these people that they place their differences as a media for interaction and communication. So it indicates that difference

itself has another language to incorporate the separateness for a common sharing of thoughts for a better living.

Finally, the color of the hill and its people (Bangalee, Chakma or Tripura) are represented through the cultural event known as '*Baishabi*' festival. It has different colors but the meaning is same i.e. to observe and celebrate the New Year. For the Bangalees it brings an opportunity to interact with the Chakmas and Tripuras through sharing of foods, songs, dances as well as emotions. On the other hand the Chakmas and Tripuras keep their doors open during this festival for all with the belief that it brings peace and happiness to the people of the hills irrespective of age, sex and community identity. Most importantly all these people find it a valuable way to highlight or demonstrate not only their identity as Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras but also to indicate that apart from political and other related tensions in the hills²³⁶, they have something to cheer up. Thus they insist that cultural practices help to recognize them both as a single community (with community feeling) and as a cohesion of cooperative understandings operating in the hill *paras*. In other words, according to these people, all these justify that ethnicity among these communities is constituted through a continuous social contact, and that they are categorized according to their language, appearances, clothes and religion among others. Ultimately their ways of interaction and boundary maintenance or differences are viable through following aspects:

- a) *Differences*: (for interactions as well) in their ways of expression of their life style on the basis of language, rituals, attitude, behavior, customs, and traditions among others.
- b) *Value system*: of these communities directly or indirectly associated with their differences in the way of expression.
- c) *Self-identification*: depending on belonging to a community (indicating identity) and at the same time acceptance by others as belonging to that community (indicating interaction and ethnicity).

²³⁶ It is further mentionable here that the conflict between Bangladesh and the CHT counter-movement, as illustrated by the Chakmas and Tripuras, evolved from the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion processes, nationalism and counter-nationalism, and politicization of ethnicity and identity of the ethnic communities among others. (Loffler noted that the amendments to Rule 34 of the CHT Regulation-1900 by the Pakistani and Bangladeshi governments effectively served to 'legalize the settlement of more and more immigrants from the plains' (Loffler, 1991); eventually this caused the continuing loss of ancestral lands of the Chakmas and Tripuras and increased settlement activities, growth of private rubber plantations, and opening of commercial and industrialized enterprises by the outsiders from the flood plains.

“We are not like other political groups; we have some connections with local and national political parties, but this does not mean that those political parties guide our emotions; we do not want to be a part of the politics of so called mainstream society of the country, rather we consider our identity (our religion, culture, economy, and traditional political activities) over and above everything; finally ethnicity sometimes regarded as a political phenomenon which guide our good social, economic, and political understandings” (Voices of a Tripura man from the field, 2012).

CHAPTER-5: POLITICAL RELATIONS, ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY FORMATION OF COMMUNITIES

**5.1 Political Relations and Relations of Politics for Ethnicity and Identity:
How the Communities Perceive?**

5.2 Formation of Political Groups: Stereotyping and Dynamism

5.3 Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Relations: Power, Politics and Identity

**5.4 Multidimensional Aspects of Ethnic Communities' Political Relations:
Factors Count**

5.1 Political Relations and Relations of Politics for Ethnicity and Identity: How the Communities Perceive?

In the previous chapter an analysis has been made on the nature of ethnicity and identity of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras based on religion and culture. The multidimensionality of their pattern of ethnicity and identity, as revealed from their religious and cultural practices, further refer to what has been addressed in this study as 'political relations and relations of politics' working among these communities. Through the course of fieldwork it has been realized that political relations and relations of politics, or in a single word politics, are playing crucial roles in the *paras* and among the people for many reasons. This multidimensionality of politics cannot be stated in a word. It demands, as revealed from these peoples' perspectives, more attention to the nature of their engagement in the political affairs. Whatever the size of their communities there are always specialized persons available to govern their decision making procedures, whether it is political, economic, religious and/ or other related matters. At this stage many of these persons (who are known as leaders as well) are said to have ritual expertise and they try to relate their ritual functions with political activities. In other words the Chakmas and Tripuras consider their religious and ritual activities not isolated from their political ideologies. In many occasions their religious views help them for conflict resolutions, and bringing respects to their values, norms, and socio-political sentiments. And they believe that this sentiment has come from their religious beliefs, community traditions, and construction of individuals who are expected to be a part of politics and practices of power.

Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* never try to manipulate their religions and rituals for political gain or loss, rather they try to engage politics and their ongoing political relations with their religions, rituals and cultures. Thus they have a headman or chief or leader in their community who has the responsibility to deal with political affairs among others. The Chakmas and Tripuras, especially, have gender dimension (i.e. participation of male and female) in political, social, cultural and economic activities almost equally, but for the Bangalees there are constraints. For these Bangalees, mostly, leadership is based on male identity and dominancy. Their belief, in this regard, is that politics is a process where they have to engage with the needs and demands of the community members and expectations for direct engagement outside the household. This, sometimes, brings them into direct contradiction and conflict of interest with the Chakmas and Tripuras, and also with other local and national political parties²³⁷. Thus these political leaders play crucial roles to deal with the mainstream society or vice-versa. Some of the factors attached to the practices of politics or the relations activated among the communities with regard to politics are:

- a) identification of the communities;
- b) ups and downs in the relations of politics towards a pattern of ethnicity²³⁸;

²³⁷ In this regard Swartz, Turner and Tuden's argument seems relevant where they mentioned that the study of politics is the study of processes involved in determining and implementing public goals and in differential achievement and use of power by the members of the group connected with these goals (Swartz, Turner and Tuden 1966:7).

²³⁸ It is notable here that ethnicity is essentially a political phenomenon, as traditional customs are used only as idioms, and as mechanisms for political alignment; political cleavages and mutual interests are associated with cultural differences; and ethnic grouping is essentially informed with no official framework of economic and political power within the state (Cohen 1996:84).

- c) fundamental rights of the communities associated with land and other rights based issues;
- d) authority of community feeling and understanding;
- e) conflicts and tensions over traditional rights²³⁹; and
- f) negotiation with the government of Bangladesh over the issues of ethnic communities' status and affiliation with the lands of CHTs.

Findings from the field indicate that there is no common agreed belief in political relations and in most of the cases people of each of these communities count on their human relations and behavior towards each other. Accordingly the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras believe that there is diversity among them in terms of relationship and for a better living they have developed some sort of classifications among them. This is reflected, as mentioned by one of the Tripuras, in their processes and practices of discrimination, violence (violation of human rights), destruction of ecosystem, and degradation of biodiversity and natural resources (forests and natural resources have been affected by the establishment of military camps and security operations). This reflection is also seen in the political relations or relations of politics. Initially two types of relations have been identified among these people: one is based on their direct engagement with different national or local political parties which has been addressed as 'political relations', and the other is based on the politics related to their practices of identity formation and inter-ethnic relations (very much connected with fundamental rights based issues) which has been addressed as 'relations of politics'. Taking these two primary issues into account it has been easy to understand the underlying meaning of the nature of politics involved in addressing their ethnicity and identity.

Political Understandings among the Ethnic Communities: Addressing Ethnicity and Identity

The major concern of this study is to highlight the different dimensions of interrelations operating among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras respectively. Along with religion and culture these communities have developed a competitive as well as supportive political relation with each other. In other words the political relations are direct and tangible creating various interest groups. The question raised here has been focused on the grounding of these types of relations and their sustainability as well as necessity in the *paras* and society. In most of the cases all these people, particularly the elders and younger generations, argued that in the face of globalization and imposed rules and conflicting situations they try to maintain an affordable political relation for a peaceful living. These, in other words, refer to a political system carried from the top level of the society with the processes of modernization²⁴⁰. The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have different views about and access to political groups and interests. Taking their differential views and interests in politics following two relational ties has been found among them.

- a) *Interest based relations*: This indicates their objective understandings for cohesion and, thus, creating an environment for affordable political relations. Mostly this type of

²³⁹ In this regard and according to Park, "ethnicity and ethnic conflict was an aspect of the relationship between groups and that it was caused by threats, real or imaginary, to an existing ecological pattern of mutual adjustment" (Park 1955 [1921]).

²⁴⁰ For more on modernization see Daniel Bell (1996).

relation has been developed considering their pattern of interrelations reflected in their day to day activities and focusing their nature of ethnicity.

- b) *Consciousness or emotion based relations*: This indicates their subjective understandings for a common and shared symbolic as well as conscious political relation. This type of relation has been developed considering their group or community identity and rights based issues.

These two ties further entails that the people of the *paras* consider their interests associated with their political activities and, thus, reinforce the processes of ethnicity. At the same time these also elaborate their visible common identifications through their language²⁴¹, food habit, community names and above all political relations designed by their interests and affiliations with different political groups for different purposes. Thus, in the competition for the values of the society to be realized politically, ethnicity can become a means of claiming place or advantage (Bell 1996:144). Quite sensibly it has been argued that the sense of belonging to a language community could become the basis, not simply for a feeling of belonging or fellowship, but also for political claims (Bartlett 1996:130). However, following is a case study of Arnab Chakma showing his politics of representation and engagement in political activities.

Case Study-10: Politics of representation

Arnab Chakma (45) lives in Paltanjay *para* and he is involved with Awami League political party, a national political party and currently formed the government of Bangladesh. He thinks that peoples of his community are engaged in different political parties, starting from local to national political parties. Historically they have had a very good contact with the plain land peoples or the Bangalees which has generated their political understandings with the outsiders of the CHTs. He believes that this indicates their politics of representation as well which, in turn, reflects their nature of ethnicity and identity: ethnicity in the sense that their pattern of representation in politics highlights and sets in motion an ideological contestation of their overall understanding towards other community people; and identity in the sense that it develops a cultural politics engaging differences for the construction of their ethnic identities.

Therefore, according to Arnab Chakma,

“...along with the multidimensional relationship designed by our religion and culture, politics or engagement in politics is another dimension indicating our approaches to address relationship with other community peoples and also to demonstrate our community identity.”

Accordingly he realizes that power²⁴² exercises in political arena are based on a relation linked to dominance and designed by knowledge, skill as well as personal charisma of their community individuals engaged in political activities. At the same time he plays a

²⁴¹ It has been argued that language is a potent symbolic issue because it accomplishes a double linkage: i) it links political claims to ownership with psychological demands for the affirmation of group worth, and ii) it ties this aggregate matter of group status to outright careerism...(Horowitz 1996:289-290).

²⁴² Foucault argued that power is a subtler thing, a force suffused through discourse and knowledge, implicit in all human relationships, a manner in which modern institutions surveille, discipline, and control; there is, however, also power at the bottom, and this power can be almost invisibly diffuse or brutally focused (Foucault 1980).

crucial role to engage his community rules of authority and power in politics with the culture and tradition targeting specific goals related to identity.

Initially, as he reveals, over the years he has started to represent the political interests and resistances in the CHTs. He helps people of other ethnic communities to participate in the movements, and he tries to lead from the front²⁴³. He considers that these types of activities have ultimately brought the Chakmas in a leading as well as dominating position in the Hill Tracts. Political activities of the Chakmas and that of the political groups are based on a moral sense or ethics of ethnic identity for which they are fighting for long.

Similar views have been also demonstrated by the Tripuras who are engaged in politics. But their engagement in different political groups or parties raised questions about their interests: is it only for maintaining an amicable social and political relation with the Bangalees (specifically) and state? or is it a real ideological standpoint of the ethnic communities on the point of addressing their identity and protecting their rights in the hills? They can never forget the violence that took place against them, the way they faced the open warfare from the invaders or outsiders in their land, and the degree how they have been attacked, their women were raped and they were killed by the government forces. They also included the issue of land grabbing which they termed as land theft. This type of political resistances became intense after the independence of Bangladesh to gain the recognition of their indigenous status and autonomy²⁴⁴.

Through this they indicated the way by which the state played crucial role in grabbing their land they inhabited for hundreds of years through having Bangalees who have either migrated to the area naturally or brought by them in the hills for a shared living with cultivation processes. All these, according to them, have created violence, resource competition, land grabbing, exploitation, and political and economic competitions among others. On the other hand the political roles and engagements played by the Bangalees markedly differ from the Chakmas and Tripuras in the hills. One of the major reasons to this difference has been identified as the Bangalees' belongingness to the mainstream community of the state.

Irrespective of these factors most of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras argued that by these situations in the hills they have experienced following two types of political representations and understandings:

- i. The first type belongs to the 'pre-Peace Accord era' in the CHTs which is a historical record of unwanted tensions and conflicts. According to them the lack of understanding of the state towards the ethnic communities residing in the hills is responsible to create armed conflicts, killings, and communal riots leading to the development of different political groups.

²⁴³ This process, like many other comparable movements, was determined by emphasising cultural features considered as important according to the given situation. The features are not necessarily objective ones, but are used as signals and emblems by the actors involved (Barth 1969:14).

²⁴⁴ In this regard Ahmed argued that the manifestation of political resistance increased in connection with an intense influx of plain land people into the hills. Ethnic relationships worsened and resistance found its expression in refusing to accept the newly immigrated Bengalis (Ahmed 1993:40).

- ii. The second type belongs to the 'post-Peace Accord era' in the CHTs which has done two things: on one hand it helped to minimize the ongoing conflicting situations existing for long in the hills, and on the other hand it created a confusion between the ethnic communities and the state resulting in the development of various political groups within the ethnic communities as well as direct engagement with the national political parties²⁴⁵.

Accordingly the above types of political representations and understandings have created complex dimensions of political relations and relations of politics among the peoples of these *paras*. In this regard and according to Upendralal Tripura, a member of PCJSS:

“...our processes of political groupings and political relations are different from the Bangalees or the state level political systems. The basic concept of our political orientation is based on our fight for freedom, freedom of our life and rights to the resources of the CHTs. We do not think that the national political parties or groups have anything to do with our life and rights. We have faced lots of trouble and unwanted insurgencies which have created distrust among us towards the state policies and government. But at the same time we are dealing with the state, government, and other local and national level political parties and personnel not only to fulfill our demands but also to demonstrate our position against the monopoly of the state. We never wanted to be submerged under the majority Bangalee people and hence started to construct our own unified identity on the basis of political content along with cultural distinctiveness. This, in other words, reflects our special relation with other communities and political groups. Yes, we consider this a political relation with the formation of various local political groups as well. We do not want to fight, but we are looking forward for a peaceful relation with all the humans in the *para* and in the hills. Therefore, we maintain relations with every human of both inside and outside the *para* connected with different political ideologies. We believe that we have a strong political ideology which is highly concerned with our rights for our land. Thus we relate these to our cultural survival as well as autonomy in the hills. These are highly related to our ideologies and traditions.”

But this is not the same for the Bangalees of Singinala *para*. The root cause to this is that they have come here from the plain lands (other areas of Bangladesh) after the Chakmas and Tripuras and consequently they do not consider their position same as that of their neighboring Chakmas and Tripuras. These Bangalees are not the ancient settlers of this area and due to their differences of language, religion and culture they find them isolated from the Chakmas and Tripuras as well. They are minorities here, but back in their mind it works that they belong to the mainstream population of the country. This sense gives them a special power of belongingness. Coming to their political relations the Bangalees here are mostly divided into two political parties: Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). It has been observed among these Bangalees that belonging to these national political parties give them special strength and power which, in turn,

²⁴⁵ In this regard Amena Mohsin argued that while the CHT Peace Accord was meant to resolve the armed conflict between the insurgents of the CHT and the government of Bangladesh, it did not address the underlying complaints of the Hill people and is thus unlikely to establish peace until the GOB seriously addresses these grievances. The situation in the CHT is in flux and has acquired complex dimensions following the accord, with one faction of the Hill people committed to pursuing full autonomy...(Mohsin 2003:13).

shapes and reshapes their relation with the Chakmas and Tripuras. Moreover, it has been identified that many of the Chakmas and Tripuras also support or engaged to either AL or BNP through maintaining close relation with the Bangalees (especially the Bangalees who are directly involved in political activities).

Thus there are political rivalries in these *paras*: these rivalries are operative among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. As it has been observed, their views and ideologies are different due to the differences in their problems in the hills. According to Amzad Hossain of Singinala *para*:

“...we are different from the Chakmas and Tripuras almost in all respects, but there is a point where we share some of our views. It is politics where we owe our representation to some extent. Apart from the local political groupings, we have our position in the national political parties and many of the Chakmas and Tripuras also find their positions in these parties. Through these participations in different political understandings we maintain our relation with each other to some extent. But being Bangalee we do not always enjoy good understandings with each other. We have realized that it is the historical record of the Chakmas and Tripuras in particular, and also the other ethnic communities in the CHTs, the history of conflict, insurgencies, distrust, and forced ruling, which have created avenues for misunderstandings among different ethnic communities in the *paras*. Later these sorts of misunderstandings have been minimize4d to some extent through our greater participation in various activities in the hill *paras* such as cultural, religious, and political among others. As Bangalees we have now developed an affordable and qualitative or subjective (to certain extent objective as well) relationship with the Chakmas and Tripuras. We have tried to build a good social and political relation through exchanging our views. Thus it is quite significant in our *paras*, in these days, that all the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras try to cultivate on a well organized political relation considering the future development of the life and livelihood of the hill people and their *paras* respectively. Taking all these into account we think that we are able to develop a positive attitude from the political representations in the hill *paras* and this attitude has given us the ample opportunity to demonstrate our identity as well as an amicable inter-ethnic relation.”

The above mentioned views and understandings for the participation of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in their local and national level politics refer to some multidimensional aspects of ethnicity and identity in these hill *paras*. Further, these people try to develop a well organized relation in politics to cooperate with each other very well. They have identified that whatever the nature of politics they do not forget their traditions and that the relation in politics or simply politics is related with their economy, culture, religion, social relations, communication, business, and the way to address their identity.

Spheres and Structures of Politics: What Really Exists?

The spheres of politics among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras further indicate a competitive and at the same time cooperative relation in action. In this regard it is significant to mention about the structure of traditional political systems exercised by the people of these communities.

It has been observed that the Chakmas address their traditional political structure in relation to social structure which is centered on the Chakma Raja (King). But political power belongs to their patrilineal lineage and follows the rules of patrilineality i.e. from father to son. The Chakma Raja is solely responsible to deal with almost every aspect of their community, whether it is social, cultural, economical, and political or others. Usually, now-a-days, these Chakmas follow the following social (political) structure: i) Chakma Raja (he is the circle chief and responsible character to collect tax and revenue for circle or the state and also to look after various community matters); ii) Headman (he is known as the chief or judge of *Mouza* (an administrative unit of the state) and to collect tax and revenue); iii) *Karbari* or village/*para* Head (he is recognized as *para* head or judge and looks after the discipline of the *para*, this is a position of leadership in circle system created by the British administration and still in action); and iv) Ordinary Chakma people who are the inhabitants of the *para* and follow the rules and regulations of the community. Following (chart-2) is a picture of their social and political structure that operated in different times.

Chart-2: Social and political structure of the Chakmas

Time Period	Structure
From 2 nd half of 16 th – 1 st half of 18 th century	Raja → <i>Chege</i> (Army Commander) → <i>Dhabeng</i> (Governor) → <i>Khajjha</i> (Tax Collector)
From Mughal Period (1737-60 AD) – the reign of Raja Dharambox Khan (1812-32)	Raja → <i>Deban</i> (<i>Dewan</i>) → <i>Khijha</i>
From 1860 (in British Period) – present time	Chief → (Circle Chief/Raja) → Headman (Head of a <i>Mouza</i>) → <i>Karbari</i> (Head of a <i>para</i> /village) → Ordinary people

Source: Chakma, Sugata 2007. Chakma. *In* Indigenous communities, Cultural Survey of Bangladesh Series-5. Kamal et al, eds. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Fieldwork 2012. Fieldwork at Khagrachari 2012.

However, with modern education, in recent times, it has been observed that the Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* give equal respect and preference to those who have become teachers, doctors, government officials or elected members of *Union Parishad* and not only to the political leaders.

The Tripuras of Beltali *para* also have their own social and political structural patterns. They have no Raja in Bangladesh, but this system operates among the Tripuras of Indian state. They have mentioned that their every aspect of social and political affairs is maintained by their 'Moung Circle Chief' and they also follow the patrilineal rules of power and authority in this regard. This is something like a central office/area from where their community activities are regulated. Thus they follow the following structure: i) Moung Circle Chief (he is in central position as a controlling authority and to look after the matters of the ethnic communities within his circle along with tax collection); ii) Headman (he is the head of *Mouza* and has the responsibility to collect tax from the people); iii) *Karbari* or *para* head (he is the head of the *para* with administrative power to look at the discipline of the *para*); iv) *Bazar Chowdbury* or head of local market (he is responsible to look after the small markets settled in the *para*); and v) Ordinary people or the residents of the *para*. The Tripuras have argued that things have changed in course of time. The village *panchayet* system (a locally established disciplinary body of authority in the village) now does not operate and the importance of different professionals in the *para* (teachers, doctors, government officers, and their representatives in *Union Parishad*)

has increased. Following (chart-3) is a picture of their social and political structure that operated in different times.

Chart-3: Social and political structure of the Tripuras

Time Period	Structure
From 2 nd half of 16 th – 1 st half of 18 th century	Cannot recognize
From Mughal Period (1737-60 AD) – the reign of Raja Dharambox Khan (1812-32)	Cannot recognize
From 1860 (in British Period) – present time	Chief (Circle Chief) → Headman (Head of a <i>Mouza</i>) → <i>Karbari</i> (Head of a <i>para</i> /village) → <i>Bazar Chowdhury</i> (Head of local market) → Ordinary people

Source: Fieldwork at Khagrachari 2012.

Both the Chakmas and Tripuras have further argued that these positions of their social structure play significant roles in maintaining their community traditions and also to focus on inter-ethnic relations. Thus for both these communities the position of the chief has been locally and officially legitimized. The other traditional leaders are integrated into a system of headmen (for *Mouza*) and *karbaris* (for *para*/village). This is a three-step administrative system where it has been observed that the Chakmas are the most dominating among all the ethnic communities living in the CHTs.

The Bangalees of Singinala *para*, as a segment of mainstream Bangalee people, follow the Bangladeshi social and political system and with strong patrilineal authority. Like the headman these Bangalees have a leader who represents the head of *panchayet* in their *para*. But they give special preference to the Union Parishad Chairman and membership structure and thus have developed a system more inclined to the state administrative system. Unlike the Chakmas and Tripuras, the Bangalees of this *para* do not have any government officials or chairman of *Union Parishad*. But they have representatives as members of *Union Parishad*. These Bangalees do not have the same functional bodies like the Chakmas and Tripuras to collect tax, but they usually look after their security and disciplinary matters in the *para*. The main strength of these Bangalees, according to them, lies in the fact that they have a direct connection with the national level political parties and thus have access to different government officials to strengthen their position among others. This gives them some privileges to work with their community relations. However, the administrative system of the CHTs is, in general and to some extent, different than the other parts of Bangladesh and it has been identified that the reason is to consider the traditions of different ethnic communities living there.

Ethnicity, thus, covers all these aspects addressed by politics. And taking the instrumentalist perspective, in this regard, it has been identified that for all these people maintaining and establishing both political and economic interests play significant roles in addressing their identity. Here they consider their cultures as objects to mediate inter-ethnic relationships. However, following are some of the indicating factors showing their spheres of political understandings addressing their nature of ethnicity and identity.

- a) *Political relations through gain and loss*: The first thing that they identify is the gain and loss in interactions or communications with each other and they recognize these as valuable elements of politics or in their political relations. They also associated these with their patterns of cultural intensity through social classes in inter-ethnic political

relations. Accordingly they believe that these are created with their meaning of identity and belongingness to a community. These are the ways through which they address their relations in politics in the hill *paras*.

- b) *Socio-political contact*: They regarded their relationships with each other through socio-political contact. This further illustrates that there are some institutionalized relationships among themselves where they have clear cultural differences. According to them the social contact operates through their relationships on the basis of culture and religion (as discussed in chapter-3) whereas the political contact operates through both amicable and dyadic relationships on the basis of the differences in community identity and nature of connection with local as well as national level politics. This, in other words, refers to a socio-political relation addressed by interactionist approach generated through a mode of exchange (i.e. economic cooperation, marital and kinship relations, etc.), statuses of individuals, and roles played in the political arena. These relate to the instrumentalist view of interactions for these three communities through utilizing their social, cultural, and political resources. Thus, from their views, it has been identified that there is the seed of politics of representation (taking history, language, religion and culture) in dealing with ethnicity and identity of the communities.
- c) *Inter-ethnic contacts*: They have identified that their political systems or understandings in the 'political relations' and/or 'relations of politics' has been generated by their inter-ethnic contacts on the basis of developing new communication technologies, exchange of goods and other materials in business and trade, and the utilization of growing population for different purposes including politics. They also practice a socio-political process of exclusion and incorporation considering the position of the individuals in inter-ethnic contacts. Thus there remains a strategic position of power and politics among these communities.
- d) *Religion and ritual for conflict resolution*: The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have commonly agreed that the types of religious and ritual practices as well as cultural activities performed in the hills play significant role in conflict resolution in many extents. In this regard following issues have been identified by them:
 - i. Help reducing any hostile relation existing among them;
 - ii. A sense of cooperation develops among these people that further help reducing any sorts of gap and/or factional or conflicting relations usually created by their political activities as well as miss understandings.
 - iii. Help developing a friendly relation with each other despite differences in political views;
 - iv. Generate a sense of value towards the hill culture and everything attached to it (including flora and fauna); and
 - v. Try to bring a social solidarity endowed with their political activities; the only difference is that their political activities are highly concentrated on their nature of ethnicity and identity.
- e) *Origin, identity and meaning of life*: Their participations in multidimensional political relations and activities practically express their fight over origin, identity, destiny, and meaning of life. To them their relations of politics, further, organizes their patterns of interactions with each other. They do not hate each other, rather they try to establish their origin and identity considering their rights based issues in the hills. The Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* do not want to lose their community identity which has a long historical background. On the other hand the Bangalees of

Singinala *para* are trying to demonstrate their close attachment with the Chakmas and Tripuras and also with the hills (though the Bangalees understand that achieving these is not so easy). These practices resemble the fact that their questions of identity, relationship as well as meaning of life are connected with their practices of power where the Chakmas and Tripuras, in particular, utilize their movement for recognizing their identity as a defense against the processes of marginalization by the state. The Bangalees are not facing this sort of threat from the state, but they consider their inclusion in the hill society with a friendly relationship and bond of trust with the Chakmas and Tripuras. All these symbolize their active participation in different levels of political relations and organization of ethnicity²⁴⁶ (these are further analyzed in later sections on stereotyping among the ethnic communities through a discussion of the political groups formed by these ethnic communities).

- f) *Ethnic labeling*: The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the hill *paras* consider several aspects of their community to be identified with a clear understanding of their identity as well as ethnicity. They think that this labeling of ethnic identity has been possible due to their consciousness of political thinking and activities. Some of these aspects are:
- i. classification of their ethnic identity (both by themselves and by others) indicating their self-identification as well;
 - ii. they have certain propensities of naming themselves or their communities which ultimately play crucial role in their political arena with a concrete placement of the community identity to others; and
 - iii. thus with the use of naming propensities ultimately represent their cultural, economic, religious, social, and political interests to others which, in other sense, establish not only their identity but also their willingness for inter-ethnic relationships.
- g) *Boundary maintenance*: These communities have further identified that their engagement in both local and national level politics has given them extra strength to foster their efforts to the formation of ethnic identity and boundary maintenance (it seems political when the Chakmas and Tripuras use the term '*Jumma*' to address or differentiate their identities, or when the Bangalees use the terms 'minority' or 'settlers'). This is all about, as they have argued, giving importance to their situations in the context of threats to their rights, competition for resources, or simply their boundary maintenance (whether it is physical, social or cultural).
- h) *Gender dimension*: The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are very clearly concerned with their gender participation in their political activities. It indicates that a number of female members of each of these communities are directly engaged in the activities related to their struggle and fight for ethnic identity. It has been observed that female participation is greater among the Chakmas and Tripuras than the Bangalees. In Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* it has been a common aspect that the Chakma and Tripura female are very conscious to raise their voices against all ill happenings through their active participation in the local political groups. For the Bangalees their female members have restricted participation in the political movements directed towards protecting Bangalees residence and rights in the hills.

²⁴⁶ In this connection it is mentionable here that Cohen has defined ethnicity or ethnic organization essentially as a kind of political organization. In his view social interaction and organization are essentially dual phenomena: they comprise aspects of utility and aspects of meaning (Cohen 1974a, 1974b; Eriksen 1993:45).

This refers to the fact that usually the Bangalee female throughout the country have less direct participation in any sort of political activities.

- i) *Debate over indigenesness*: The relationship of the Chakmas and Tripuras with the Bangalees and the state of Bangladesh has been further endangered because of their claim to be the indigenous community of the *paras* in the hills. This has become a political agenda of the political groups formed by the Chakmas and Tripuras. The constitution of Bangladesh has not recognized the Chakmas and Tripuras and the similar communities as the indigenous communities of the entire CHTs. Rather they are termed as 'ethnic minority' or 'minor ethnic community'. This has questioned the demands claimed by the Chakmas and Tripuras, and the Bangalees also try to reject their demands. In this regard it is mentionable that the International Labour Organization (ILO) Constitution No. 169 defines indigenous people as "peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions" (ILSD 2009:9). But the Bangladesh government has not recognized their (Chakmas and Tripuras) claims as indigenous and this has created tension among the hill people over their identification: not as ethnic minority but as indigenous peoples.

5.2 Formation of Political Groups and Connection with Ethnicity and Identity: Stereotyping and Dynamism

Differences are common and stereotyped among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the hill *paras* in terms of culture, religion, and politics. This pattern is further elaborated according to the relationships existing within these communities. This is a type of standardized relationship basically focusing their ethnic origin, identity, membership of specific communities, sharing of knowledge, and types of relations they are involved (the types of relations include either friendly or hostile or joking). These further illustrate the nature of their interaction and communication patterns and it has been identified that they place these stereotyped as well as standardized and dynamic relationships crucial in the foundation of a cohesive understanding, community feeling, and political groups. These are also related with their rights based issues and particularly with the historical record of confrontation as well as discrimination for the Chakmas and Tripuras.

But using the stereotyping characteristics to address the dynamic relationships working among the people of these communities is questionable. They have always warned others saying that addressing them with such stereotyped characteristics have two dimensions: one is the way through which they themselves indicate their identities, and the other is the way used by others to identify their characteristic features. The reason for mentioning these stereotypic characteristics here is to illustrate the systems and processes of relations actually taking place within these communities. These, in other words, show the tendencies of their interactions and also their political relations, relations of politics, and formation of political groups to justify and address their ethnicity, identity, and mode of interactions.

Thus the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have identified the following two types of stereotyped (dynamic as well) characters as held by themselves and by others (a summary

of which is shown in chart-4). However, they believe that preserving these characteristic features further help them to form as well as formalize not only their ethnic characters and identity but also their political relations and political groups. In other words all these features enable them to develop their consciousness regarding their rights, community feeling, and leadership in the sectors of their economy, politics, and society.

Chart-4: Stereotyped (dynamic) characters of the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura (by self and by others)

Stereotyped Characters	Ethnic Communities		
	Bangalee	Chakma	Tripura
By self	Religious mentality, sensible, hospitable, strong sense of Bangalee culture, industrious, and interactive.	Indigenous, children of the hills, very clever, powerful, religious, industrious, love for tradition and culture, leadership.	Indigenous, children of the hills, hard working, dignified, caring, friendly, believe in family tradition, honest, justifiable, and communicative.
By others	Member of mainstream population, very much clever, power holder, sometimes lazy but greedy, political, and exploitative.	Ambitious, forceful, industrious, sometimes greedy, capitalization of majority status in the hill <i>paras</i> , and tough to reach.	Not so greedy, laborious, not so clever, too much ethno centric, and very easy going.

Source: Fieldwork 2012

The above mentioned characteristic features further illustrate that these communities of the *paras* try to develop their own ways of interacting with each other and also with the outsiders. These characteristics indicate some of their conscious attitude towards each other and also their nature of power exercise as well as political understanding and leadership. This leads to one of the most significant aspects of their lives and that is 'politics'. It has been identified that they place crucial importance to their political understandings and participation in politics because of the following reasons.

- a) The Chakmas and Tripuras consider their rights to land (hills), river, and forest over and above everything. They believe that these rights based issues are their life sustaining demands and crucial for their survivals. One of the most significant ways to uphold and fulfill their demands is to raise their voices and indigenous power through politics, interactions with different political groups, and the state authorities (both local and national).
- b) Historically, as the Chakmas and Tripuras also illustrated, they have a long story of fight for their existence in the hills. In due course there have been conflicts between the ethnic communities of the hill *paras* and the state authorities²⁴⁷ over the issue of their right to land and resources, and also for their identity crisis and recognition. These historical events led to the development of armed struggles and violent phases

²⁴⁷ It has been argued that these processes helped the then government to recognize the CHTs as a national security problem, settlement programs for rehabilitating landless Bangalees were developed (Roy 1998) and ultimately the restrictions mentioned in the 1900 CHT Manual against outsiders to enter into the CHTs has been removed by the government.

of the conflict and they (*Shanti Bahini*) targeted Bangladeshi army camps, settler Bangalees, and state authorities in the region. In other words the conflict over land, according to them, provided a ground for armed conflict between the settler Bangalees, ethnic communities, and law enforcing agencies of the state. All these together led to the development of a consciousness among them to fight for their land (to which they demand that they are indigenous) and identity. The Chakmas and Tripuras have argued that the aim of state's actions was not only to rehabilitate landless Bangalees from other areas of Bangladesh into the CHTs, but also to establish a demographic shift in the area (a kind of political migration). This further generated the process of majority-minority dictum. Accordingly these Chakmas and Tripuras have been found to demonstrate and raise their voices through the practice and participation in local and national level political groups. They do not think that this is the only way to solve their problems, but one of the ways to clear their position, and interaction with the Bangalees and state authorities.

- c) The Bangalees of Singinala *para* have their own but different perspectives in this regard. Keeping in mind that they are minor in the hill *paras* and also the unresolved issue of Bangalee settlers (this settler issue is closely related to political intension of the state), these Bangalees find their strength through forming of and participating in different political groups. They further believe that the political practices in the hills have brought the Chakmas and Tripuras into a close interaction with them and this, ultimately, shaped and reshaped their nature of ethnic relations. As a result they place crucial importance to politics to understand the dynamics of interrelations operating among themselves and the Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras*.
- d) For these three communities usage of these stereotyped characters to justify their nature of ethnic identity further evaluate their division and classification in the society with reference to their natural resources. In other words these indicate their conditions of power holder and powerlessness connected with their socio-political understandings of life. The notions of power and privilege actually help these community people to maintain their socio-political and inter-ethnic relations for a better living in this complicated social universe.
- e) To some extent these help them to define their ethnic boundaries. According to the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras these stereotyped (though these are not the actual description of what they do) characters define their community identity, and thus, serve to clarify their distinctiveness as well as differences. In other words they consider these characteristic features significant in their relations of politics and formation of various political groups. But any of their activities is related to their rights based issues.
- f) However, they attach these features with their moralities. Saying this Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras try to demonstrate their own community's moral superiority which, in turn (as they believe), help them to play significant political roles to survive in the society. But it has been identified that, in many occasions, these have helped them to form and guide their political groups in the hill *paras* (these political groups have different manifests and play vital role in the maintenance of a good inter-ethnic relation).

Political Groups: Representations of the Communities

Considering the above mentioned stereotyping features as determined by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras to illustrate their own community's identity, it has been found crucial that they have formed several political groups on the basis of these characteristics.

Here it is not required to demonstrate their ways to form these political groups, rather it is important to understand why do they do so (with background) and how do they use these groups for inter-ethnic relations. Before going to analyze the types of political groups formed by or participated in by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras (to justify their pattern of interactions or inter-ethnic relations²⁴⁸ as well as demonstrate their power), it has been found justifiable to highlight some of the factors responsible for the formation of these political groups in the following way.

- i. These help them to demonstrate their community membership as well as loyalty to the community. Eventually these enable them to maintain the conflict or competition working among the three communities. In other words this refers to an interactive nature of relations or dichotomization operating through their political groups.
- ii. A type of mutual understanding considering their cultural differences also exists among these communities. They relate this to their ways of political interaction as well focusing power relations and their tendencies to live in an amicable environment or such an environment where every community have almost equal opportunity to capitalize on their own will. Thus these three communities have idealized for the need of a mutual recognition of both their identity and cultural differences along with their exercises of power and politics. In these socio-political contexts, therefore, ethnicity occurs among these communities keeping in mind their differences in culture as well.

Considering the above mentioned factors the political groups of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras operating in the *paras* have been categorized both in the contexts of local and national continuum. At this stage their practices of political groups have been organized into two categories – one is based on their local political groups highly connected with their rights based issues, and the other is based on the national level political groups highly connected with the national issues and power exercises (in many cases they have identified this type of political practices associated with the mainstream political groups).

But, now-a-days, the political parties especially formed by the Chakmas and Tripuras are characterized by following few aspects – involvement in a typical power-politics (which is a usual case for the Bangalee's political activities) to control their influences over land, division of interests in political activities, leadership feud, and illegal toll collection to meet the organizational expenses among others.

Following chart-5 (formation of political groups and their facts) summarizes these two categories of political groups of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras*. In this regard it is mentionable that the Bangalees have developed one local political group along with the national level political groups, while the Chakmas and Tripuras (along with other ethnic communities of their neighboring *paras*) have developed a number of local political groups with some connection with the national level political groups as well. In many aspects it has been found that through these political groups they try to justify their nature of ethnicity and identity.

²⁴⁸ In this regard Harald Eidheim's views have been found relevant. Eidheim showed that negative stereotyping can be interrelated with a shared cultural repertoire, that both aspects are probably necessary components of a stable system of inter-ethnic relations (Eidheim 1971; Eriksen 1993).

Chart-5: Formation of political groups and their facts (local and national)

Political Groups	Community Attachment	Facts
<i>Pahari Chattra Parishad (PCP or Hill Student Council)</i>	Chakma and Tripura	<p><i>Pahari Chattra Parishad (PCP)</i> is a political group formed by the students of CHTs where a number of Chakma and Tripura students of these <i>paras</i> also participated actively. Founded on 20 May 1989, PCP is a student wing of PCJSS (now JSS) and actively working with the students belonging to various ethnic communities studying in different universities, colleges and schools of Bangladesh. They are highly concerned with their human rights (or traditional rights) to protect the hill resources as well as their culture and traditions. The main purpose of this political group has been to take care of the welfare issues of the hill students and fellow members of their ethnic communities.</p> <p>The Chakmas and Tripuras along with their other neighbors believed that this type of group or association is helping them to raise their voices and organize their hands against deprivations that their students and people are facing. PCP also addresses the issues like autonomy of the hill people, their free flow movement, removal of the security forces or agents from the hill areas, etc. PCP is currently working for the students of their communities in the hill <i>paras</i> considering that their fight for justice is not over yet. In course of time the PCP members have established their relations with the Bangalees and also with the national level political parties. But in any case they have not forgotten their indigenous rights and the dream to establish a society free of conflict.</p>
<i>Pahari Gono Parishad (PGP or Hill People's Council)</i>	Chakma and Tripura	<p><i>Pahari Gono Parishad (PGP)</i> is the highest area for the representation of the Chakmas and Tripuras and also other ethnic communities of the hill <i>paras</i> in Khagrachari as well as in the CHTs. PGP incorporates all the ethnic people and their main target is to fight against the mainstream government of Bangladesh for establishing their rights in the hills. Internally this is a strong political group where the members of civil society of Khagrachari also contribute with their valuable thoughts.</p> <p>Apart from full autonomy PGP looks forward to secure their habitat by claiming their previous access to land, natural resources, and social and cultural activities. Though there are divisions observed in the bodies of PGP, but altogether they</p>

		are trying to uphold their common interests in the hills. Many of the Chakmas and Tripuras of the <i>paras</i> are involved in the activities of PGP and they consider these activities as fights for establishing their indigenesness.
Hill Women Federation (HWF)	Chakma and Tripura	<p>Hill Women Federation (HWF) has been established for the welfare of the young hill women. HWF is a youth women wing of PCJSS (now JSS) struggling for rights to self-determination in the CHTs and has been founded on 8 March 1988. One of its aims is to establish a society free from exploitation of women. The entire CHT has a history of trouble and exploitation of women. Traditionally the Chakma and Tripura women are hard working, but at the same time they have been largely exploited, tortured, raped as well as harassed by the security, too. The Chakmas and Tripuras have not forgotten about what happened to Kolpona Chakma and many other women like her.</p> <p>Along with seeking for a place of freedom, HWF is working for the hill women to raise their voices against any sort of exploitation and injustice. Today many of the Chakma and Tripura women are engaged in the activities of HWF where it has its branches in different educational institutes (at the levels of university, college and school). The members of HWF are also concerned and aware of the women of other ethnic communities including the Bangalees. Being a political and welfare organization, HWF is very cautious about their activities in the hills and in any matter they try to interact with the government authority of Bangladesh. However, in most of the cases they are aware of their identity and maintaining relations with others with the belief that their activities will bring justice for the hill women.</p>
		Founded in 10 August 1975 <i>Parbatya Chattagram Mahila Samiti</i> (PCMS) is a women organization and a wing of PCJSS (now JSS). Right from the beginning, as the Chakma and Tripura women expressed their views, this organization has been trying to establish the hill women's voices against various exploitations. PCMS is fully operated by the members and they try to help each other from this organization. The Chakma and Tripura women, especially those who are the active members of this organization, have recalled their past history as a history of exploitation, killing or insurgencies and extreme violations of their rights along with physical harassment. To save them from these ill-

<p>Parbatya Chattagram Mahila Samiti (PCMS)</p>	<p>Chakma and Tripura</p>	<p>motivated activities they have grouped together and found that it is lot easier to resist these is through their political activities and consciousness.</p> <p>One of the most important aspects of their activities is that they do not want violence in reply to the injustice that took place against them; rather they want to raise their voices indicating their points of demands which include equality for women, freedom of voice, legal and proper action against violence, peace in the entire CHTs, and creating opportunities for the hill women in different sectors of life. At the same time PCMS tries to maintain a supportive relation with other ethnic communities and particularly with the Bangalee women and, thus, expressed that it is thorough good social relation that they can bring a justifiable as well as sustainable relationship with all. However, they demonstrated that PCMS is solely a local hill based women's organization and they are ready to sacrifice their lives to fulfill their demands and protect their identities through resistances.</p>
<p>Parbatya Chattagram Juba Samiti (PCJS)</p>	<p>Chakma and Tripura</p>	<p>Founded in 1975 <i>Parbatya Chattagram Juba Samiti</i> (PCJS) is a youth wing organization of PCJSS (now JSS). There are a huge number of young people in the hill <i>paras</i> belonging to Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities. Most of these young people are both college or university students and they form a big portion of the hill society. PCJSS has motivated this young generation towards the demands of hill people. Apart from this motivation, this young generation is actually very conscious about their rights and struggles for existence. The young Chakmas and Tripuras of the hill <i>paras</i> have learnt from their parents and grandparents about the insurrections and communal attacks on their ancestors. All these have generated the feelings of identity crisis as well as fight for rights among themselves.</p> <p>The main aim of PCJS has been to organize the youth with a view to strengthen their power and spread their voices from local to national levels of demonstrations. Thus PCJS is a highly local political organization working for JSS and tries to find solution to the problems and threats against the hill people. To them their identity is attached to their community origin and hill environment. They also believe that an amicable relationship with the local and national level authorities as well as different ethnic communities including the</p>

		<p>Bangalees living in the hill <i>paras</i> is possible. Finally they believe that resistance is the best possible way to fight against violence and injustice by which they and their parents or grandparents have been victimized.</p>
<p>Parbatya Chattagram Jono Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) or Jono Samhati Samiti (JSS – Chittagong Hill Ethnic Peoples’ Coordination Association)</p>	<p>Chakma and Tripura</p>	<p><i>Parbatya Chattagram Jono Samhati Samiti</i> (PCJSS) or <i>Jono Samhati Samiti</i> (JSS), founded in 1972, is the highly political party in the CHTs under the leadership of Shantu Larma. It is recognized as a party that led insurgencies in CHTs and with which the Government of Bangladesh signed the said Peace Accord during 1997. This is a simple statement about PCJSS or JSS. But in reality PCJSS has a historical background related to the identity crisis of the hill people, their survival and existence, and protest against government activities and forceful interventions that went against their freedom of living, thought and movement in the CHTs. In other words, and according to the Chakmas and Tripuras of the <i>paras</i>, from the very beginning PCJSS has been recognized as the souvenir of all the hill people for a democratic political party (with democratic ideologies and values for the hill people) in the CHTs and by the hill people.</p> <p>To fulfill the demands (the demands of PCJSS are categorized as cultural (calling their identity as <i>Jummas</i>), political (identifying their entire land in the CHTs as <i>Jummaland</i>), economic (considering their land to be entitled under the authority and jurisdiction of regional council), security, gender, etc.) of the hill people the members or followers of PCJSS, later established as JSS, went for armed forces revolutions against the government forces way back to the British, Pakistani and beginning of the Bangladeshi periods. In 1975, following a military coup and political upset, PCJSS leader Manobendra Narayan Larma fled to India. The Indian government gave its full support to the PCJSS and allowed it to establish headquarters in the Indian state of Tripura. The <i>Shanti Bahini</i> (SB or Peace Force), the military wing of the PCJSS, was given training and assistance by the Indian military and was allowed to operate from bases within the country, giving India considerable leverage in its relations with Bangladesh²⁴⁹.</p> <p>Many of the Chakmas and Tripuras of the <i>paras</i></p>

²⁴⁹ For more on this see Amena Mohsin (2003:13).

		<p>mentioned that PCJSS have tried to raise the voices of the hill people for a full autonomy of the CHTs and freedom of their living. This further indicates the objectives like free from Islamic fanaticism, expansionism, exploitation, oppression, deprivation and perpetual rule of Bangladesh, safeguard the national entity and homeland for the various multilingual nationalities, and to ensure regional autonomy as well as separate entity status of CHT with constitutional guarantee and legislative assembly among others²⁵⁰. But due to armed conflicts between PCJSS and the military forces of Bangladesh government, the Awami League formed government managed to sign a Peace Accord in 1997. According to the Chakmas and Tripuras, the ill-motivated actions taken by the military and other forces of the Bangladesh government have led the hill people to revolt and at the end of the day the Peace Accord appeared in the scene, but this does not indicate that the fight for establishing the demands of the hill people is over.</p> <p>Today, it appears to them that the accord has been highly political, but to some extent they also feel that at least the hill people have raised the issues related to their live and livelihood in the hills. Though in these days PCJSS or JSS have been controversial due to some of their activities that the other ethnic people (small in number than the Chakmas and Tripuras and also from within the Chakmas and Tripuras) think, some reformations went through the PCJSS or JSS. However, there is no doubt about the fact that whatever happened in the CHTs by different government authorities of Bangladesh have been against the interests of the hill people and also a threat to their overall livelihood strategies.</p>
		<p>Beginning from 12007, <i>Jano Sambati Samiti-Reformist (JSS-R)</i> or <i>Jano Sambatri Samiti-M. N. Larma</i> has been established as a purely political party belonging to the <i>pabaries</i> of the CHTs. According to the Chakmas and Tripuras of the <i>paras</i>, JSS-R has been established due to the conflict of interests between Shantu Larma (founder of JSS) and his brother M. N. Larma. It is highly recognized that the conflict of interests is based on the basic rights based issues of the hill people from where the JSS led by Shantu Larma have moved</p>

²⁵⁰ For more on this see Amena Mohsin (2003:127-128).

<p><i>Jano Samhati Samiti-Reformist (JSS-R) or Jano Samhati Samiti-M. N. Larma</i></p>	<p>Chakma and Tripura</p>	<p>away. The members of JSS-R claim that they hold the true sense of belongingness to the origin and identity as well as demands of the hill people. There are few Chakmas and Tripuras living in Paltanajay and Beltali <i>paras</i> who belong to the JSS-R. They do not accept the 1997 Peace Accord signed between PCJSS and the then Government of Bangladesh. The main reason for this thought of JSS-R is that this accord only represents the power and interests of the party PCJSS or JSS led by Shantu Larma and many of the thoughts, emotions, rights and attitudes of the ethnic communities of the entire CHTs have been overlooked. This has challenged the leadership and capability of Shantu Larma.</p> <p>Considering all these reasons, at the end of the day, JSS-R is working as a reformist political party with a view to fulfill their demands claiming the full autonomy of the CHTs. Accordingly they try to maintain a good relation with all the ethnic communities of the hill tracts including the Bangalees of Khagrachari and the Bangalee resident Singinala <i>para</i>. However, the activities of JSS-R further indicate that it is a dominant political party in the area to perform the due roles in the political field of the CHTs.</p>
<p>United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF)</p>	<p>Chakma and Tripura</p>	<p>United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), an unified political party, has become very popular not only in the hill <i>paras</i> of Chakma and Tripura but also throughout the CHTs. UPDF has been established on 26 December 1998 by a group of PCJSS members (who directly opposed the 1997 peace accord) and breakaway factions of PCP, PGP, and HWF among others. UPDF is working very strongly at the root levels of the study <i>paras</i> with the manifests to achieve full autonomy of the CHTs. It has been identified that like the JSS-R, UPDF also condemned PCJSS or JSS (specially their activities) for compromising with the government of Bangladesh in the name of peace accord.</p> <p>The activities of UPDF further refer to the fact that a conflicting relation is operating in the hill areas and in many occasions the conflict resulted in killings and abductions to establish control or exercise power over the areas. There are so many controversies seen over the activities of UPDF in the area such as illegal toll collection, exploiting media protocols, threatening and coercing the ordinary ethnic people, etc. But one thing is clear</p>

		<p>from the Chakmas, Tripuras and Bangalees of the <i>paras</i> that UPDF is another political party (organizing movements both at home or in the hill <i>paras</i> of Khagrachari and Rangamati and outside the CHTs or in Dhaka), among many, trying to establish their power and authority in the CHTs by exploiting the rights based issues of the hill people generally.</p>
<p>Bangalee Political Parties: <i>Somo Adhikar Andolon</i> (SAA or Movement for Equal Rights) and <i>Parbatya Bangalee Chattra Parishad</i> (PBCP or Hill Bangalee Student Union)</p>	<p>Bangalee</p>	<p>The Bangalees of not only Singinala <i>para</i> of Khagrachari but also of other areas of the CHTs have established their political groups or parties named as <i>Somo Adhikar Andolon</i> (SAA or Movement for Equal Rights) and <i>Parbatya Bangalee Chattra Parishad</i> (PBCP or Hill Bangalee Student Union) respectively. Taking few clauses of the 1997 peace accord (which they have recognized as against the interests and survivals of the Bangalees living in the hill <i>paras</i>) these two political parties have been able to establish their credibility among the ordinary Bangalee people in the hill <i>paras</i>.</p> <p>Through public meetings, processions and press briefings among others both SAA and PBCP have been organizing their activities throughout the CHTs and many of the Bangalees residents of Singinala <i>para</i> are the active members of these political parties. This is very well known in the hill <i>paras</i> that these Bangalee led political parties are not only organizationally weak but also lack extreme leadership quality. Again it has been identified that these political parties have been established as a counter part of the political groups led by the hill ethnic communities such as JSS, JSS-R, PCP, PGP, HWF, UPDF, etc. But the Bangalees of the <i>para</i> do understand that they need a political platform of their own in the hills through which they can raise their voices and face the challenges on their survival strategies.</p>
		<p>Both Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are the nationally and internationally recognized political parties of Bangladesh. The Chakmas and Tripuras of the <i>paras</i> consider these as the mainstream political parties and along with the Bangalees a number of Chakmas and Tripuras (many of whom are the youth group or younger generations) have actively participated in the activities of AL and BNP. Thus it has been observed that they consider their active participation in these political parties as a source of power and status. Many of the elder people of Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities have</p>

<p>Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) – National level political parties</p>	<p>Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura</p>	<p>argued that this type of political activities have lessen the importance of their demands, rights and struggle to protect the land and resources they are living in. While a few of them think that participation in these political parties have enhanced their opportunities both in their <i>paras</i> and the national level political cultures.</p> <p>On the other hand the Bangalees, not all, find their strength by engaging in any of these political parties. There is no difference, in many cases, in the fact that people try to engage themselves with the ruling party to increase their opportunities of accessing power and gaining status in the society. But the situation is different in the hill <i>paras</i> than the other plain lands of Bangladesh. Because the Chakmas and Tripuras, along with other ethnic communities, are the dominant groups in the hills and they never compromise their rights and obligations to the hills. Only those who are fond of power, whether they belong to Bangalee, Chakma or Tripura community, try to gain something from their active engagements with the national level political parties of Bangladesh, but with a conscious footing. Here it provides a platform for the relations of politics where all these three communities have come together to become a part of the national level political system and thus, to some extent, plays significant role in creating a type of cohesive relation and understanding.</p>
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Source: Fieldwork 2012

The above mentioned political groups or parties are the platforms where the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras find their ways to raise their voices and organize their activities. This seems to be a flat description of the political groups, but looking from the insider's perspective it has been identified that with these political platforms all these ethnic communities have developed a good understanding. It has been observed that a number of young Tripura men are highly involved in the national level political parties such as AL or BNP. Especially these young Tripura men are the active members of AL (the political party that currently formed the government of Bangladesh) and exercise extensive political as well as economic power in the locality. This refers to the fact that their connection with the government party has given them strengths, benefits and support in favor of their political activities in the hill *paras*. Some of the young Chakma men are also involved in such practices, but the Tripuras have the major engagement.

However, this does not indicate that the local political parties have effect. Rather engagement with the national level political parties has given them additional benefit. It is important to note that historically the Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* have suffered a lot by external forces (mostly the armed forces of the government of Bangladesh) in the name of controlling the unrest in the hills, and also by the internal conflicting relations operated within different ethnic communities. When it comes to the Bangalees, as it has

been mentioned earlier, they belong to the mainstream population of Bangladesh which has given them the strength and also political backup (i.e. belonging to AL or BNP/ either government or opposition) to sustain their voices as well as living in the hill *para* of Khagrachari. Eventually through a continuous interaction with the Chakmas and Tripuras, the Bangalees have also learnt (to some extent) the procedures to deal with the people and environment of the hill *paras*. Thus the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras keep focusing on their identity, maintenance of boundary with each other whenever needed, and also building an amicable social and political relations indicating both stereotyped and dynamic nature of interactions or inter-ethnic relations. However, the formation and activities of these political groups by these three communities adhere to the idea of postmodern revival of ethnicity by Melucci (1989) and these are working as a weapon of revenge, as instruments to apply pressure in the political market, and as a response to the needs for personal and collective identity.

Thus there are two types of relations seen among these community members – one is a relation of cooperation and the other is a relation of conflict. These two types of relations exist like a coin and the preconditions for both these patterns of relations are –

- i. Interpretation of self-identity which is sometimes related with their politics of identity.
- ii. Survival strategies.
- iii. Defending own economic, social, political, and cultural identity.
- iv. Organization of community belief and inter-ethnic relations.
- v. Preserving natural resources.
- vi. Maintaining friendship with all the ethnic communities.
- vii. Prioritizing community beliefs and practices which reflect their senses of belongingness, community pride, and identity formation among others.
- viii. Value orientations i.e. evaluation of own cultural features over and above anything.
- ix. Considering education and technological advancement²⁵¹ as essentially generating opportunities for a new level of political understanding.

Combining all these aspects of relations of cooperation and conflicts among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura of the *paras* it is mentionable that the political understandings and ethnic relations created around politics have a dynamic character. This reflects every community's identity and the way they maintain relations. These further lead to the fact that the formation of political organizations and their activities help the ethnic communities in creating a collective identity based on an ethnic process.

This collective identity, according to the observation from the field, takes two forms: one is based on individual community identity and the other is based on a combination of all the ethnic communities in the hills through using a common name such as '*Pahari*' or '*Jumma*'. In other words, this refers to a process of ethno-politics where the Chakmas and Tripuras, in particular, are involved in maintaining their boundaries for the formation of their identity and to protect their age old community rights and traditions in the hills.

²⁵¹ In this regard and according to Eriksen "technology can be essential in generating opportunities and constraints...most of the complex, large-scale societies we know would probably have been less effectively integrated without effective communication technology...mass education, which describe and reify history and culture, plays an important part in this respect" (Eriksen 1993:91).

However, following is a case study of a Tripura man named Sudhangsu Tripura showing how the Tripuras maintain a dynamic political attitude in the locality.

Case Study-11: Political dimension of a Tripura in the hill

Sudhangsu Tripura (49) lives in Beltali *para* of Khagrachari with his wife and four children (two sons and two daughters). His father was a local leader and a member of PCJSS. From the very beginning Sudhangsu has observed that they had to fight for establishing their right to land, resources, cultural heritage as well as to their existence. This has given him the opportunity to actively participate in the political activities of the *para*. Sudhangsu was born in this *para* and also got married in the same *para*. Coming to the question of political interests and activities he mentioned that not only him but also many Tripura male and female of the *para* are actively engaged in the political activities. Due to his involvement for a long period of time Sudhangsu realized that his forefathers have struggled a lot and many of his community members have sacrificed their lives to protect their land and identity. According to him:

“...I have seen my family as well as community members to suffer a lot. Historically we are the first settlers of this area and have developed our own livelihood strategies closely associated with the nature of the hills. Our heart and soul are deeply rooted in the hills, forests, and way of living. But when I see that the outsiders including government or state authorities as well as other politically established Bangalee settlers start to remove us from our own land and force us to leave everything we have, it created strong reactions among us to protest these unexpected activities. When we see that we have been exploited, excluded, and further marginalized within our own area, we have started fighting and raise our voices against these. Politics is not only about conflict and faction, it is also about learning our traditions and building confidence. I have learnt so many things due to my engagement in politics about how to build relations with other community members and also to establish our identity and traditions. In a true sense, thus, in course of my learning I have realized that it is very important for us to work together for a better living of the hill people.”

Sudhangsu, thus, has a strong leadership quality in the *para* and he tries to maintain a good relation with all the community members of the Chakma and Bangalee. He has different opinion about the 1997 peace accord and thinks that this has been only a negotiation with the state authority to reduce the conflicts in the hills. But in a true sense the original inhabitants of the *paras* (Chakma and Tripura) have not been able to ensure their rights to land and natural resources. Sudhangsu has joined the local political party JSS-R, which is known as a reformist political group. Because he thinks that PCJSS or JSS have lost their originality and acts according to the desire of the state authority. Accordingly he also taught his children about the original demands of the hill people which include rights to land, natural resources, independent economic practices, check on the intrusion of outsiders in the hills, access to forest resources, full autonomy of the CHTs, freedom of thought, establishment of indigenous identity, and preservation of their traditions and cultures among others.

In course of his political activities Sudhangsu has faced two types of challenges – one from within the hill people (particularly from the members of JSS) and the other from the national level political parties (particularly from the members of AL or BNP). But he has his own strategies to face the challenges where the main theme has been to

encapsulate the actual demands of the hill people. Sudhangsu argued that despite these challenges he has been able to focus on the identity of the hill people and idealized that the simplicity of the Tripuras or Chakmas or the original inhabitants of the hills and their *paras* is not their weakness. Rather it gives them the strength to overthrow any complexity, and he is working at the grassroots levels and with the other ethnic communities of the hills to generate their traditions and cultures which are closely associated with their land.

Sudhangsu is the representative of those hill people who believe that without the fulfillment of their rights based demands there will be no freedom and they will face challenges from everywhere. The root cause for this believing, as Sudhangsu and other members of this political party think, is that they have been forced by the state authorities to go for armed movement. Sudhangsu and his community members, thus, always try to uphold their culture, beliefs, customs, and traditions in front of their younger generations as well as the outsiders. Fighting the challenges has given him ample opportunity to work with a dynamic effort in generating the objectives or demands of the community as well as hill people.

Sudhangsu always memorizes the past incidences of killing of his community people that took place in the hills and find his sources of inspiration and strength to bring better future for their children. To him factions or conflicts are part and parcel of politics, but believing in and establishing their origin and identity will always remain in their heart. At the same time he organizes dialogue with the Bangalees and Chakmas as well as other political parties over various issues of the hills. Thus true dynamic relations of politics come about – one with various communities and the other with various political bodies of the hill *paras* of Khagrachari.

According to Sudhangsu, their language of politics is based on their community identity and every aspect of the hill people is related to their identity and culture as a whole. In this regard Sudhangsu recognizes himself as a true activist, reformist of PCJSS or JSS, critique of government or state organized activities against their origin and identity, and a believer of establishing a world of hill people full of freedom of choices and consortium of actual rights.

5.3 Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Relations: Power, Politics, and Identity

Subject to the discussions made in the previous section of this chapter it further refers to the underlying facts or another dimension of power, politics, and identity issue of the ethnic communities and Bangalees living in the hill *paras*. More specifically it denotes the fact of a symmetrical and asymmetrical type of relations operating among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura of Singinala, Beltali and Paltanjoy *paras* of Khagrachari. It is very well known among these people that the problems of CHTs are centered around –

- i. a conflict existing in between the majority and minority issue of the ethnic communities;
- ii. debates about the forced settlement of the outsiders (particularly those poor Bangalee people brought from many areas of Bangladesh) in the hill *paras* and areas;

- iii. too much engagement law enforcement agencies of the state and their extensive establishment in the hill areas even at the cost of displacement of the ethnic communities from their land;
- iv. politics and exercises of power related to the demand of a specific type of nation and/or state building;
- v. adopting strategies of a politics of identity formation for a long period of time; and
- vi. countering the hegemonic as well as any sort of rules imposed upon them or on their identity

Eventually, taking all these dimensions of power and politics centered on their identity and ethnicity, the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura people address two types of relations working among them. In other words, as already mentioned, at first these denote a symmetrical type of relation where all these communities try to decorate their relations based on a mutual understanding and sharing of views, ideas, and practices. And the other type of relation, as practiced by them, is based on conflict, competition, and discrimination of access to power and resources in the hills, and has been termed as asymmetrical type of relation.

These patterns of relationships are not a mere fallacy. Rather these include every dimension seen in these hill *paras* and connected with the identity status and ethnicity of these people. There is a clear difference existing among these communities in terms of their access to power, relationship with politics and political parties, and formation or expression of identity. These are crucial in the context of hill *paras* where the Chakmas are exercising and enjoying the dominant status (considering power and politics), the Tripuras are enjoying less than the Chakmas but greater than the Bangalees, and finally the Bangalees are less dominating (despite the fact the Bangalees of this *para* belong to the majority community of Bangladesh). Combining all these factors it seems quite obvious that the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have developed a special type of ethnic relation through the practice of an ethno-politics addressing every aspect of their lives. In other words all these patterns of relationships refer to a dynamic aspect of ethno-politics through symmetrical and asymmetrical conditions and ethnic processes. The nature of symmetrical and asymmetrical relations in politics, which is also related to their identity and ethnicity, is analyzed further in the following sections.

Places of Symmetrical Relations: Getting into the Deep Value

Aspects of politics in ethnicity, taking as the first category in this study according to these community peoples, involve power relations on the basis of symmetrical understandings among the ethnic communities. As it has been mentioned earlier the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras (due to their living in close proximity for a long period of time and developing a common (not always) or mutual understanding) have built up a ground politically to face each other. By nature their political groups are of two types: one is fully operated by the Bangalees and the others are operated by the Chakmas and Tripuras with definite vision, mission, and objectives. Many of the people of Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura, directly involved in political activities, have elaborately identified the following aspects responsible to define their symmetrical nature of power and political relations (in most cases they recognize these aspects as the determining factors to address their ethnicity and identity with a mutual understanding).

Counting ethnic variations: There are ethnic variations in the study *paras* and these ethnic communities try to count on their nature of relationship with each other. This ethnic variation, further, draws on internal tensions and inconsistencies among the members with different ethnic identities. However, the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have engaged themselves, particularly those related to politics, with the national level political parties which have created a ground to work together. Access to power, in this case, goes to every sphere of these three communities. The Chakmas and Tripuras have argued, in this regard, that this mutuality exists because this gives them the ample opportunity to exercise power not only in the locality but also they become able to capitalize their position considering their connection to the central level political activities of Bangladesh. So on this ground politics plays significant role to develop a tolerable ethnic relation. According to Koibak, one of the young Tripuras of the *para*:

“...I have joined Awami League, the national level political party, which formed the present government of Bangladesh. I am one of those young Tripuras who has taken the opportunity to exercise power in my *para* as well as in the towns of Khagrachari. I am the owner of few mountains and forest areas near to my residence and any engagement with politics and also with the Bangalee political persons have given me an opportunity to capitalize (or invest) on my resources. With this background I think a kind of mutual or trustworthy relation of politics is going through the relations of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras.”

Search for peace: The people of these three communities have always tried to express their views regarding the current situations in the hill *paras*. They always prefer a peaceful relation with each other. But in reality somewhere in their mind there exists a tension. In most cases this tension is related with their peaceful living or not. According to a Chakma leader:

“...when we see that our family members are getting in danger and even losing their lives to defend our land, language and rights, we cannot sit redundant; but at the same time we are trying to demonstrate our position and identity to others, and in particular to the state, that we are not enemy to the state; we only want to establish our rights and secure our livelihood in the hills”.

This statement or argument makes a point very clear that nobody of the Chakma and Tripura of their *paras* want to create enemies, rather they want peace and happiness (but not with the sacrifice of their rights and lives). None of the Bangalees of the *para* have a feeling that a submissive life is expected. Many of the Bangalees of the *para* further argued that not only their neighboring Chakmas and Tripuras but also they themselves are trying to live a peaceful life. According to their observations following factors (in most cases these are designed by the political activities operated in the hills by different ethnic communities) can bring real peace in the hills and among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. This does not indicate that a complete unrest is prevailing in their *paras* now, but this is also true that the contemporary situation is not out of anxiety.

- i. Change in the state policy towards a forceful settlement and/or development in the hills.
- ii. Recognizing the identity of the Chakma, Tripura and similar other ethnic communities of the hills in the constitution of the state.
- iii. Preserving as well as accepting the traditional rights of the peoples in the hill *paras* by the state.
- iv. Understanding the vast cultural variations of the hill *paras* and creating an environment in the hills for a freedom of thought and practicing of the cultures and traditions by the Chakmas and Tripuras.
- v. Taking necessary initiatives to make the Chakmas and Tripuras believe that the Bangalees are not their counterparts or threatening to their traditions. Similar thoughts are also needed to be developed among the Bangalees towards the Chakmas and Tripuras.
- vi. Finally state and its government have to play a crucial role in creating a peaceful relation as well as ensuring an amicable environment in the hills.

Visualizing ethnic voice and loyalty: This refers to another aspect of symmetrical relations in the political understanding of these three communities. It has been observed that today the ethnic peoples are raising their voices through their political platforms. At the same time by showing their loyalty to the respective political groups, all these communities are trying to defend their own distinct identity by the name of their community and protesting all sorts of exploitations made against them. This demands further clarification. In most cases, and throughout the world, it is quite commonly seen that the state (and its authority) tries to do three things to the ethnic communities: assimilating them into larger communities, dominating over their life, and adopting an ideology of multiculturalism²⁵². In response to this the Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* have argued that some of the strategies of Bangladesh government and state such as forcefully threatening their identity, establishing Bangalee nationalism over their community nationalism, and addressing them as ethnic minorities have forced them to protest these threats. Initially their activities and voices have created awareness even among their Bangalee neighbors who have come to realize their positions. According to them this has created an amicable relation with the Bangalee as well. Analyzing these types of relations further indicates that the minority and majority terms are political issues and they do not want to be compartmentalized in this way. All these communities want to visualize their voices and ethnic loyalty where, according to their understandings, their political groups and activities are playing significant roles to demonstrate their good ethnic relations and strong community identity. Sensitizing these also refers to the fact that the Chakmas and Tripuras, in response to their label of minority status, are incompatible with the state policies and politics of Bangladesh. In many occasions they opt for full independence and freedom of movements in the hills. In other words they are trying to justify their position through developing a good political relation and formation of political groups along with participating in national level political parties. Thus all these factors have influenced them to become politically organized and demonstrate their interests. Considering the anthropological perspectives of ethnicity and identity the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have maintained a dynamic ethno-politics to capitalize their identity issue in the hills.

²⁵² For more see Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993:123).

Places of Asymmetrical Relations: What are the Differences?

Most of the people of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras consider differences as integral part of their lives. More importantly they have focused primarily on two factors taken as responsible to create the differences: one is the access to political power and the other is the access to economic resources. It has been identified that access to political power, in most respect, control the mechanism of and access to economic resources. This is another dimension of the relationship operating among these people. In other words this type of relationship has been identified by them as the asymmetrical relation. Thus addressing the question of identity formation as well as dealing with their debate on identity crisis all these three communities have capitalized the issues of power, politics, cultural differences, origin, and background. Definitely then, as has been addressed by them, there appears a point of contradiction or contradictory relation existing among them at least at the expense of political power and authority.

This asymmetrical relation further intensifies their nature of access to political power and the measurement of gain and loss in politics. As it has been already mentioned there are two types of political power and authority operating among the ethnic communities like the Chakmas and Tripuras.

Firstly, they have their own traditional political bodies and structures where they are practicing their political power and authority on the basis of their customary rules and regulations.

Secondly, they are also participating in the national level political parties and practices which has given them an opportunity to be a part of global politics.

In addition to these political practices the Chakmas and Tripuras, in particular, have developed several political bodies such as JSS, JSS-R, UPDF, etc. The main aim of these political bodies is to establish their separate identity through recognizing their indigenusness in the hills. This political strategy, according to many of the Chakmas and Tripuras of the Paltanjoy and Beltali *paras*, has gone against the state policy where they think that they have little recognition as indigenous ethnic community (the Constitution of Bangladesh has addressed the Chakmas and Tripuras and the similar ethnic communities as 'ethnic minorities') and no recognition as indigenous communities of the hills.

Most the Bangalees of Singinala para have argued that the point of contradictions and interests start from the debate on state policies and amendments of the Constitution of Bangladesh regarding the identity of these ethnic communities. But this seems to be a simplified argument. In practical there are many other underlying factors which are operating in the hills to address the issue of identity politics. On the ground of access to political parties and exercises of power the Bangalees of this *para* are divided into or affiliated with two political groups of parties: one is the current ruling party Awami League and the other is the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Thus they have their direct connection with the global politics. This connection has given them the opportunity to maintain a dominant political relation in the area bearing in mind that these Bangalees are the minorities in the hills in comparison to the Chakmas and Tripuras. In other words this political connection works for them as a psychological

boost up to handle any political crisis in the *para*. Apart from these political divisions all the Bangalees have formed *Somo Adhikar Andolon* (SAA) and *Parbattya Bangalee Chattra Parishad* (PBCP) as point of contradictions and building close attachment with the hill political environment. The Bangalees further consider the formation of these two political bodies as a counter of the local political groups formed by the Chakmas and Tripuras.

According to the Chakmas and Tripuras this diversity in politics as well as political groupings or polarization are not any isolated whole, rather a strong historical background is related with this. In this 21st century none of the Chakmas and Tripuras wants to see their people die or live in critical livelihood strategies through pressures created upon them by either their rivalries of the state authorities. On the other hand the Bangalees also do not want to leave their places and fight with the Chakmas and Tripuras to establish their rights in the hills. All these factors indicate that all these communities in the study *paras* try to defend their community pride and identity, protect their rights through multidimensional political activities, and to develop a harmonious socio-political as well as economic and cultural relation. But it has been identified among these people that these are not easy tasks to maintain.

Cultural differences are the crucial factors in this regard where the Chakmas and Tripuras, in particular, shape and reshape or construct or deconstruct their political activities through their cultural values and norms, customs, and traditions. At the same time none of these communities, as a whole, compromises with their community ideals and value orientations. It has been observed quite significant among the Chakmas and Tripuras that they have important connections with and reliability on international support. However, considering all these aspects to assess a sensible understanding of their asymmetrical political relations, following discussion is organized focusing some of the crucial grounds where conflicts and differences sustain.

Majority-minority dichotomization and categorization. One of the crucial points addressed by the three communities is their dichotomization and categorization on the basis of a majority-minority²⁵³ differentiation. In most occasions they try to refer to this dichotomy responsible to create all the problems and conflict of traditions. The Chakmas and Tripuras have attached this process of categorization to politically designed aspects of their society and community: a politics of number. But they have never agreed to be addressed as minor only because of their numerically inferior status. Because they have a long historical background (both cultural and political) associated with this place and they have their own identity as Chakma and Tripura. They have rigorously and quite boldly mentioned that it is the political motives utilized by the Bangalees and the state to treat them as minor or inferior in all respects of their lives, and thus creating distrust among them toward the Bangalees and the state to develop a relation of contradiction. They have further argued that this majority-minority concern has developed a hegemonic relation in the political understandings of the locality and the state.

²⁵³ In this regard Eriksen argued that an ethnic minority can be defined as a group which is numerically inferior to the rest of the population in a society, which is politically non-dominant...the twin concepts minority and majority are relative and relational; a minority exists only in relation to a majority and vice versa, and their relationship is contingent on the relevant system boundaries (Eriksen 1993:121).

On the other hand the Bangalees are minor in the context of their number in the hill *para*, but in the context of overall Bangladesh they regard them as a part of the majority community. With specific historical background these Bangalees preserve this psychological advantage in their mental satisfaction which, according to them, boosts up their political advantage and relations. They also argued that the Chakmas are the most dominating as well as powerful community of the area and this has put them into a troublesome political relation in the locality. But these Bangalees have realized that the politics of the hill people is different than that of the greater Bangalees. The Chakmas and Tripuras are very strong in this context and none of the Bangalees has anything to do or say against them. But somewhere there remains a fear among these communities. All of them have used the term 'fear' to illustrate the nature of political contradicting relations. The political activist Chakmas and Tripuras, a number of who live in Paltanjoy and Beltali *paras*, have argued that they would never compromise with their community identity and right to land just because they are less in number. The Bangalees, on the other hand through forming local political groups, are trying to demonstrate their position in the locality with their dignified and separate identical relations.

Overall it has been identified that the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* do not consider this majority-minority issue over and above everything, but are going through this hegemonic political relation. They are now upholding their own cultures and traditions through participation in dynamic political relations with each other. It means that they are trying to avoid these controversies and focus on their interrelations which ultimately denote their nature of ethnicity and identity. At the same time some of the political activities of majority-minority dichotomy are created around their economic, social, linguistic, cultural, capitalistic works as well as state controlled hegemonies.

Polarization of social relations through politics: Politics plays important role in the life of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. But this does not mean that everyone of each of these communities are directly involved in political activities. They bear the sense of their own community's political ideology. This differs from the participation in national level political parties. Here it has been observed that these three communities are highly polarized. The basis of this polarization is their community tradition, customs, and cultural orientations. It has been mentioned earlier that the Chakmas and Tripuras give preference and value to their own cultures and traditions. Accordingly their different types of activities – political, economic or social – are naturally designed by their culture and tradition and focused on their identity issue. This is reflected in their local political parties, which in turn, helps them to shape their social relations. In other words they relate their political activities with their traditional rights in the hills. Questioning their identity crisis they have further attached this with their indigenouness and in this way all the members of Chakma and Tripura of Paltanjoy and Beltali *paras* have come into a platform. This political platform, though some divisions have been created, is the media for their polarization in politics. They believe that with this polarization there exists a system of boundary maintenance in between them and their Bangalee counterpart. The Bangalees of Singinala *para* have also mentioned that these polarizations have made a ground for a clear distinction among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. They try to maintain a good social relation in the hill *paras*, but when it comes to politically determined collectiveness they identify a dichotomized as well as highly polarized pattern of social relation reflected in their day to day activities and interactions. Thus it has been identified that –

- i. at one hand the Chakmas and Tripuras design their social relations both within themselves and with the Bangalees based on their community beliefs, rituals, and political ideologies (this political ideology is completely based on their indigenouness and belonging to the hills); and
- ii. on the other hand the Bangalees are not fully engaged with the hill culture (in most cases their engagement is seen as partial) and political practices (their political culture as well as practices belong to the national level political ideologies, with few local political groups, and without any place for indigenouness).

Given this backdrop, it has become quite clear that there exists a distinctive politically determined polarized social relation which is further reflected in their daily interactions. These, in other words, show a compartmentalized social and political relation and for the people of these three communities politics is an integral part of it indicating their ethnicity with ethnic dichotomization and processes of boundary maintenance with each other.

Globalizing the localized: One way or the other there is the seed of globalization in the study *paras*. This globalization process, through technological advancement and progress, has largely affected the local economy, cultures, customs, traditions, and overall politics. Because today cheap travel and new media technologies have been employed to unify distant people and to lay claims to universalized values such as human rights and indigenoun sovereignty (Lewellen 2003). As it has been discussed earlier two types of political activities are seen in these *paras* – one is local and the other is national (this national level politics has been identified by the people of these *paras* as global). Along with these they have also connection with different international organizations such as UNO, ILO, World Bank, UNDP, etc. Whatever the platform of these political activities it has been also observed that, at least in the context of these hill *paras*, these are dependent or and interrelated with each other and thus creating as asymmetrical political relation. Moreover, the local level political activities are now nationally and internationally observed with a careful administers. This brings out the fact that there is a clear distinction in between the political activities of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. This also gives a wave of political relation where each of these communities maintains a boundary. The people of these communities have different structural, cultural, and political positions and these are reflected in their local and own community based political activities as well. These highly localized political activities become crucial especially when there is the question of identity crisis and the politics of identity formation developed around it. In case of the Chakmas and Tripuras this question of identity crisis is a sensitive but million dollar issue. And at this point it has been observed that the local level political activities have become globalized with the inclusion and development of modernity in the area. Many of the Chakma and Tripura have mentioned that they have seen dramatic changes in the processes of their political activities and political representations, especially during the 20th and 21st centuries. They have places their political activities on the global platform and raised their voices for their rights more concretely. On the other hand the Bangalees see this practice as an opportunity for the Chakma and Tripura to establish their position clearly. While the Bangalees have formed local political groups (as mentioned in chart-3 of this chapter) with a view to give it a local flavor and at the same time to establish their identity and position closely associated with the hill culture and environment. But the Chakmas and Tripuras see this attempt of the Bangalees as another political strategy to dominate over

their culture and tradition, and a counter act in response to the local political activities organized by them. These are the differences of perspectives in global and local tendencies which reflect an asymmetrical, dichotomous as well as conflicting relation among these communities.

This is not any generalized opinion expressed by these people, rather these are the beliefs that they hold, political attitudes that they practice, and global-local continuum that they try to establish. In this regard it is rightly argued by Friedman that it might seem difficult, if not wrong, to attempt to find unity in a world that is increasingly described in terms of fragmentation, disintegration, meaninglessness, and cultural mix (Friedman 1991:360). This has been observed that in this local-global continuum of political activities and relations the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have identified following situational relational practices among them.

- i. The local political groups formatted and formulated by the Chakmas and Tripuras are fragmented where few of the groups, for example the PCJSS or JSS, have developed connection with the national level political bodies and the state. This is a relationship of bargain and criticism. But the other political groups have been critical of the PCJSS or JSS and their main objective has been to fight for freedom and indigenous right. However, the Bangalees (especially the settler Bangalees who were brought politically by different governments of the state) are considered by them as intruders. This is not the case for the Bangalees of Singinala para. But when it comes to the question of their identity issue there exist a contradictory relationship status among these three communities.
- ii. At some times, the local-global political continuum and interrelations in the paras become disintegrated. There exist distrust and clear boundary maintenance. The Chakmas and Tripuras never like to compromise with the situations or activities that destroys their traditions in the hills. They have no problem with the nature and intensity of global impacts, but they do not compromise if these impacts upon their rights, voices, and identity. The Bangalees live a comprehensive life in the para with always trying to negotiate with the Chakmas and Tripuras. The disintegration comes where there appears a case of inter-ethnic contradiction.
- iii. One of the major impacts of the local-global continuum is seen in the cultural interactions of these communities. This further dresses their political activities. All of their activities are much more exposed to the outside world than ever before. This is considered by them both meaningful and harmful. Meaningful in the sense that it helps all of them to take the favor of national and international assistances, and harmful in the sense that at a certain level of interaction this creates and increases the distrust and tension among the members of these communities.

Formation of Identity in the Hills: Factors of Power and Politics

Formation of identity, as it has been observed, is closely associated with the factors of power and politics in the hills. In other words, there is a sense of collective identity formation and in most cases the people of the hills relates this with ethno-politics. But the question appears here is why the Chakmas and Tripuras do opt for this ethno-politics to demonstrate their ethnic identity and not the Bangalees? The answer to this question,

according to the Chakmas and Tripuras, lies in their historical background of struggle for existence. Many members of the Chakma and Tripura communities have been seen to refer to their historical background. And most of them argued that their identity is closely tied with their blood, emotion, language, and soil of the hills. This is a reflection of their individual sense of belongingness along with their group consciousness. This is also because they have experienced that not only their identity but also their existence have been threatened. In reply to this threatening situation they have always tried to find out their ways to defend their identity and existence. According to Upendralal Tripura:

“...we have experienced a lot of trouble in the past. I have seen my parents and grandparents to fight for our land, resources, protecting our women from harassment, and ultimately defending our existence in the *para*. The question of identity crisis is not any new concern, and we are facing this problem for a long time. It became more critical we see that the state authority also denies recognizing us as indigenous peoples and also our right to this area. We always want to live in peace, but that did not happen and our fellow peoples sacrificed their lives, we started to make a political move, a move not only to establish our identity but also to secure our existence.”

It has been identified that at a certain level of their protest against the threat to their existence they started to deal with this politically. Here comes the question of power and politics. Till now the Chakmas and Tripuras use their local political authority to address the issue of their identity. Accordingly the term ‘*Jumma*’ or in other words ‘*Pahari*’ has been developed by them through which they have tried to create a collective identity. This has a symbolic meaning closely attached to their culture and tradition of cultivation and living in the hills. At this stage the local political party PCJSS made elaboration of their primary objectives to secure their political and economic autonomy in the hills. But after the signing of 1997 peace accord most of the activities of PCJSS have been questioned as being dominated by and compromised with the then government of Bangladesh. As a result a number of local political groups evolved and their main objective, till now, is to defend their ethnic identity and existence through organizing movements, protests, and dialogues against and with the state. Thus it seems inevitable that the current situation in these hill *paras* relates to a conflict of majority and minority group centered on the politics of nation-state and identity formation. At the same time the Chakmas and Tripuras, who are addressed as ethnic minorities within the state, have developed this politics of identity formation as a strategic goal to fight against the activities of the state and with a local-global continuum.

For the Bangalees the situation is different. They do not have the problem to establish their identity as Bangalee. Because they know and show that they belong to the majority group of Bangladesh. This is an identity based safeguard for them where the term ‘Bangalee’ gives them an advantage of power and confidence of dealing with various situations and peoples of Chakma and Tripura in the hills. Coming to the point of politics these Bangalees have further benefit on the ground that they have affiliation with the national level political groups. The major problem they face in the *para* or in the hill areas is revolved around the issue of their settlement. As it has been discussed earlier the Chakma and Tripura or the ethnic communities in the CHTs could not take the issue of settlement of Bangalee people in this area quite easily. Because according to their beliefs and understandings this settlement process has destroyed their habitus and resources, and increased competition. But the Bangalees of Singinala *para* have settled here almost for 100 years and they have been invited by the Chakma Raja primarily for introducing

plain land cultivation practices in the hills. At the same time they have mentioned that a number of Bangalees have been forcefully brought to settle down in some other areas of Khagrachari. These Bangalees' experiences illustrate that the Chakmas and Tripuras or the other similar ethnic communities of the hills have faced trouble with the settler Bangalees.

However, in course of time, the Bangalees of Singinala *para* along with other Bangalees of the surrounding areas have constituted two hill based political parties – one is *Somo Adhikar Andolon* (Movement for Equal Rights) and the *Parbattya Bangalee Chattra Parishad* (Hill Bangalee Student Union). The aim of these political parties has been to establish the rights of the Bangalees in the hills with the message that the Bangalees are not enemies and they also want to make a living with the Chakmas and Tripuras. At this stage it can be highlighted that though the Bangalees do not have the problem to define their identity as Bangalees, but they are trying to create another type of identity labeling it as '*Parbattya Bangalee*' or '*Pahari Bangalee*' or 'Hill Bangalee' people. In many occasions this attempt by the Bangalees has been judged as a counter part to the political initiatives taken by Chakma and Tripura. The following discussion shows, as pointed out by these people, some of the significant aspects of identity formation and its connection with power and politics.

- i. The state adopted political and economic policies for the CHTs and more specifically for the hill people like the Chakmas and Tripuras. These policies have not only endangered these communities' existence, but also generated the issue of identity politics. Most intrinsically, now-a-days, the Bangalees have also started to cultivate on the issue of identity formation revolving around power and politics.
- ii. Not only political and economic but also development policies by the state in the hills have made a ground to dislocate these hill people from their land, resources and homestead areas. This process has increased the tension among the Chakmas and Tripuras. Ultimately the term '*Jumma*' has been established, as mentioned earlier, to show their collective identity. It has become popular and the Chakmas and Tripuras consider this approach as a counter to the dominance of the Bangalees. In this regard the Bangalees argued that these are nothing but a political strategy adopted by the Chakmas and Tripuras to protest the Bangalees to enter the CHTs. Arguably the Bangalees urged for the fact that by being a citizen of Bangladesh they have the right to live and make their living at any place of the country. But at the same time they have come to realize that the state should have dealt with the hill people more sophisticatedly considering their different cultures and traditions in politics, economy, and livelihood strategies.
- iii. The Chakmas still remember the past incidents, especially after the independence of Bangladesh and in response to the development processes of the state, of not constitutionally recognizing them as the ethnic communities of the hills²⁵⁴. They think that when their appeal has been

²⁵⁴ In this regard it is mentionable that the hill people sought constitutional safeguard for their protection and recognition as separate communities by placing these demands to the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: autonomy for the CHTs with its own legislature, retention of the 1900 CHT Manual, continuation of the offices of tribal chiefs, and provisions restricting the amendment of the CHT Manual and imposing a ban on the influx of non-tribal people into the CHT (Mohsin 2003:22). Moreover, the entire CHT region has been kept open since the beginning of 1950s for unrestricted migration and acquisition of land titles by

turned down by the state during 1972 and labeled the term 'Bengali Nationalism' for all the inhabitants of Bangladesh, it made them feel that they have not been recognized in the constitution of Bangladesh. The root to their tension, according to their belief, lies in this background. On the other hand the Bangalees believe that it was right to label the term Bangalee in the sense of Bangladeshi nationalism, but at the same time it is necessary to incorporate the ideals of linguistic and cultural variations of different ethnic communities residing in the CHTs. These Bangalees feel that they would not face any trouble in the CHTs if the state authority takes initiatives to acknowledge the ethnic and cultural diversities in the hills according to their community ideals and values. On this ground the politics of identity formation or the issue of identity crisis, according to the Bangalees, would not be threatening both for the ethnic communities and the country.

- iv. People of these three communities believe that history can never be forgotten. The long term history of sufferings of the Chakmas and Tripuras, in terms of political and economic development policies taken by the state, have given rise to the nationalist movements within the nation Bangladesh. These movements by the Chakmas and Tripuras and their other small ethnic communities, as the Bangalees of the area recognized, have created tension in the state over the issue of identity of the hill people. As it has been already mentioned, the birth of PCJSS and enhancement of its activities with the help from Indian government (formed by Manobendra Narayan Larma on 27 March 1972) has been a reaction to the then state policies. The Chakmas and Tripuras of the *paras* still remember the horrible situations caused by the establishment of Kaptai dam through damaging their land, homestead areas, forest resources, and above all their livelihood. They think that (especially their present generation) these development processes have not only threatened their lives but also forced them to have no choice other than to react through organized movements (along with armed forces). They further argued that even the 1997 peace accord has failed to change their lot according to their expectations. All these historical processes have bound them to generate the identity as '*Jumma*', and they attach this identity only attached with the hill people whom they consider as the children of the hills, rivers, and forests. The position of the Bangalees is critical in this regard. These Bangalees argued that they have a feeling of danger regarding their belongingness to the hills. In reaction to the movements of the Chakma and Tripura they have organized themselves delivering the message that the Bangalees are adapting to the culture and tradition of the hills. Thus a sense of respect works here towards developing a tolerable social and political relation. The outcome of which is the development of the hill based political groups by the Bangalees. They further argued that anything imposed upon them or on the Chakmas and Tripuras will never settle down the ongoing tensions. At the same time, as citizens of Bangladesh, the Chakmas and Tripuras also have to maintain the state laws, but not at the cost of their traditional rights, rules and regulations.

non-indigenous people in violation of the letter and spirit of the CHT Regulation-1900, which provided the basic legal framework for civil, revenue and judicial administration in the CHT (Adnan 2004).

However, following is a case study of a Chakma and Bangalee belonging to Paltanjay and Singinala *paras* showing the nature and tendency of symmetrical and asymmetrical relations. This case study further shows the exercise of power, connection with politics, and fighting for identity formation (or dealing with identity crisis) in the hills.

Case Study-12: Relations of power, politics, and identity

This is a study of Mohan Chakma (34) and Amir Hossain (36) living in Paltanjay and Singinala *paras* with their families. Mohan has a family of wife and two children and Amir has his wife and one child. Both of them are known as young leaders in their respective *paras* and representing the young generation in the hills. Both of them, again, are directly involved in political activities both at the local and national levels. Mohan considers that it is his community traditions and political ideals, long history of struggle for existence as well as sufferings that have given him the strength to fight for establishing the rights of the hill peoples in the hills. In course of this activity he has had both symmetrical and asymmetrical or mutual and contradictory relations with the Bangalees. But in most cases their activities are directed towards the state. In terms of local level political engagement Mohan is an active leader of UPDF and highly criticizes the activities of JSS or JSS-R on the ground that their (JSS or JSS-R) activities have failed to generate the movement of the hill peoples. Based on this framework Mohan urges for the demands for full autonomy of the CHTs with the full authority and freedom of the hill people. This is the ground, as Amir has identified, for a contradictory relationship with the state and Bangalees.

Amir has been a leader of AL (the party that has formed the current government) and also an active leader of SAA. He, along with other local Bangalees, has organized a movement in the name of '*Somo Adhikar Andolon* (movements for equal rights)' in the hills. The main aim and objective of this movement, according to Amir, is to express a position and create a place of the Bangalees among the hill peoples and in the hills. He has faced a lot of trouble in the *para* and these troubles placed him in front of and against the Chakmas and Tripuras. The ground for contradiction comes, according to Amir, when the Chakmas and Tripuras claim for a separate nation-state within the state Bangladesh. Amir raised the point that all the people here are the inhabitants of Bangladesh and are labeled as Bangladeshi. On this point Amir does not find any ground to the claims of the Chakmas and Tripuras for a separate nation-state within a state. Quite significantly this view of Amir as a Bangalee has caused him a troublesome relation with Mohan and Mohan finds the position of Amir as a threat against their movement for right. There was a situation, both Mohan and Amir have memorized, when both of them with the few political group members have been involved in direct contradictions, causing injuries to a number of people from both the groups. This type of situation has been settled down with the involvement of the local political leaders, law enforcement agencies, and District Commissioner.

On the other hand Mohan and Amir know each other for a long time of living in the neighboring *paras*. There are a number of occasions where both of them meet each other such as cultural and religious programs. Both of them argued that these are the grounds for their direct interaction with each other, both at the individual and community levels. This continuous interaction has brought Amir to think that all the ethnic communities of the hills have their traditions and historical and cultural resources which are needed to be respected. This is also true for the Bangalees and Mohan believes that a good social and political is not easy to establish until-unless they do not have their entitled rights and traditions ensured and are free from both internal

and external threats. Both Mohan and Amir have a similarity of thought, particularly in the case of respecting each other's culture and tradition. This admiration leads to a relation of mutuality.

Both Mohan and Amir have political connections (being leaders) with both local and national political parties. This connection refers to a relation of either mutuality or bargaining with each other, with various political groups, and also with the state. Here both of them have power to exercise over their followers in the political activities. Not only in politics but also in social and cultural activities both Mohan and Amir try to play organizing roles. With all these activities, at large, they try to enforce their identity. They shared that they would never compromise with anything at the cost of their identity crisis. However, these are the grounds for their ethnic identity formation, categorizing themselves and organizing their group relations through power, politics and mutual agreement – finally expressing their ethnicity from another point of view.

5.4 Multidimensional aspects of Ethnic Communities' Political Relations: Factors Count

It is not only about the ways of political activities of the ethnic communities like the Chakmas and Tripuras in the *paras*, but also about the fact that how do the people of these communities interact as well as deal with the Bangalees living there of their neighbors. According to the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras, during the course of political and settlement history of the entire CHTs one thing became clear that this area has two different but clearly distinctive pictures and these are as follows:

- i. A place (study *paras* and also the entire CHTs) having residents from only the ethnic communities like the Chakma, Tripura and similar others. This refers to the fact that once CHTs were only inhabited by these people with their traditional and cultural resources. This status dates back to the British period until-unless the Chakma Raja invited the plain land Bangalees to settle in the plains of the hills and inaugurate plain land cultivation practices in this area.
- ii. A place, particularly after the British period and onwards, having residents from the Bangalees as well as being an open area for free flow movement of tourists and outsiders. This is an addition to the ethnic communities living for hundreds of years in this area. At this stage the study *paras* as well as the entire CHTs are recognized as places with people from all the ethnic communities including the invited and settler Bangalees. This process has opened the hill area to the outsiders which the Chakmas and Tripuras have never expected.

From the above mentioned points it becomes clear that a type of tension crept up in the hills with the interventions of a number of factors: state authority, law enforcement agencies, and outsiders as inhabitants. The last factor refers to the Bangalee intervention in the hills. Here the question raised as what is the ground for politics and political movements and how did the issue of identity politics emerge? In response to these questions most of the Chakmas and Tripuras argued that it is not their fault to engage their identity issue with politics and develop a political relation with the Bangalees and the state. A number of situations have bounded or forced them to do so and these are well written in their history. On the other hand the Bangalees are in a position where they are facing the problems of settler Bangalees. Along with this there lies a gap in the

understandings between the Bangalees, and Chakmas and Tripuras, and most importantly with the policies adopted by the state. In any situation the members of these three communities have identified the following factors guiding the political relations in ethnic processes.

Ethnic categorization and group relations: This is one dimension of the political relations operating among these three communities. These communities are highly distinct and categorized according to their political values, norms, and ideologies. These values, norms, and ideologies differ significantly indicating a clear boundary maintained among these communities. It has been identified among the Chakmas and Tripuras that their political activities, especially after the political and economic development policies by the state, centered on their identity, rights and traditions. Thus this is a question of their struggle for existence – struggle to preserve their natural resources and community identity. On the other hand the Bangalees feel that they are being treated as outsiders although they have the right to live anywhere in Bangladesh according to the law of the state. This has created a contradictory situation in the area, but that is not everything in the hills. Despite these differences in interest, the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have a tolerable political relation which ultimately shapes their socio-economic relations. This is how ethnicity operates in the hills.

Hills and plains: This is a question of identity, identity crisis and politics centered on these. It has been identified that through the formation of different local political groups by the Chakmas and Tripuras attempts have been made to create a platform to establish their ethnic identity. In response to misinterpretation of their identity and its recognition by the state, the term '*Jumma*' (politically at least as argued by most of the Chakmas and Tripuras) has been generated. But ideologically they prefer to be identified with their community names, values, norms, and cultural traditions associated with the hills. At the same time the Bangalees are trying to avoid the settler Bangalees' issue and raise awareness among the Chakmas and Tripuras that they want to live with all the peoples in the area. Accordingly they are trying to adapt with the nature, culture, and traditions of the hills. And in this process an attempt has been made by them to label their identity as 'Hill Bangalees'. This is something, according to the Bangalees, to cope with the Chakmas and Tripuras and to maintain a well established socio-political relation such as hills and plains are mixing and interacting with each other quite symmetrically.

Emphasizing local-global continuum: This is a point of reaction and judgment area where the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras, in the 21st century, believe that globalization has played significant role in their political relations and relations of politics. In other words it has given them to take the issues in the hills from local to global arena. This means that their relations spread out from their *paras* to outside world and they emphasize the local-global continuum in this regard. The Chakmas and Tripuras, with their local political groups, have tried to keep their boundary maintenance alive, kept their issues of identity crisis live to others, and raised their voices against the policies taken by the state. Accordingly the Bangalees do not consider their position in contradiction with the Chakmas and Tripuras. They try to develop such an environment in the *para* and with their neighbors where a symmetrical political and social relation would bring peace and happiness in the hills.

Ethnicity and identity through political relations: These ethnic communities have developed their ethnic identities in association with their political relations. In other words they count their historical background in addressing their relationship with each other. This

practice has created an environment where two different political relations are in operation: one is idealized by the Chakma and Tripura cultures and traditions where their major political activities are based on the recognition of their indigenous identities locally, nationally and internationally; and the other is formatted by the Bangalees who have a long historical background (but are relatively new in the *para*) and they are trying to create a tolerable environment in the hills with the expectations of bringing true interactions. These two aspects, thus, expressing the nature of ethnicity and identity with special emphasis on the multidimensional political relations exercised in the hills.

Ethnic identity as symbolic tool in politics: These people, as has been observed, go through two types or senses of meaning in dealing with ethnicity, identity, and politics in action. At first they see their internal and external relationships as a significant ground not only for boundary maintenance but also to generate their political activities centered on their identity formation. And secondly through these political activities, now-a-days, they are using the aspects of ethnic identity symbolically in their political arena. Overall these two aspects of their political dealings, ultimately, throwing lights on their pattern of individual as well as social interactions and competitions or struggle for establishing their existence in the hills. But at the same time it is mentionable that the crisis for community identity is not that much acute for the Bangalees as it is for the Chakmas and Tripuras. The basic ideals, as it has been discussed earlier, for these symbolically designed political activities (also termed as ethno-political movements) are to determine their position both as a culture bearing unit as well as an organizational group. But in this case their ideals of culture bearing unit to establish their indigeneness is stronger than their organizational aspects.

Considering all these factors related to their political, cultural, religious, territorial as well as consciousness in terms of their ethnic identity the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have developed a scheme of a true understanding among them. Hence they have further incorporated the following key issues for this scheme:

- i. These communities have developed a certain type of political relation closely associated with their territorial or geographical area (in this case their *paras*) where they are living closely with each other. Each of these communities consider their places of living (or geographical areas) as culture area to reconstruct their past as well as to develop their political understandings.
- ii. In terms of their political orientation or status a situation of ethnic identity focused sense of nationality working among the Chakmas and Tripuras in particular. This resembles their demands of freedom and recognition of their hill regulations. But for the Bangalees the Bangladeshi nationalism has been the ideal considering the fact of wherever they reside within the country. This opposite senses of belongingness, in many occasions, creates a conflict of interest among these three communities.
- iii. In all the cases these people give preference to their historical background, and especially to the political history. For the Bangalees it is their long term struggle to gain the independent Bangladesh, and for the Chakmas and Tripuras it is their engagement with the war of independence of Bangladesh and struggle for existence in the CHTs.
- iv. Accordingly the Chakmas and Tripuras consider their movement (along with factions created) as a national consciousness, which is organized around their cultural and political image as '*Jumma*'. But for the Bangalees they have nothing to establish, and the only thing that they are trying to resonate is the

image of Bangladeshi nationality (slightly a deconstructed image of 'hill Bangalee'). In both the cases it has been identified that all these activities are closely linked to their culture, religion, language, and above all their ethnic identity.

However, the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have developed competitive political groups or became members of political parties in their *paras*. Through this they are trying to react to each other's activities and interests. In other words these are also recognized by them as interest groups where the Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to protest their external threats on one hand, and on the other hand the Bangalees are trying to be united in their *paras* through developing local political groups. For these differences in their interests it has been observed that there are a number of political groups developed in the *paras* and thus increasing the internal competitive socio-political relations. Eventually the historical background to the birth of Bangladesh, growth of Bangladeshi nationalism and its policies regarding CHTs, and conflict of traditions played significant role to build this competitive relation with the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion, internal-external and/or nationalism and counter-nationalism processes in the hills.

“Much depends upon our values: People have values, notions of what is good or worthy and what is bad or unworthy of human life, regarding the most fundamental questions of existence. Our choices, our actions in the world, are guided by them. They are the ultimate ends against which we measure our actions” (Alexander 2005:455; Graeber 2005:439).

CHAPTER-6: ECONOMY AND MARKET SPHERES: A PLACE FOR INTERACTION

6.1 Economy of the CHTs: Nature and Processes

6.2 Market Spheres in the Hill: Is really a Place of Peoples' Interaction?

6.3 Money, Market and Culture of the Hills: From Household to Market

6.4 Brief Sketch of the Relations among these Ethnic Communities in the Economic and Market Spheres

6.1 Economy of the CHTs: Nature and Processes

One of the most significant aspects of human interactions, building relationships and creating a field of communication and interaction is the economy and market spheres of any society and its communities. Quite naturally the *paras* of the hills in Khagrachari or more specifically the society in these *paras* are also guided by this common pattern of human interactions and communications through the system and spheres of economy and market. But in this study it has been identified that the nature of economy and market in the hills is different from the plain land areas of Bangladesh. In the beginning of this discussion a focus has been given to the nature of processes of economy or economic processes of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in their *paras*. This is very crucial not only to understand the dynamic pattern of interaction or ethnicity but also to grasp the livelihood strategies of these people. Because it has been argued that the economic life of any people is the activities through which they produce, circulate and consume things, the ways that people and societies secure their subsistence or provision themselves; it includes material and immaterial objects such as labor, services, knowledge, myth, names and charms, and so on (Carrier, ed. 2005:3-4). With this backdrop it becomes clear that the economy or the economic life of these people is guided by different aspects of the hills including its natural and environmental settings.

This has generated the practices and increased the importance of an economic practice in the hill *paras* and town which is usually termed as ‘market economy’. At the same time, with the impact of modernization and globalization, the hill areas have gone through a major change in the traditional economic practices. It has been observed that apart from globalization there is a historical fact related with this change. Most of these people, particularly the elders, have argued that since the time when the British influenced the Hill Tracts, the transformation process in the economic activities started to take place. And the British administrators, for the sake of their own need, have introduced the notions of trade and goods to accelerate the economic expansion in the hills. Eventually these hill *paras* are not out of these processes, and the people living here have experienced an alteration of the ‘subsistence-economic-technological’ status to a highly ‘technological-commercial-industrial’ boost up along with political development. Thus they have urged for the following two factors from these changes, both in economic activities and interpersonal as well as inter-ethnic relationships:

- i. Internal factors, meaning changes from inside to adapt with new ideas and ideologies; and
- ii. External factors, meaning changes from outside through a process of diffusion and introduction of new technologies guiding their economic philosophies.

With different cultural practices and attachment with object there is a marked difference in the economic practices of these people. These are reflected in their day to day activities as well as in their patterns of land rights, processes of cultivation in the land²⁵⁵,

²⁵⁵ For the Bangalees land is considered as a personal property which can be sold in the market, but for the Chakmas and Tripuras the concept of landownership is absent. Because they do not consider land as a personal property, but contain customary rights and community ownership of their land. Today land, particularly the plain land, is regarded as the property of the state and claim on such land requires clearance from the office of the District Commissioner. But in the

access to market, valuing different objects that have different economic value²⁵⁶ and a tendency of production for market among others.

Through these strategies and systems, therefore, a strong connection exists between the exercise of power and system of provisioning in the society of hill *paras*. Both of these together maintain the economy and market situations here. In this case three illustrative issues of these people have become connected with each other and these are – power, meaning and material provisioning. All these together shape the systems of economic activities, nature of market practices and patterns of interpersonal as well as inter-ethnic relationships here. In this context and according to Pierre Bourdieu ‘habitus’ is a key element in the processes of social reproduction of the material and power structures in any society (Bourdieu 1979). These, in other words, form a dialectic system among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. This system follows a dialectically inter-wined system for these people and has been seen in various aspects of their life. Thus following a provisioning perspective and dialectics of provisioning²⁵⁷ the chart-6 below shows the nature of dialectics of provisioning in the economy and market spheres of the hill *paras* for these people.

Chart-6: Dialectics of provisioning in the economy and market spheres of the hill people

Things (material and immaterial) Systems of provision	Technology, relations with production, distribution or allocation of products, circulation of movement
Power System Focusing a system of domination	Institutions and markets, differentiation, coercion, consent
Meaning with a cultural system of the people	Mutual responsibility, presentation of self, forms of belonging, identity construction

The current scenario of these hill *paras* and the people living there illustrates that a type of consumerism or market oriented economic system is in action with a cultural and social perspectives and importance of things. This type of economic system (related to market) has played crucial role in changing the mode of life of these people. Here it has been found significant to have some idea about the way Polanyi has defined the market economy. In his terms, “a market economy is an economic system controlled, regulated and directed by markets alone; order in the production and distribution of goods is entrusted to this self-regulating mechanism...Self-regulation implies that all production is for sale on the market and that all income derives from such sales. Accordingly, there are markets for all elements of industry, not only for goods (always including services) but also for labor, land, and money...A further group of assumptions follows in respect to

traditional practice of the Chakmas and Tripuras still the Circle Chief, Headman and *Karbari* are held as primarily concerned for the allocation and use of any land in their *paras*.

²⁵⁶ According to Arjun Appadurai, “while some objects make only one journey from production to consumption, others can follow paths that take them in and out of commodity status, being consumed many times over in different forms in different cultural contexts by different people; the value of such an object thus depends both on its individual ‘cultural biography’ its movement and ‘life history’, and on its ‘social history’, which can be traced for classes of objects in a society and which creates the large-scale dynamics that constrain the ‘intimate trajectories’ of things” (Appadurai 1986:23, 34-6).

²⁵⁷ For more see Susana Narstzky (2005).

the state and its policy. Nothing must be allowed to inhibit the formation of markets...No measure or policy must be countenanced that would influence the action of these markets. Neither price, nor supply, nor demand must be fixed or regulated” (Polanyi 1957[1944]:68-9). Therefore, to understand the nature of ethnicity and interaction based on economy and market of these people it is necessary to capture the multidimensional aspects of their economic practices.

Economic Practices of the Bangalees: Labeling with Mainstreaming

As it has been discussed earlier there are two types of Bangalees living in the hills of CHTs based on their settlement status or history. One group of Bangalees (the Bangalees of Singinala *para* belong to this group) have made their settlement in these areas for more than 50-60 years from now and in most of the cases either they have been invited by the Chakmas and Tripuras or conducted natural migration in search for new economic opportunities. These Bangalees are recognized as peaceful invaders and infiltrated into most of the town markets and larger villages. While the other group of Bangalees (today the controversies are centered on this group and different communities and political parties are creating political issues about them) have been brought in the CHTs by post-independence government of Bangladesh and are today designated as settler Bangalees (forcefully settled in the CHTs and in most of the cases the ethnic communities like the Chakmas and Tripuras are putting their arguments against these Bangalees). Whatever is their settlement history, the economic practices of both of these groups of Bangalees have an orientation to the mainstream Bangalee population of the country. But this study is concerned about the first category of Bangalees who have settled in Singinala *para* to make their living as well as organizing their livelihood strategies in the hills in collaboration with the Chakmas and Tripuras.

Thus to have a broader understanding of the economic life of these Bangalees it is significant to attach their economic activities, thoughts, ideas and beliefs with their social and cultural world where they consider them belonging to the mainstream population of the country. At the same time they are developing the belief that they are a part of the hill culture and environment. With this process they consider their economic activities (i.e. production, distribution, and consumption of agricultural products as well as other business oriented materials) related to a stratified social system where everyone is ranked in terms of everyone else. The main reason for this practice and process has been identified by them as centered on age, sex and gender based stratification of Bangalee culture and tradition. According to them when they have come to this place they were confronted with the culture and tradition of the Chakmas and Tripuras. This confrontation was also reflected in their economic activities. Because their major mode of living or source of earning is agricultural activities. In other words they have started their living in the plains of the hills and beside the river of Singinala *para* with their agricultural activities. Eventually they helped generate the agricultural activities of the hills by introducing the plain land cultivation processes and techniques.

In course of time, as they have pointed out, major changes have been seen in the overall economic activities of the hills leading to new patterns of economy and market oriented commodity based production systems. According to Mojida (39), a Bangalee woman,

“...I have seen lots of changes in our *para* and also in the town. Everything went to the market and ultimately our understandings about the objects or things

produced have changed. Value of commodity, production for market, market as a place for transaction and exchange, interacting with people from various ethnic communities in the market – all these together are changing our views and understandings toward a market oriented economic and social system. I have not seen these in practice earlier. But soon after the introduction and free flow movements of multi-various goods and services in these *paras* and town not only the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras but also the other ethnic communities have started to bring changes to their traditional economic practices. In addition changes have also occurred in the patterns and tastes of production and consumption. Modernization and globalization might have played significant roles in this regard. I do not know whether there is any negative side of this sort of economic activities or not, I do realize that people belonging to different ethnic communities (especially those who are directly engaged in productive activities) are not only able to have access to different commodities at one place (market) but also to bring their products in the market and have a chance to get together. I think market economy has opened new avenues for us and in course of time diversified the chances for activities we are engaged in. I have seen that the people of this area are engaged with various activities and have differences in access to resources. These created competitions among us and particularly during such a time when market is playing crucial role in our lives. We, the Bangalees, are also engaged in these activities and competitions. But the idea of market economy is not new to us and this has helped us to cope up with the situation in the hills. In addition to this I can say that market and economic practices related with market are both the places and systems of developing interrelations among the peoples of Beltali, Paltanjay and Singinala *paras*.”

From the understandings of Mojida and observations from the field it has been identified that the Bangalees of Singinala *para* are engaged in different types of economic activities. Considering their position in the hills they have carefully stepped into different activities to make their living. And they believe that their engagement has given them an opportunity to interact with the Chakmas and Tripuras at different places and with renewed activities. Most of the Bangalees of this *para* have been brought here or invited to settle down to do agricultural works. So they are directly engaged with the systems of agricultural production in the hills. They have come to realize that with their engagement in the lands of the hills the demand of land based economic system has increased. At the same time the other options of doing business in the market have been geared up for them to some extent. According to Mohsin (41), a Bangalee man,

“...I have a grocery shop in the town market and I am directly involved in the practices of market economy. In my opinion the market economy of this area has two aspects: one is positive aspect (because it has helped us to generate our income, do some business, and create an option or ground for interaction with others), and the other is negative aspect (because the Chakmas and Tripuras try to demonstrate that the outsiders have invaded in their areas and made their traditional economic system competitive and vulnerable as well).”

However, these Bangalees have categorized their economic or income generating activities or occupations in the following ways. For a better understanding these categories have been briefly elaborated in the following discussions to show their level of engagement as well as the existing scenario of the hill *paras*.

Agricultural activities: Historically these Bangalees are habituated with agricultural activities. In fact many of them have been brought to this area for agricultural activities, and particularly to bring plain land agricultural practices into the hill areas. Almost all the Bangalees' primary occupation or activity has been agriculture and they have ranked this activity as the first category of their economic activities. In addition to this it has been found that Bangalee men and women are equally involved in agricultural activities. This indicates that to make their family survive they are taking all the chances to increase their family income and also to secure a better future for their children. They consider that this has given them the opportunity to create a place among their neighboring Chakmas and Tripuras and also to develop interrelation with them. Usually they do not own land in the area, but they take lease of land as well as work on other's land to produce crops which include paddy, different seasonal vegetables, turmeric, etc. In course of time production for market system has increased in this area and according to them they are now producing for market and to make profit from the market. Today, as they have demonstrated, occupational diversification has increased in the area and the young generations are more interested in other activities other than agricultural works. But this is not same for all the Bangalees here. There are two of the Bangalee households of Singinala para who have agricultural land in Beltali para. That land belonged to a Tripura family and for some reasons (the major of which, as resembled by the Tripuras, was the pressures created upon the concerned Tripura family by the local Bangalee and Chakma influential leaders) that Tripura family sold the land to these Bangalees. This is an evidence of the nature of landholding as well as the practice of agricultural works in the hill paras. But at the same time the Bangalees have indicated to the fact that though they are involved in agricultural activities, there is a less chance for them to get the right to land resources in the hills. This is due to the existence of traditional land ownership as well as distribution systems in the hills. However, they have no problem of doing agricultural works with others, but they have questioned the fact that they have limited or no access to land and natural resources of the hills. As a result they have to go through a challenging economic processes and practices with available opportunities for ethnic interactions as well.

Small scale business: The second category of economic activity has been addressed by them as small scale business. In this category, according to them, there remains grocery shop in the local and town markets, cloth shop, vegetable shop, poultry shop, and small restaurant in the town. It has been observed that the Bangalees of Singinala para, particularly eight families, are engaged in these small scale business activities. This helps them to lead their lives with an ease, but there are challenges as well. In an open market economic system the challenges have been created for these families on the basis of four things – i) cultural differences, ii) political issues, iii) access to power, and iv) control over natural resources. Besides these things there are opportunities for them in the market and they think that they are contributing not only to the market but also to the society of the hill paras. In the face of globalization things have changed a lot here and the Bangalees have argued that the Chakmas and Tripuras also like to use the nationally and internationally produced different products. Above all the Bangalees find their ways for a peaceful and interactive life through maintaining these businesses as well as building interrelations both within and outside the market places with the Chakmas and Tripuras in particular, and all the other ethnic peoples in general.

Drivers and working in workshops: Driving buses and easy bikes, rickshaw pulling, helpers of buses and working in small auto mobile engineering workshops are some other occupational categories for the Bangalees. About eight to ten Bangalee families are living

by these occupations. As it has been discussed earlier Khagrachari is a tourist area where a lot of local and foreign visitors come throughout the year. A free flow movement (this movement was absent a few decades ago) of people and goods in Khagrachari has created opportunities and opened new avenues for occupations for these people. Engaging in these works has given them (also the other ethnic communities) multidimensional chances to get money direct from the field. In other words they are trying to survive with their families in this area where they had limited income generating activities at least a few decades ago. These survival strategies are different for different types of people and the Bangalees here find it critical to be engaged in any activity that has smooth process to earn money. In course of doing these works they are able to interact with the Chakmas and Tripuras living in other parts of Khagrachari. According to Sanjib (45), one of the easy bike drivers,

“...the scenario of job market or doing business is changing rapidly in the hill paras and towns of Khagrachari. I have been driving this easy bike for the last two years. It is new in this area and people are finding it as a cheap vehicle to move in the town. Not only the Bangalees but also a number of Chakma and Tripura people are now working as drivers of this vehicle. I have found it as a nice way to earn money and with this money to run my family of five members. But there are challenges and threats as well. In case of political unrest in the hills (either by the *paharies* or by the major national political parties) I have to remain very careful. Because any damage caused to my vehicle would not only risk my income but also my survival with my family members. However, new opportunities have been created in this area and we, the Bangalees, are trying to go along with the ethnic people of the hills through contributing to the overall economic sector.”

Working in offices: This is another working sector where few of the Bangalees of Singinala *para* are working as fourth class employee in various government and non-government organizations. Some of the offices are court, bank, district administration office, etc. It has been observed that there are five Bangalee household heads who are working in these offices. But they do not consider these types of work as permanent because they have some agricultural activities both within and outside their *para*. However, working in these offices has given them the opportunity to be linked with different government and non-government officials. These linkages have given them the strength, support and security to deal with different aspects of their lives in the hill *paras* and towns. At the same time they have been able to find a way to send their children to schools for education. Ultimately it has been identified that they are getting few opportunities to develop their carrier and find a way to survive with their families. Among the five household heads two of them consider this type of occupation as a secondary one because they have some agricultural activities where they sharecrop in the lands of Chakmas and Tripuras. Altogether this economic practice illustrates that these Bangalees are able to use the resources of the hills. Above all these activities further help them to capitalize their relations with their neighboring Chakmas and Tripuras as well.

Working as day laborers: This is an economic practice not only of the hill areas but also of all over Bangladesh. In other words the day laborers are engaged in different types of activities such as agricultural activities, construction work (it includes house building, roads, drainage system, etc.), industrial works, etc. It is a huge market where a lot of Bangalees are also engaged. It has been observed that twelve Bangalee families (both male and female) are working as day laborers. During fieldwork among the Tripuras of

Beltali *para* it has been identified that a number of Bangalee women are working as day laborers in their agricultural field. Conversation with those women has brought out the following picture: this practice indicates that working as day laborer is not only popular but also profitable for them. In this regard they have mentioned about following two types of day laborers practiced in the hill *paras* –

- i) Fixed or permanent day laborers who are permanently working for their landlord in both the agricultural and construction works field; and
- ii) Seasonal day laborers who are brought about by different land holders during different seasons of agricultural activities such as plantation period, harvesting period, etc.

Taking both these categories into consideration these Bangalees have argued that these types of activities have helped to the development of their relationship of trust with the Chakmas and Tripuras. Because they have measured that working as day laborers not only give them a chance to increase their household income but also to create a bondage or understanding among themselves (or from an economic anthropological perspective this understanding goes beyond the master and serf or landowner and labor relation). In this regard they have further argued that there are three ways exist in organizing these labor forces and these are – i) kinship connection, ii) good social bondage, and iii) a capitalistic mode of production. In each of these cases, as they believe, there remains beliefs, values and practices related to the overall economic system of the hill *paras*.

All these together refer to a dynamic relationship among these three communities in the field of economy. Along with these the Bangalees also mentioned that this labor economy has a direct connection with the market. During fieldwork it has been identified that following two types of sources of laborers are seen in the hill *paras*:

- i) Labor market (this means that from the central place of the town, usually beside the main road, the landowners or the contractors come to pick different types of laborers according to their need and on a contract basis); and
- ii) Permanent or directly personal connection based labor zone (this means that a number of landowners or contractors have direct connection with laborers and due to this they do not need to go to the labor market).

Therefore, whatever the types or sources of laborers it has been observed that a number of Bangalee families are earning for their living by selling their labors. This is also very crucial for the economic systems of the hill *paras*.

Working for political parties: This is the final category of occupational practices, as mentioned by the Bangalees (because this brings cash for them), in the hill *paras*. The reason to bring this type of activities into the overall economic practices of the hill *paras* has been identified by them as the engagement of a larger number of people into political activities. In other words they have argued that working for political parties means to go to the processions during any political meeting. In this case this type of activity has been addressed by them as a ‘part time’ or ‘situational occupation’. Because, today, a lot of people belonging to the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities are engaged in this activity and they are paid for their participation. In most cases the transactions are done at the back stage, but most of them do not want to express their reason for this type of participation. However, many of the Bangalees here people also participate in this

situational occupation but not at the cost of their lives. They maintained that the political parties used to invest in this sector to show a large number of supporters during their meetings, processions or rallies. But at the same time it has been argued that there are other people among them who are really involved in political activities. One of the most striking features of this activity is the exercise of power by individuals which ultimately shapes their relations in structural, organizational as well as interpersonal understandings and communications. Involvement in this activity further illustrates the nature of relations operating through their exercises of power, patterns of ideology and the way resources and labor are allocated in the area. Therefore, there is a direct connection found among the political activities and economic or occupational systems of the hill *paras*.

Thus all these categories together demonstrate the economic activities of the Bangalees here. It has been identified that there are multidimensional offerings in the hills for all the ethnic communities. The nature of their economic activities as well as occupations is different and this has given them a chance to find out their best living options in their *paras* and town. Because with a limited access to land and natural resources the Bangalees face the challenges to secure their livelihood strategies both in the hills and in collaboration as well as contradiction with their neighboring Chakmas and Tripuras. The types of occupational status also refer to the status and class positions of the Bangalees here where they find their place at the third stage.

As it has been mentioned earlier hill offers a lot of resources to produce different types of crops in agricultural activities, but with a limited access to these resources the Bangalees have to search for new options. These options include selling agricultural products in the local and town markets, selling grocery products, cloths and electronic products among others. According to them modernization, globalization and access to modern education – all these together are creating and generating opportunities for all the ethnic communities. But they consider education as the key marker to create differences in access to occupation, business or any other economic activity. They also believe that opportunities are not created by themselves, and one has to explore for chances and create opportunities for him or her facing all layers of people from different ethnic communities, economic and social organizations, and also from existing agricultural and business practices. Eventually there is a growing tendency towards market oriented economic systems in the hill *paras* and towns where there remains a clear interaction among production, distribution and consumption practices. Following is a case study of a Bangalee living in Singinala *para* demonstrating the nature of economic life and opportunities as well as processes of engagement with hill based economic activities.

Case Study-13: Livelihood strategy of a Bangalee in the hills

Rafiqul Islam Mia (50) lives in Singinala *para* with his family of eight members. His main income source is a grocery shop in the town market of Khagrachari *Sadar* Thana. His shop is only 3.5 kilometers away from his home and he has almost every item in his shop. This is his primary income generating activity, while agricultural work remains the secondary one. He thinks that land based production system or activity is the best economic strategy in the hill areas, because hill offers a very productive land resource to produce different types of crops both for own consumption and for the market. Mia has chosen the grocery business in the town of Khagrachari because he thinks that this is the best business policy for him to earn money. He has observed so many things in the *paras* and town and realizes that people are changing their tastes

and choices regarding products in the market.

According to his observation globalization has played significant role in bringing not only products but also people in the market. With this backdrop he has designed his livelihood strategy focusing market oriented economic system of the hills. Through selling varieties of products Mia has been able to engage in a multidimensional interrelation with the peoples of different communities. He has created a position for him both in the *paras* and market area. This has given him a secured place in his livelihood strategy. Despite his engagement in this type of economic activity, he is trying to develop a better career for his children who are now doing jobs in Dhaka. He has seen so many ups and downs in the area and with this experience he has adjusted his livelihood strategies from time to time. In course of living in Singinala *para* for the last 35 years he has been able to build an amicable social, political and business relation with the other Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras both in the *paras* and town.

At the beginning it was difficult for him to set up his grocery business in the market. But he has had to manage the local political leaders and business personnel (belonging to Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities) in favor of his business settlement. According to Mia the investment was not a big amount, but the processes were long for managing local political groups and other business people. Today he finds it as a positive output of maintaining good relations with different actors in the locality. Ultimately he has been able to establish his position in the area. In his own words,

“...it seems difficult for the Bangalees to settle down any business in this area. Because there is a chance of contradiction with the Chakmas and Tripuras who, in most of the cases, consider the Bangalees as outsiders. But there thinking is not always true because as a citizen of Bangladesh we also have every right to do business and organize our livelihood strategies in any area of the country.”

Thus Mia has gone through these processes and now trying to develop an environment so that everyone can have the access and opportunity to design his or her economic life in the hills.

Livelihood Strategies of the Chakmas and Tripuras: Labeling with Local, Traditional and Global

The economic and livelihood strategies as well as nature and processes of economic activities of the Chakmas and Tripuras are mixtures of their local, traditional and global exercises as well as elements. There is no doubt about the fact that a striking difference is visible in the economic practices of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. A few decades ago their socio-economic conditions were not always known to all the people of Bangladesh. It has been often argued that without their constitutional recognition in Bangladesh as ethnic communities, the Chakmas and Tripuras (and the other ethnic communities too) are living a tough life in the CHTs and struggling to protecting their culture, economic interest as well as identity at large. Talking about the striking differences in the nature and processes of economic systems between the Bangalees and the Chakmas and Tripuras most important demarcated things observed are –

- i. attachment of culture and tradition with economic activities;

- ii. *Jhum* cultivation, till now, as the major agricultural activity and their culture centered on this system cultivation as well as in come generating activity;
- iii. collective ownership and usages of means of production used for cultivation;
- iv. participation of both male and female members of the ethnic communities which refers to ensuring a gender participation in all spheres of economic activities in the hills (i.e. participation of almost all male and female members (who are at least adult) in the production, distribution and consumption of products involved in an economic system);
- v. almost an absence of exploitative economic and social relations within the community members; and
- vi. an ecologically friendly economic practice is maintained where the flow of natural resources and products follow the routes from the hills, forests and lands (as foods) to humans and also back to the environment²⁵⁸.

Before going to discuss in detail about the nature and process of economic system of the Chakmas and Tripuras some other factors are needed to be clarified, because these people have considered those factors having direct impact on their livelihood strategies.

Firstly, the economic development policies (for example accelerating the process of industrialization through 'Kaptai Dam': it has been argued that the problems in the CHT region had largely begun with the building of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam between 1957 and 1963, when the area was administered by Pakistan; this dam flooded at least 54,000 acres of settled cultivable land, farmed by the ethnic communities, and displaced over 100,000 people (Khan, 1994; Amnesty International, 2000) taken by the state in the CHTs have affected their traditional land and natural resource management practices in the hills. According to the Chakmas and Tripuras these policies have failed to understand their traditional practices highly sensitive to the nature, environment and resource management as a whole.

Secondly, state's intervention and imposition of rules and regulations in the forests of the hills have restricted their access to these forests. In other words the forest and its resources are considered by them rooted in their economic, cultural and religious lives. These resources also constitute an integral and significant part of their livelihood strategies and traditionally they relate their beliefs, practices, habitus, rituals and spirits with these resources. According to them forests are not only regarded as their common property but also as life sustaining resources to them. Therefore, the policies, rules and regulations imposed by the state have largely affected their ways of living. In other words they consider these as attacks on their customary rights over land, forests and forest resources²⁵⁹.

²⁵⁸ In this regard Rappaport argued that consumption of food through a broad ecosystem falls within sustainable limits (Rappaport 1984[1968]). This refers to the fact that the Chakmas and Tripuras are very sensitive to their natural environment and according to them this is so because they attach their cultures, beliefs, rituals, and traditions with the nature and ecosystem to have a better economic and livelihood strategies.

²⁵⁹ It has been recorded that the first attack on the hill people's customary rights over the forests and forest resources came during the British colonial period, when the notion of social forestry changed to commercial forestry; and in 1875 the British introduced two types of forests: i) reserve forests (RFs) which were put under the management of forest department and where *jhum* cultivation and any use of forest resources were prohibited; and ii) district forests (DFs) which were under the direct control of district commissioner and where *jhum* cultivation and use

Thirdly, the omnipresent armies and police forces in the hills and town of Khagrachari by the state have created tensions among the Chakmas and Tripuras. They consider that these processes have not only distorted their productive and economic systems but also their traditional production relations. Even then, considering the nature of production relations, it has been observed that in a growing capitalistic and market oriented economic system they maintain the importance of economic activities operating outside the market and based on their friendship, kinship, religion and class connections. All these, according to their practices, are truly gendered relations and seen economically important. In other words these refer to their culture and tradition deeply associated with their economic activities – showing the basic differences from the Bangalees.

Fourthly, introduction of a market based economic system and intervention of different multidimensional companies in the hill land to produce for market – both these together have changed the traditional practices of these people in many respects. Thus they have gone through a shift in practice from production for own consumption (primarily) to production for market (now heavily practiced). The root cause for this has been identified by them as globalization and opening the area to the outsiders.

Fifthly, alienation of the ethnic communities from their land, as argued by the Chakmas and Tripuras, is another impact factor to bring changes in their economic and livelihood strategies. This alienation, not only from their land but also from their forest resources (or at least through the restrictions over these resources by the state), has done few things to their communities and these are – i) displacement of many of their community members in several areas of their *paras* and Khagrachari, ii) loss of their traditional rights, iii) introduction of the terms and processes of criminalization, iv) commercial use of forest and forest resources by outsiders, and v) environmental degradation created by the forest department through unplanned activities. However, according to their belief system land of the hills is recognized as their communal property and the ultimate owners of this property are *para* communities, kin group and ancestral spirits (for them the right of individual families, in this regard, is usufruct only). Today there is an exercise seen in the hills where land has been started to be considered as individual property and a property to be bought and sold in the market. Thus they have tagged this practice with the market economic system, which is largely practiced in their outside world.

of forest produce for domestic purposes were allowed with certain restrictions (Mohsin 2003:25). Accordingly Roy and Halim further argued, "...the use of common land by the ethnic people is not new in the region because, since the British colonial period, those who lost their access to the former common land eventually moved on to the state owned reserve forests. This gave birth to the 'village common forests' (VCFs) of today, which are directly managed, protected and used by these communities" (Roy and Halim 2001). On the other hand and in Adnan's word, "available documents of the indigenous ethnic groups of the CHT indicate that notions of private property rights regarding land were not only absent, but also unnecessary for their way of life as they used to depend on shifting cultivation. Their customary practices for allocating and using common land were not written down in the form of legal codes. Instead, they were handed down from one generation to another as part of an oral tradition. However, CHT Regulation-1900 enacted during the colonial period laid down specific rules on rights of entry and residence in the CHT, as well as land settlements and transfers. This regulation made it difficult for people from outside to acquire rights to land in the CHT. Unfortunately, some of these restrictive measures on outsiders were withdrawn even before the end of the British rule. Later, during the succeeding Pakistani and Bangladeshi periods, through a series of legislative amendments and executive orders, the remaining restrictions on outsiders were lifted. In the process, the erstwhile indigenous common land of the tribal people has been converted to state and private property" (Adnan, 2004).

Therefore, taking these factors into account the Chakmas and Tripuras of Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* have categorized their economic activities and livelihood strategies in the following ways.

Agricultural practices with tradition and modern aspects: The Chakmas and Tripuras have argued that their main economic practice to organize their overall livelihood strategies is based on *jhum* cultivation in the hills. Traditionally they are practicing this cultivation process for centuries to produce the crops needed for their own consumption. And they consider this practice closely associated with their religions, beliefs, rituals, customs, traditions and cultures as a whole. In other words their economic system is embedded in their society where their religious and community leaders have control over the natural resources. Here it has been identified that most of these leaders are the elder members of their communities. This is the case because in the social systems of these Chakmas and Tripuras the impact of politics, economics, religion and kinship are seen almost in all aspects and activities of their lives. Thus they view the world as an integrated entity upholding a system of human to human, nature to human and human to nature relationship. According to them,

“...we are the children of the hills and rivers and we know our land and resources as well as environment of the hills better than others. Nature has blessed us with lots of resources and we also know how to cultivate these resources. Accordingly our total agriculture based economic system is circulated around two types of mode of production: one is a community based agricultural system where means of production is owned collectively, and the other is a lineage system (keeping the collective ownership of means of production) where the elder member of our communities have the authority and controlling mechanism regarding production, distribution and consumption of products.”

Though these traditional systems operate in their agricultural activities, today, a modern cultivation process has been also largely practiced by them. These Chakmas and Tripuras have land both in the hills and at the plains of those hills. For many years they are cultivating in these lands and today they are using modern equipments and taking assistances from the Bangalees in different layers of their agricultural works. Thus a shift has been seen in their production and consumption system i.e. production only for consumption to production for market and consumption as well. Protecting tradition is their major concern, but at the same time they are trying to cope up with the market economy. May be due to this it has been observed that in these days a number of Bangalees (both men and women) from Singinala *para* are working in the agricultural lands of the Chakmas and Tripuras. Therefore, in most of the cases, the main income comes from their agricultural practices and they also place this type of activity at the first stage of their overall economic practices.

It has been also observed that a few Chakma families have started cultivating turmeric commercially in support to capture the business in the market. For instance, today, a number of companies have entered the area to get supply of fresh and original turmeric for instance. On the other hand the Tripuras are also trying to catch the market by producing surplus crops or production. Categorically the crops or items produces by both these communities include paddy, turmeric, bamboo, vegetables, herbs, etc. Among these items bamboo bears special significance in their everyday life and as a material it gives their *paras* a natural appearance as well as integral part of the hill landscape. It is

related with their lifestyle which include making of walking sticks, carrying sticks, water piper, handlooms, and most importantly houses. But a conflict of tradition also exists in the hill where the younger generation wants to make profit at any cost from their land and that is why they do not hesitate to lease their lands to the Bangalees or outsiders. With these practices they have now learnt to capitalize their land and natural resources targeting the market. Thus a combination of traditional and modern practices have been getting popularity among the Chakmas and Tripuras and simultaneously diversifying their economic activities as well as occupations.

Cultivating on small scale business: There are so many options for these ethnic communities regarding small scale businesses in the local and town markets. These options have been categorized by them into the following types – selling of food products, small shops on the footpaths of the local (*para*) and town markets as well to sale different herbs, fruits and vegetables produced in their home garden and agricultural land, producing commercial crops in the hills such as turmeric, ownership of grocery shops both in the local and town markets, restaurant business, tailoring shop, and boutique houses or shops in the town market. It has been observed that both male and female members of the Chakmas and Tripuras are directly involved in these businesses and everywhere they uphold their cultures and traditions. One of the Tripura business women (owner of a boutique shop or fashion house in the town market) of Beltali *para* has argued that their area is very popular for the tourists and every year a lot of outsiders come to visit Khagrachari. According to her they are very fond of local dress, ornaments and many other such things. Due to these they have invested a lot in different types of small businesses which gives them additional earnings apart from their agricultural works or activities based on production in the land. Equally, in the area, the Chakmas and Tripuras are having best opportunities to do these businesses. But as the Chakmas are the dominant than the Tripuras in the CHTs, they have an advantage of getting the best output and income from their businesses. In this regard and according to Animesh Chakma (52),

“...I am doing the restaurant business for the last twenty years in the town of Khagrachari. In course of time I have seen a lot of changes in the area and a lot of people from outside of Khagrachari are coming here for different purposes. In my restaurant I prepare different types foods for different people such as local traditional food using local herbs and roots of bamboo (locally known as ‘*basher core*’), vegetables, etc. and also some common food for the Bangalees. My place is an excellent area for the gathering of people from different ethnic communities and it gives me a profitable return from my business. Therefore, things are changing in this area and lots of people are engaging in different types of business activities. But in any situation our culture and tradition come first.”

Altogether these are the scenario of business activities of the Chakmas and Tripuras in these hill *paras* and town. They look for these opportunities and capitalize as well as invest their earnings and properties to become successful. In other words these businesses give them a chance to control the market of the hills, and in every case they try to build their relationships with others on the basis of their interpersonal and inter-ethnic connectivity.

Driving motor vehicles and boats: This has become a profession for many of the young Chakmas and Tripuras of these *paras*. It has been observed that a number of young

people, usually male, are becoming the owners of easy bikes. They are earning handsome money from driving these vehicles in the town. Along with these a number of other Chakma and Tripura people are working as bus drivers and helpers in the city bus services and a kind of jeep motor vehicles locally known as '*chander gar*' (moon vehicle). This type of vehicle is very popular in the hilly roads of Khagrachari for carrying passengers and different types of goods. Many of the Chakma and Tripura young men consider driving these vehicles as prestigious for them within their communities. Both Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* remain on the other side of the river Chengi and people have to cross the river by boat. It takes only 4-5 minutes to cross the river and few Chakma and Tripura men and women work as drivers of those boats. Basically these are country boats and importance of these boats is immense for them. They really enjoy driving these boats and this further proves their nature of hard work and sense of belongingness to the hills and rivers. Therefore, the Chakma and Tripura women also work in this sector and they do not hesitate to mix with the Bangalees and other people coming to their contact. Ultimately working as drivers of different types of vehicles gives them the ample opportunity to mobilize their income generating activities.

Working as officers and teachers: For the last few years these people are involving themselves in different official works. This includes working in the government and non-government offices, courts, district controller office, etc. In addition to these official works few of the Chakma and Tripura men and women are school teachers situated in the *paras* and in the town. In this regard it has been identified that education is playing crucial role to develop their career as officials. Today parents are sending their children to the schools, colleges and universities to get higher education. In course of time, as it has been observed, many of the young Chakmas and Tripuras are not willing to engage themselves in their family business or agricultural activities. They are giving priority to government or private jobs because they believe that these types of activities give them the chance to get into the office works of the state. The government of Bangladesh has also imposed a quota system for the ethnic people like the Chakmas and Tripuras in different job sectors of the country. This, ultimately, has given them an opportunity to enhance their income generating activities and work along with the Bangalees as well.

Working as day laborers: Today this is also recognized by them as an economic practice of the hill areas where few of the Chakma and Tripura families are working as day laborers. Like the Bangalees these activities include agricultural works, construction houses and roads, etc. They also consider that this has become a market in the area and both male and female are working as day laborers. It has been observed during fieldwork among the Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* that the Chakma landowner has employed a number of Tripura men and women (Bangalees also work in this land) as day laborers following two types of practices –

- i) Permanent day laborers – usually taken from within their communities but depending on the nature of who they also recruit the Bangalees; and
- ii) Contractual day laborers – usually those who are contracted for different phases of a season of agricultural activities.

Political activities as earning sources: Like the Bangalees, the Chakmas and Tripuras are also involved in political activities (this is also discussed in chapter four). And their engagement in different political parties, both local and national, involves money both as leaders and workers. It has been observed that few of the young Chakma and Tripura political leaders are directly involved with national level political parties, in this case that

political party that has currently formed the government of Bangladesh. This engagement has given them the power and strength to invest their capital as well as to make profit from different business sectors that are open to them. One of the young Tripura men has argued that today it has become easier for them to sell their trees (i.e. exporting quality wood to different areas of Bangladesh), taking contracts for different works in government offices, and also to invest in their land as well as to offer other to invest in their hills. These are facilitated due to their direct engagement in political activities. As it has been mentioned earlier the Chakmas and Tripuras have two types of political engagements – one is with the local political parties and the other is with the national political parties. At the same time another issue is also active in the *paras* where the Chakmas are dominant than the Tripuras and Bangalees. This dominancy has given their political leaders and activists additional advantages to capitalize on their natural resources. So this is another kind of economic competition focusing rights to land and natural resources of the hills. This type of practice has added two things to the politics and economy for these people – i) following global trends in politics a major concern of cultural survival, and ii) the locus of community identity based on their culture and tradition associated with economic activities. One of the Chakma women argued that the hills, forests and *paras* belong to them where they have their customary rights over these resources. Due to this, to her, they do not expect that the outsiders would come and destroy as well as exploit their resources. These acclamations of customary rights are also major aspects of their political activities and demands. Most of them now utilize their resources best and think that if there is an opportunity for them to organize themselves politically then why it is not that they also use their power and politics for their income generating activities? Altogether it has been identified by them that political activities initialize and generate their earning capabilities in the *paras* and town of Khagrachari.

Thus the Chakmas and Tripuras of Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* have various options for their economic activities. The above discussions illustrate the nature and processes of their economic practices and ultimately demonstrates the fact that due to modernization and globalization they are also engaging themselves in a multi-dimensional income generating activities. Their options are increasing day by day and with higher educational background many of them are choosing official jobs as their professions. A change has occurred in almost every section of their society leading to renewed economic activities. A combination of their cultures and traditions has further generated their income sources. But at the same time they are trying to maintain their community traditions. Traditions that they consider closely attached to their ancestors' beliefs and practices and these traditions are the basis of their overall livelihood strategies. However, following are two case studies, one from the Chakmas and the other from the Tripuras, illustrating the nature and processes of their economic activities in the hills.

Case Study-14: The way of a Chakma's livelihood strategy

Soumma Chakma (45) lives on his agricultural activities and stays with his family of six members in Paltanjay *para*. His main income source is production from his lands – from the hills and also from the plains of the hills. He is doing these agricultural activities for generations i.e. he has seen his parents and grandparents doing this work. But Soumma has realized that there is a marked difference seen in the income generating activities of the past and present. Today he has lot more options in this regard. May be due to this his secondary source of income is the earning from his cloth shop situated in the town market. To him his community peoples are now engaging themselves into different activities. Apart from producing paddy, turmeric, wood trees, herbs and vegetables in his land, he also sales locally produced cloths and ornaments

(particularly the Chakma dresses and ornaments) from his shop.

He sees it as a positive move by the Chakmas as people belonging to different cultures, religions and ethnic backgrounds loves to buy dresses and ornaments from his shop (because these products reflect Chakma culture and tradition as a whole). He believes that the products they produce and sale in the market bear greater traditional importance and fresh flavors. He has engaged a number of hired laborers belonging to Chakma, Tripura and Bangalee communities into his agricultural lands and also to run his cloth business.

Coming to the point of different occupations available in the *paras* and town of Khagrachari Soumma further illustrated that in the past there was the practice of production for own (community) consumption, but in these days two types of approaches are in practice – one is production for self-consumption and the other is production for the market (i.e. for global customers). In other words, today, in a business oriented and open market system, they are producing surplus products targeting the consumers of the market. Altogether Soumma considers that the hill *para* is going through several changes where the Chakma young generations are looking for new professions, but not at the cost of their culture and tradition.

Case Study-15: Searching for new challenges and economic activities

Probodh Tripura's (36) main income source is agriculture and he lives in Beltali *para* with his family of five members. He also drives easy bike in the town. He has a very small amount of plain land adjacent to his house where he produces crops like paddy and vegetables. His father lives with him and looks after his agricultural activities. Probodh does this agricultural work mainly for the consumption of his own family and he takes half a portion of his agricultural production to sale in the local market. On the other hand he drives his easy bike from morning to evening which gives an additional earning for his family. He represents the young generation of the Tripuras of Beltali *para* and his views are associated with new patterns of occupations. But he finds a multi-various option for business targeting tourism in Khagrachari. He believes that if they have full access to education, from primary to higher level and both inside and outside Khagrachari, there will be a renewed chance for them to be involved in government and non-government as well as private offices.

Thus Probodh refers to searching for new economic activities so that they can extend their income sources. For this urged for proper access to education, establishment of good educational institutions, reducing discriminations existing within the Chakmas and Tripuras and also promoting their languages in every sphere of their lives. According to him political engagement has changed the scenario in the hills. To him their engagement with national political parties has increased than ever before and these political practices have opened different types of business options in front of them. He believes that if one has access to power and politics he or she can capitalize the resources and options available in the *paras*. However, Probodh thinks that in course of time there will be lot more opportunities in the hills and access to market economy seems to be important to organize not only their economic activities but also their relationships with each other.

From the above discussions, observations and case studies it has been identified that the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to create social space irrespective of the ages, works and class differentiations for an integrated economic and livelihood strategies in

the hills. In this regard Bourdieu's argument seems relevant where he demonstrated that social space indicates a set of distinct and co-existing positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another in the fields of economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1998). This refers to the fact that, today, they are trying to capitalize their habitual set of differentiations to generate their production, distribution and consumption activities associated with a market oriented economic system or a system based on goods, money and market.

However, considering all these aspects of economic system (including its nature and process) it has been identified that the people of these three communities have organized their economic activities in different layers. Thus following differential scheme of economic activities (see chart-7) is predictable for them. These are basically different economic idioms observed in their economic activities as well as livelihood strategies that they have developed for long through countering different changes, cultural climax, intensity of doing different economic activities and dynamic situations of their status, role, religions, political engagement and overall relationships in the hills.

Chart-7: Differential scheme of economic activities of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras

Bangalee	Chakma and Tripura
Production is less, but if produced it is mainly for exchange in the market	Production is both for use and exchange in the market
Commodity idiom is mainly practiced	Both gift and commodity idioms are practiced
Socially authorized economic relations	Socially embedded economic relations
Selling of labor in the market is largely practiced	Controlling of means of production and less on selling labor
Expertise with industrial mechanisms and equipped with well technological knowledge	Less or no expertise with industrial mechanisms and less equipped with technological knowledge
Both informal-formal and political economy is practiced	Symbolic and cultural ecology as well as informal and political economies in these days

6.2 Market Spheres in the Hills: Is really a place of People's Interaction?

Historically the economic lives of the Chakmas and Tripuras have been based on the traditional practices of cultivation (*jhum* cultivation) in the hills, fishing in the river *Chengi*, cultivation of 'bamboo' and '*shal*' trees on the hill slopes and doing small scale business in the locality. As it has been mentioned earlier their economic activities were centered on their cultures, beliefs, customs and traditions. Thus customary laws played significant roles in guiding all of their income generating activities. On the other hand the scenario for the Bangalees is different from the Chakmas and Tripuras. These Bangalees have settled here for more than 60 years from now and hence they are trying to cope up with the customs and traditions of the hills. Historically these Bangalees are habituated with the mainstream economic practices of the country such as plain land's agricultural activities, town centered as well as market oriented economic transactions and diversified occupational practices among others. Thus for the Bangalees introduction of a market oriented economic system in the hill is not new.

However, today, the scenario of the hill *paras* and town of Khagrachari has been changed leading to an economic system where production for market (surplus production) and capitalistic mode of production have become dominant. Thus there has been a development of market based economy seen in the town and in this market sphere, along with sphere of exchange²⁶⁰, people from different ethnic communities are coming into regular contact – not only as consumers but also as business enterprises. This is an indication to the development of a typical market economy associated with people of the hills and their cultures and traditions. Whenever one moves from his own *para* to the town he or she comes into contact with global products. In other words, today, most of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have identified their market place or sphere as a typical place for ethnic interactions – these interactions help them to cross-cut their inter-ethnic issues. They find this market place as an area where they can buy things, do business, talk to each others, gather for friendly discussion, and overall contribute to the economy as well as politics of the area. It has been observed that there are a number of characters involved in the economy and market spheres for these people which ultimately guide the overall economic and livelihood strategies operated in the hills. These characters include businessmen, individuals operating as agents of economic transactions, general customers, business leaders, and community leaders²⁶¹.

Most of these people believe that the type of market atmosphere they are going through is providing them with both social and market space. They consider this as space because they have come to understand that in the face of globalization it has become inevitable for them to enter into a social and economic system guided and generated by capitalistic mode of production or a system corresponding from consumption based production to market based production. Combining all these issues most of these people have identified following aspects as crucial markers of addressing current market oriented economic system as a place for communication and interaction or protecting, showing and maintaining their ethnicity and identity.

Market economy dominating people and community: Market economy is a concept and model of capitalistic mode of production. Usually the urban areas or plain land districts of Bangladesh have gone through the market economy for many years. But that is not the same in case of the hill *paras* and towns of CHTs. Again shifting from a consumption based economic system to a market oriented economic system has introduced a shared material interest among these Chakmas and Tripuras. The Bangalees of Singinala *para* are not new to this system and they have illustrated that this type of economic and exchange or transaction system helps in connecting one group of people with another irrespective of ethnic identities (in this case the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras) and comprise almost every aspect of their economic lives. According to these people this refers to two

²⁶⁰ In this regard it seems significant to know about the concept of sphere of exchange and Paul Bohannan defined this as: "...one in which a society's exchangeable goods fall into two or more mutually exclusive spheres, each marked by different institutionalization and different moral values" (Bohannan 1963).

²⁶¹ In this regard the following suggestion from Marx seems relevant: "...in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general" (Marx and Engels 1968).

things – one is a market-dominated economy and the other is a market economy dominating people and communities in these hill *paras*. Thus there exists an interwoven relationship between these communities and the market sphere. The nature and processes of economic activities of these communities, as mentioned earlier, support this relationship. In this regard these three communities have mentioned the following practices related with their economy and market sphere.

- i) Acquisition and ownership of natural resources and material things – both inside and outside the market – needed to accumulate their chances for competition in the market. The change has occurred in the tendencies of economic activities of the Chakmas and Tripuras. This refers to the fact that market sphere has become significant for those who are engaged in agricultural activities and now try to make profit out of their interests.
- ii) Production of goods for the market has been the major economic strategy of these ethnic communities. In most cases the Chakmas and Tripuras are the owners of means of production in their *paras* and they engage laborers to cultivate their land. In a growing market system they did not lag behind and are trying to produce commercial products that have market value. In case of the Bangalees many of them are investing their labors, though a few of them have small ownership in the means of production, in the production systems of the hill *paras*. According to their views these practices are increasing with the increased importance of market economy and value of products in their *paras* and town.
- iii) Transfer, exchange and use of things (goods) and services are also becoming attached with the current market economy. All these things are taking place both inside and outside the market where the individuals and families are trying to select things or goods, services and exchanging goods to maximize their self-interest.
- iv) The economic systems in the hill *paras* have two realms: one is based on community and the other is market economy or a trade system based on interpersonal relations. In case of community based economic realm the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are organizing their economic activities on the basis of networks of relationships. In these *paras* there is a type of kinship and neighboring ties to organize different types of economic activities such as agricultural works, day labor, small scale business activities, etc. On the other hand the market system operating in these *paras* and town is based on these communities in order to formulate rules and regulations to organize the nature of business, trade and involvement of people. In this case these three communities have mentioned about the fact that their market system works as an agent or platform to organize relationships between people who are considered both as businessmen and consumers²⁶². This reflects the tendency of a system where market is playing crucial roles to dominate over people and the communities as a whole. Because they think that their market economy gives them an opportunity to make new connections to material things, goods, services and people among others.

²⁶² In this regard Stephen Gudeman's argument is mentionable where he suggested that markets revolve about impersonal trade although these exchanges may be mixed with communal ties; and in market trade the relations between people, and between them and things, are contractual and contained within community agreement (Gudeman 2005:95-96).

Market sphere as constructing, maintaining and appropriating people' interaction: According to the understandings of the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura businessmen and women, particularly those who have a direct connection with the market, their market oriented economic system is helping them to construct, maintain as well as appropriate their interactions and interpersonal relationships. They have associated these aspects of economic system with their bases which include their knowledge, skill, power exercise, culture and history among others. In other words these communities consider their cultures, customs and traditions as their guiding philosophies to generate as well as formulate any such kind of relations in their community and market economic relations. However, they have identified following issues as important factors to demonstrate their interactions with market sphere (considering the differences seen among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras).

- i) Very few of the Bangalees of Singinala *para* have businesses in the local and town markets. Either they have grocery shops or sale vegetables in the market. According to them they have a very limited option in the market where the Chakmas and Tripuras are the most dominant. Considering this they have argued that their interactions with others are being constructed and deconstructed through multidimensional characters in the market. And the existing market sphere or market economy itself is working as a denominating factor to guide people's patterns and processes of interactions with each other. According to one of the Bangalees of Singinala *para*,

“...market is a place for the exchange of goods and services. But I have observed that many other things are also exchanged other than the goods and services only and these are – person to person interaction, mode of communication with other irrespective of ethnic identity, mobilizing a true customer journey following the chain from home to market, etc. I believe that we have organized our patterns and processes of interaction with people of almost every ethnic community of the hills, and particularly the Chakmas and Tripuras, through respecting each and every community's beliefs, customs, traditions and cultures as a whole. Taken together the market sphere in the hills, as I believe, has given the people of this area at least a chance to make their living where, on the other hand, people's interaction is a common outcome to share our thoughts, values and emotions attached with the goods and services exchanged.”

- ii) This market based economic system has been relatively new to the Chakmas and Tripuras and similar other ethnic communities. But the Chakmas are in a dominant position in this realm. Most of the Chakmas of Paltanjay *para* either have a business in or a connection to the market. In this case and according to a Chakma businessman (who is a owner of a cloth shop in the town market),

“...we are the children of the hills and everything in the hills belongs to us. I believe that our knowledge, beliefs, customs, traditions, and religious and political practices have given our market a wonderful color. Along with this we have a heritage of knowledge and skills with which we are connecting to the market system. But it is also true that we did not have this type of practices in the past. In the course of time things have changed, outsiders' interventions have increased, and globalization has made the path easy for

the introduction of an urban based market economic system in our areas at large. We could not escape from the market sphere and we have also started to find our ways and options to capitalize our advantages in this market system. I think, today, this market sphere is dominating even over our overall livelihood strategies and at the same time bounding us to get connected with different local, national and international products and people. So to me this has become a multi-ethnic economic system and sphere of peoples' interaction where everyone is trying to understand each other. But at the same time we have not forgotten our cultures and traditions as we do not want that our traditions might be lost in a vein."

- iii) The Tripuras of Beltali *para* have different experiences in the market economic system. They are not lagging behind from this system, but they do consider that there is a large competition going around the market. They do not discharge or ignore the necessity of business economy, but at the same time they are trying to maintain their culture and tradition in association with a capitalistic economic system. According to one of the Tripura women (who is the owner of a multi-purpose shop in the town and also a farmer),

"...we are not in a better position in the market in comparison with the Chakmas. But at the same time we are living in a better position than the Bangalees. I have cultivated crops in the plain lands of the hills, planted turmeric on the hills, and produced cloths in my handloom. A number of workers are working both in the plantation works and handloom operation in my home. In the course of my small business I have come into close interaction with different types of people. But I have also developed a good connection with the Bangalees and Chakmas, particularly those who are working in my agricultural land and making of cloths. I have come to understand that it is not easy to organize everything in the market and different people have different opinion about the nature of economic practices in the hills. We have to cultivate on these issues so that we can have good opportunities ahead of us and also try to cope up with the market situations. Today it has become significant for us to invest in different businesses because the importance of money has increased in recent years. In other words, then, the market economy is constructing as well as maintaining the relationships among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras and also developing an environment in the hill *paras* and town where we have multidimensional options to organize our livelihood strategies."

Development of a material culture and consumerism through market spheres: This is another aspect of the economic lives of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in the hills. It has been observed that a pattern of consumerism is practiced among these people where they are showing a tendency towards materiality. It reminds about the work of Miller where he restored materiality as a key problem of identity and social relations is a consumer society (Miller 1987). Taking this view into consideration it has been identified that a world of consumerism, individual tastes, and connection with material things have increased in this area. Thus a lot of ethnic peoples are coming into direct contact with the material aspects of their lives due to the development of a money centered market sphere. Today they are also referring to this pattern of economic system as a type of material culture and a life style based on consumption from market. This reminds the fact that the Chakmas and Tripuras, in particular, are shifting from production for own consumption

to production for and consumption from market. Thus from a Marxist perspective as well it can be argued that the type of production taking place in the hills gives a way to develop two types of relations: one is based on market economy, and the other is based on political consciousness. At the same time this aspect of consumerism and materialistic view of economic life has become attached with following dimensions of the livelihood strategies of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras as a whole.

- i) Through a relation of material exchange and consumerism, they try to display their own identities in the market sphere. This is a reflection of their boundary maintenance as well. In other words all these people are living a life in an environment where they are strong competitors with each other and at the same time follow a business or exchange relation. The Bangalees try to display their Bangaleeness in their every item sold, exchanged or purchased within the market sphere. The same thing is also true for the Chakmas and Tripuras. And in every case all of them have argued that these are also the markers of their identity.
- ii) Whether engaged in business works or not, all these people have direct connection with the market economy and they are of opinion that they try to link themselves with other people belonging to different ethnic communities and social groups. They now consider the market sphere as a big place not only for the business dealings but also for interpersonal connection, communication and interaction among others. This leads to the fact that they are searching for an amicable social relation in their paras and town to reduce the ongoing tension centered on so-called peace-building in the hills. With this backdrop they further expressed that this market system is not always positive for us, but at the same time it is playing crucial role in developing a relation among them through increasing their interests in material aspects of their lives.
- iii) Many of the members of these three communities have pointed out that modernization and globalization have shown a path to the development of a tendency of shopping in the market. Many of the also try to relate this market system with their political understandings, because a lot of people belonging to different ethnic communities are now establishing their relationships with different political leaders in order to make their living a sustainable one in the hills. But again the Chakmas are the dominant actors in this regard, whereas the Tripuras are in a middle position and the Bangalees are struggling to establish their positions.

Individual and family are two spheres associated with the market: Both the individual and family constitute different spheres in these hill *paras* in relation with two things: one is associated with the nature of economic activities of the individuals and families, and the other is associated with their tendencies of economic exchange in two areas – job market and shopping in various shops in the consumer world. Today not only the market sphere but also the overall economic activities of the individuals and families belonging to the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura (as discussed earlier) ethnic communities are guided by three different but related things and these are – i) material self-interest (mostly centered on individual interest), ii) intra-family transactions (centered on different religious and cultural festivals and occasions), and iii) rules and exchange to be taken place both within and outside their households. However, the existing practices here show a ‘money-mediated’ exchange (i.e. a system where everything counts for money), a type of exchange which is now dominating and appropriating the lives of individuals and

families. In most of the cases, as it has been observed here, the individual and family spheres have become very critical and materialistic in association with the development of this money-mediated market sphere.

Market sphere: a place for exchange location and commercial integration: Members of these three ethnic communities think that their market places are special areas for different aspects related to their daily lives to communicate two things: one designates their exchange location, and the other refers to their commercial integration. In any case they consider market places as primary areas, in these days, for their communications, gatherings and interactions in general. For them communications are facilitated through the ways they organize their mode of exchange and interactions are generated through their personal connection (these personal connections take into account their social, cultural and political connectivity). The main reason for this thinking has been identified as the availability and introduction of lots of goods and services in their *paras* and town respectively. It is now almost impossible for them to avoid the connections and changes they are going through. In many occasions they have customized not only their modes of exchange but also their inter-connectivity with each other. It has been observed that like many urban areas of Bangladesh the town of Khagrachari has gone through several changes and market place is playing significant role as a primary exchange location for the people living here. According to Anup (65), an old Chakma male from Paltanjay *para*,

“...usually we are not habituated with the current ways of market economy where every product must be presented and/ or exchanged in a single place. This is relatively new in our area and suddenly we are finding that all the people in the hill *paras*, including Chakmas and Tripuras, are getting involved in this system. It seems like that we have no places to escape and all of our belongings are becoming available in the market. It's a bit tricky for us and bounding our new generation into an environment where they find it as a normal mode of their living. The life styles are also changing and coping with new products and markers of urban life.”²⁶³

But different views are also there from within the peoples of Tripura community of the *para*. Many of them have identified the market places as their primary economic exchange locations and their economic and livelihood strategies are centering on this new tradition. They have argued that their market places are sites of –

- i) an area for global commercial integration where all sorts of products are available;
- ii) a principal vehicle to carry their local and traditional products and features into a global arena;
- iii) generating as well as transforming their practices into a production for cash crops and also combining their handmade traditional or craft goods jumping into the market sphere to compete with the other global products;

²⁶³ In relation to this it has been found significant where Gain, Morel and Tigga have argued that the *adivasi* (here referring to the Chakmas and Tripuras) worlds are being constantly infiltrated by the dominant interests of the majority population and by the market forces; wherever they are they have one general profile: they are economically deprived, have less access to resources, are progressively losing their common land and other products, and struggling for their survival and identity (Gain, Morel and Tigga 2000:5).

- iv) organizing their overall mode of exchanges overlapping into their local lives and economic practices as well; and
- v) this is also a place for their women where they are turning to the market vending in order to survive and at the same time they are finding this as an opportunity to bring whatever they produce in their home garden or on their small amount of land.

Therefore, they are considering these practices as ways to facilitate their gender participation in the market i.e. their gender ideologies are also mediated by their market spheres. All these together refers to the fact that the ethnic communities, other than the Bangalees, are also taking this capitalistic economic practice (preferably the market oriented economic system) as a media for their interaction and strengthening their interpersonal relationship as well. Thus the market sphere is recognized by them as a place where their relationships also sometimes become commercial – through commercialization of products and segregation of people (clearly differentiated and identified) in relation to these commercial practices that their market places offering them. However, following case studies from the Bangalee and Tripura communities show their nature of interactions in this market sphere

Case Study-16: The attitude of a Bangalee in interacting with others

Sunil Biswas (46) lives in Singinala *para* with his family of five members. He is an easy bike driver and at the same time his wife works in the land of a neighboring Tripura family living in Beltali *para*. Both of them are not directly engaged in the business activities located in the local and town markets. But they have an indirect connection as consumers. Sunil and his family are closely attached to a number of Chakma and Tripura families who have few business activities, either as owner of grocery shop or having own restaurant business, in both the local and town markets. He argued that the Chakmas and Tripuras are well privileged due to the fact that they are the early settlers of this area. And as a Bangalee he is going through critical situations where he has to adjust to the environment of the hill *paras* and the people residing there. In other words and according to Sunil,

“...as Bangalee we have some limitations to make our living here. Some of the factors behind this are – we are the latecomers to this area; we have cultural and language differences with the Chakmas and Tripuras; due to these differences the Chakmas and Tripuras never expect that the Bangalees should live here and facilitate their livelihood strategies through engaging in different activities of the hills; we also find it difficult, in many occasions, to cope up with the practices of the hills; and there are a number of cases where we have not been welcomed by them in the market sphere and faced different types of obstacles in doing business.”

Though Sunil has not any business activity in the markets, but he has experienced these obstacles as customer. Therefore, he has to depend solely on the market to survive and as a result he has been able to maintain good understanding with the Chakmas and Tripuras. But, for him, this does not indicate that the Bangalees are in a very good position in market economy and market relations as well. At the same time he has some Bangalee friends who have small business activities in the market. Taken together he further realized that there is a strong dominancy of ethnic communities in the hills, which ultimately shapes and reshapes the relations and business dealings in

the market.

Thus Sunil has identified some major aspects of market spheres for the Bangalees in the hills and these are – i) though it seems that the existing market is an open area but there is a control from the Chakmas and Tripuras which ultimately guide their inter-ethnic relations, ii) this controlling authority maintains the exchange spheres operating in between the families and market irrespective of ethnic identity, and iii) Bangalees are trying to develop their places both inside and outside the market sphere which refers to a multidimensional socio-economic relation – this is also a big sphere where three things come together: people, relationship and business dealings.

Taking all these into account Sunil has found it critical for the Bangalees in this para where they have to develop different attitudes not only in dealing with the Chakmas and Tripuras but also to move around in a diversified market spheres in the hills. He and his family is going through this situation for a long time and it has helped them to cope up with the market realities in the hills which they consider not only tough but also dominated and occupied by the Chakmas in action.

Case Study-17: The way a Tripura deal with market and business economy

Somnath Tripura's (58) lives in Beltali *para* with his family of six members. He belongs to the second strata of power dynamics in the *para*. Somnath has a full engagement in the business activities of the town market where he is the owner of a small restaurant. Along with this he has an amount of land adjacent to his house and also traditionally owns a portion of hill where he practices *jhum* cultivation. So Somnath has two types of business engagement: one is food business or restaurant business, and the other is agricultural business where he takes the surplus production from his land to the town market. Due to these business practices he holds a very good position and control both in his *para* and in the market sphere. For him market sphere is organized by the rules of transactions and exchange relations that take place in between different ethnic communities.

Somnath has organized his family members to look after these business activities – he and his elder son look after the restaurant business, while his wife and another son look after the agricultural works. These practices have given him the ample opportunity to move around almost every spheres of the market and for him these are – trade/ business related with agricultural activities, capitalizing the food business sector, community tradition and maintenance of an amicable socio-economic relation with the Bangalees and Chakmas in the market, and optimizing power relations as well to control a holding in business sector or market economy of the hills. Thus Somnath belongs to such a category of people in the *para* who knows to control the existing market situation of the hills.

6.3 Money, Market and Culture of the Hills: From Household to Market

Markets depend on communities or states for the formation and enforcement of rules of trade and informal agreements, or customs of trading and conducting business; and the community realm of economy features important economic processes...consisting of entities that people appropriate, make, allocate and use in relation to one another, where the base is locally and historically formed (Gudeman 2005:96-97). These ethnic communities consider their family (with whom they live), house (where they eat and

sleep), land (where they cultivate), and crops (which they produce for own as well as market consumption) as the bases in relation to their economic activities. Many of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have argued that the current scenario of their economic activities have brought their families and households within the framework of money²⁶⁴ and market. In any situation they consider their cultures and traditions (having local and historical significances) working as the denominating factors to organize their overall activities. Above all these help them to demonstrate following two things for their communities:

- i) Capitalization of the growing market economic system in the hills; and
- ii) Expression of their community identity in the course of their categorization of themselves and group relationships that they maintain while coming into continuous interaction with each other.

Thus in discussing about the relationships among money, market and cultures in the hills they have identified the way through which individuals, families and households have been brought into the market and the economic practices determined by the market tradition. They further mentioned about some crucial aspects of their livelihood strategies that ultimately illustrate the relationships among money, market and culture. This is also related with the nature and scope of the economic activities of their families and households.

The way families and households organize their knowledge, skills and economic bases: The families and households of most of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have argued that there is a direct connection seen in the dynamic aspects of four things – knowledge, skills, economic bases and the market. Following is an analysis of how all these facts organize their overall livelihood strategies.

- i) Almost all the families of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have argued that they have gained their knowledge, required for their economic and livelihood strategies, from their families, households and also from their ancestors. This has helped them to develop their skills required to fight with or compete in an open market economic system. They consider this as an open heritage where their knowledge and skills support them to light up their existing economic activities.
- ii) Their economic bases, as discussed earlier, are vast and touching almost every aspects of their lives. These economic bases include their plentiful resources such as land, forest and river. It has been observed that these communities share these resources depending on their knowledge, skills, capability and understandings of their usages. In this case these resources are traditionally owned by the Chakmas and Tripuras and it has been identified that the Bangalee families are trying to develop a good relation with them to increase their chances of using these resources. These, in other words, clarify the fact that with an increase of the market economy in the hills almost all

²⁶⁴ In this regard Keynes asserted that states involved money and he distinguished the way debts, price or purchasing power are expressed, discharged or hold – i.e. money as a unit of account or money of account, money as a medium of exchange or money proper, and modern money is a managed outcome of the interplay between states and markets (Keynes 1930). In other words money conveys meanings and these tell us a lot about the way beings make communities (Buchan 1997).

these people, irrespective of community identity, are trying to maximize their intensity to use as much resources as possible. Thus they are capitalizing their opportunities with the hope that they will be able to survive in this world of global market oriented economic practices not only as owners and cultivators but also as consumers. This is evident in situations where it has been observed that a number of Bangalee families (including their women) are working as day laborers in the agricultural land and hill that traditionally belong to the Chakmas and Tripuras. This type of engagement for years has increased the opportunities for the Bangalees to maximize their economic and livelihood options. On the other hand the Chakmas and Tripuras have been able to elaborate their relationship with the Bangalees through an exchange and trading of the skills that the Bangalees hold. Eventually all these together have increased the economic activities of all these people to face the challenges of a global market economy.

- iii) The Tripuras have argued that there is another dimension of their engagement with market economy, business practices and also utilization of money. They, thus, refer to a conflict of interest between two different communities over the ownership, usage and capitalization of either their traditionally owned land and resources or their privately owned properties. In case of the hill *paras*, as the Tripuras have mentioned, the concept of private property is absent and the kind of conflict exists is created around their traditionally owned resources (based on customary laws). But they have further identified that due to globalization and commercialization importance of money has increased where almost every of their community members have become cautious regarding using their land with the assurance that their resources would surely bring them a return i.e. money. In addition to these, and like the Bangalees and Chakmas, these Tripuras are very conscious regarding following issues related with their families and households – firstly interaction with all their community members as well as members of Bangalee and Chakma communities for a mutual understanding towards their capital, investment, and gain from their daily economic activities; secondly using their knowledge and skills for the well-being of their family, household and community members through making money from the market; and thirdly highly demonstrating their cultural identity over and above the profit-loss calculations formulated by the capitalistic world.

Materialistic understandings: According to these people one of the most significant changes that took place in the hill *paras* and town over the last two decades has been the introduction of a money-centered livelihood strategy. This practice is very common in the capitalistic world and they have experienced the increase of a materialistic worldviews among their community members. As it has been already discussed the Chakmas and Tripuras have not been familiar with the production for market system, rather they were familiar with a production for own consumption. Their main way of cultivation in the hills was *jhum* cultivation. But in course of time and with the intervention of a commercially oriented production, the main aim of which is to target people as customers in the market (this is very common in the plain lands of Bangladesh for centuries), they have also learnt about few things and these are –

- i) Material accumulation of food, equipments used to produce crops, tools, techniques as well as their natural resources;

- ii) Converting people into a labor force whose main duty is to earn money through selling their labor; and
- iii) Capitalizing their interrelations in the market areas.

However, for the Bangalees of Singinala *para* this practice was not new and this process has given them an advantage to keep their positions up among the Chakmas and Tripuras through selling as well as sharing their knowledge and skills in this regard. In response to this these Bangalees have argued that they are habituated with these materialistic aspects of livelihood strategies for generations and initially they are facilitated with the development of these practices in the hills.

Keeping these in mind the Chakmas and Tripuras have different opinion. According to them,

“...every of our resources – land, trees, hills, forests, river and other natural beings – are part of our culture and tradition. Nature has helped us to keep away from the market or to avoid any sorts of exploitations. Still nature is everything for us, she provides us with lots of resources and shows us our path to lead a livable life. We have our customary rules and regulations to protect our land, hill and forest. But this does not mean that we do not know how to cope up with the current changing aspects of our society. We are not against these changing processes, but we are very much aware of our traditional rights and obligations. Taking all these into account we have now learnt to deal with the material aspects of our lives. At the same time we are trying to maintain that everything in our hills and lives should not be carried within the market just because of a materialistic and capitalistic view point. We have also maintained some sorts of prohibitions to leave everything in the hands of market, and accordingly this has given us the ample opportunity to show others that the ethnic peoples of the hills have a distinct way of life guided and maintained by our nature.”

All these together illustrate the fact that each of these communities has their own ways of living. In doing so they have idealized following aspects of their lives:

- i) Materialistic view, at least partially, predominates their community philosophy that organizes their economic as well as livelihood strategies;
- ii) In many cases development of an individualistic understanding ultimately displays their material cultures;
- iii) Development of a community identity reshaped by market philosophy – a major concern is given to the importance of money;
- iv) Calculation of a profit-loss mechanism which was absent in the hills at least a few decades ago;
- v) A kind of bondage has developed centering on the market – whether Bangalee, Chakma or Tripura, he or she has access to an open market area not only as a simple consumer but also as businessmen/ businesswomen or investors; and
- vi) Development of an inter-ethnic connection that has helped these people, both at individual and community levels, to become persons as a composite of relationships and to define their personal and community identity.

Technological change reshaping production strategies in the hills: This refers to the fact that which has been discussed earlier. Today a dramatic change has been observed in the field of the use of technology in the hills. It has been identified that the Chakmas and Tripuras have not only learnt from their neighboring Bangalees (at least for a century) about the use of plain land technologies in their cultivation processes, but also about new ideas. Thus most of the Chakmas and Tripuras have agreed with this fact and due to their direct engagement with market many of them have been using modern equipments even in their jhum cultivation which included digging machine, small tractor, pump machine, and shallow machine among others. This is may be the outcome of a capitalistic mode of production in the hills, but at the same time the Chakmas and Tripuras have learnt to invest their capital in technology not only to increase their productivity but also to create profits²⁶⁵. Thus for the Bangalees here it might be a common practice, but for the Chakmas and Tripuras it has become a combination of modern technology with their traditional practices in almost every aspects of their lives. It has been observed that the Bangalees have taken this technological takeoff in their hill *paras* as a blessing for the overall economic boost up as well as development. But these processes have increased competitions in this area which even involve their political power and privilege. In this case people of these three communities are very much aware of their belongingness to the hills, capability to adjust to renewed strategies that have forced them to convert their production and effort into money, and shifting their crop patterns into cash crops. However, at the end of the day, they think of their survival strategies.

Money, market and culture in a world addressed by tradition and modern: Every people, living in these *paras*, do not compromise with their culture and tradition. If this is the case then where is the place of money in their society? In response to this the Bangalees have argued that they have maintained their Bangalee culture and tradition in the *para* and in connection with the other people living there. But they know the importance of money economy which has a strong connection with modernity. It has been observed that with the advent of modernization and globalization not only the Bangalees but also the Chakmas and Tripuras have been bound to accept the options and facilities offered by this money economy where everything in their *paras* contains an economic value. They further mentioned that the concept of money economy and market are not new, but for the Chakmas and Tripuras and other hill people this system has brought several changes to their basic economic practices. There has been the development of a practice of interpersonal exchange, transforming everything related to crop or other materials into commodity, creating their values in the market and situating this market into a central position for peoples' gathering, sharing and exchanging of views, ideas and products respectively. Thus they are going through following two types of experiences in their hill *paras* –

- i) These Bangalees are well aware of this type of market and economic systems. They know how to deal with things and people in a multi-faced social system where commoditization, commercialization and evaluation of product and people go simultaneously; and
- ii) These Chakmas and Tripuras are relatively new to the market economy system (at least for the last two decades or few more than that) where they

²⁶⁵ In this regard it is mentionable that as productive technology develops, it increases productive capacity as so reduces the amount of labor it takes to produce a given commodity (Durrenberger 2005:129). Thus it has become common in the hills where all these communities have taken their chances to convert their efforts into productivity and commodity in the market.

have been forced, in their voices, to cope up with new ideas and values usually seen in a modern world economic system. These ideas and values include turning their sustainable economy into a cash economy, valuing everything on the basis of commoditization, and marketing of their cultures and traditions through the engagement of corporate and media activities among others.

These positions here raised the issue of the nature of a connection between traditionalism and modernity and also between money and culture. In other words these refer to the fact that in a world of globalization or global economy the situation in these *paras* is also changing where, according to these people, modern education, introduction of new technologies, expansion of telecommunication and information technology, etc. are playing significant roles to bring new ideas, beliefs and knowledge about different aspects of their market based economic practices. Thus they are shifting from an inter-familial or inter-household based exchange system to a surplus economic system targeting the market and bringing everyone there. Therefore, at one hand there is the free flow movement of modern commodities ranging from technological equipments to dresses and ornaments and on the other hand there are a number of ethnic people belonging to the Chakmas and Tripuras who are trying to make a combination of their tradition with the modern items (but not violating their community rules, regulations and customs as a whole). With this backdrop these three communities have identified following key issues or spheres of exchange to justify their current world combined with tradition and modern and at the same time rendering the critical relationship existing among money, market and cultures in the hills.

- i) These Chakma and Tripura families have been used to a kind of exchange pattern, usually of a small amount but diversified types of food products and household materials, among themselves in a place of their *paras*. This has been their traditional practice of economic exchange which also justified their both inter and intra-ethnic relationships. This type of economic practice is highly based on their culture and tradition.
- ii) After settling down in Singinala para these Bangalees faced lots of troubles in having their desired commodities or the products they are usually habituated with while living in their places of birth. For this reason whenever they moved out from Khagrachari they always brought the goods and products (such as cloths, dry food, cosmetics, ornaments, and many other things for personal, family and household usages) from Chittagong, Feni, Nokhali and Dhaka. This does not mean that the Bangalees residing in this para are the first to bring global items in Khagrachari. Many of the Chakmas and Tripuras, who frequently moved to different places of Bangladesh, have also brought those items. However, with the frequent movement of these items things have started to change in the hills.
- iii) In course of time there has been a gradual change in this area. Some historical facts are also responsible for this change. Many elder members of these communities have argued that with the removal of restrictions imposed upon the outsiders (usually Bangalees from various districts other than the CHTs) to enter into the CHTs, a free flow movement of hundreds and thousands of people, goods and services from other areas of Bangladesh took place here. These *paras* have also gone through the similar situations. Thus long-distance trade, importance, commoditization of locally produced goods, introduction of labor as capital, instrument in the land for a

commercial basis – all these also entered into these areas. According to their understandings these practices have maximized the chances for the outside traders to establish and capture the market here. And few of them have also been able to take this as an opportunity to invest in their land in order to cope up with this changing situation. With these processes the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have gone through a new type of relationship with each other both at the individual and community levels.

- iv) Slightly from a different perspective they render modern education yet another factor to bring about these changes and relying on money centered livelihood strategies. Few of the Bangalees have argued that if they have money they not only can afford to lead a livable life but also can develop good relationship with other community members. On the other hand the Chakmas and Tripuras have argued that bearing good relationship through money is another sphere designed by current economic activities and exchange process, but is subordinated to their inherited position, secular and community leadership and political power respectively. Thus they believe that whatever the strength of money and market, their culture and tradition would always prevail over these. Because their communities make rules based on customs and traditions and for them the meaning of money and market is different both at the individual and community levels.

Community and state in dealing with the systems of money, market and cultures in the hills: It has been argued by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras that money has become a significant medium through which they are sharing their economic exchanges. When it comes to the communities it becomes important to look at their cultures and traditions as well. Thus it becomes clear that each of these communities gives preference to their community identity, culture and tradition even during their business activities or any sort of transactions or exchanges that take place among them. This is very essential for them to maintain this ethnicity and identity. But when it comes to the role of the state there have been multiple views seen among them. The Chakmas and Tripuras have different views regarding what the state is doing in the hills. It has been observed that they do not like the imposition of rules by the state authorities over their customarily owned land and resources, their business and livelihood strategies. In many occasions they have complained that the modern bureaucracy, law and agency introduced in their area have, to some extent undermined their close attachment with their social world. It seems quite natural for them to rely on their traditional economic activities, but due to internal and external pressures they were also forced to enter into the capitalistic market economy. But the Bangalees, on the other hand, think that state has a big role to play in the hill areas. Because different types of initiatives taken by the state have helped them to enhance their chances of doing business as well as taking part into various economic activities. Hence it refers to the fact that there remains a conflict of interest in between the Bangalees and the Chakmas and Tripuras. However, two opposite perspectives have been the outcome of current economic practices in the hills (which ultimately shows that there is a strong conflict of interest prevailing among these communities) and these are –

- i) The Bangalees want the state and government to look after almost every aspect of their lives so that the CHTs cannot be left alone as an isolated whole from other areas of the country. In other words they have persuaded to the fact that the hill *paras* (or the entire CHTs) are not merely a property of some ethnic communities who have migrated from Assam and Tripura

- states of India and, thus, their claims to isolate the CHTs become null and void with this perspective of the Bangalees; and
- ii) The Chakmas and Tripuras, on the other hand, consider their *paras* (and also the entire CHTs) as their ancestral and territory and designates all other peoples, except themselves or their alike ethnic communities, as outsiders. Thus according to their considerations no one is allowed to enter the CHTs (this is also mentioned in the CHT Regulation of 1900). With this opposite perspective they are illustrating the fact that they have been forced to compromise with a number of situations which include outsider's interventions, settlement of Bangalees with whom they have a conflict of interest, development of market, too much emphasis on money oriented transactions and trade business, technological development and commercialization of their cultural practices and others.

Nature of exchanges in ceremonies for formalize inter-ethnic relationships: These communities are very fond of ceremonies and there are many ways through which they celebrate different occasions in the hills such as birth, marriage and death rituals, observation of new year celebrations, and also different religious festivals (such as *Puja*, Christmas and *Eid* festivals). These are their life-cycle rituals and broader stages where different people, community members, kin or friends, consider the economic values of commodities and gifts exchanged in the above mentioned ceremonies. These refer to two things – one is a circulation of money and the other is a mode of formalizing their inter-ethnic relationships. Thus, as argued by Yunxiang Yan, looking at the context of relations two types of exchange can be seen – one is a horizontal exchange which occurs among social equals, and the other is a vertical exchange which cuts across the boundaries of social status; but the two types of activities may co-exist on some occasions (Yan 2005:247). These are community festivals associated with their religions as well and carry much importance in their day to day activities where men, women and children participate. By the term exchange they have not only referred to the gift items but also to other items that involve money or buying and selling options. As it has been observed in their local markets people are, in many occasions, selling foodstuffs produced in their home garden or land and at the same time they are buying other items that are not usually available in the hill *paras*. Usually this sort of exchange takes place in between the Bangalees and the Chakmas and Tripuras and has greater involvement of money. However, in case of exchanging gift items it takes place among all these people depending on their inter-personal and inter-familial relationships or sometimes the relationship of neighborhood only²⁶⁶.

A few decades ago, according to them, these festivals were purely based on their religious significances and without much involvement of money. But, today, these festivals have become very colorful in the sense that a number of national corporate sectors are investing a lot of money and different electronic media are coming to telecast these festivals. These are some factors that have taken place in their areas for the last few years. But in general the Chakmas and Tripuras (in particular) and the Bangalees (to some extent) usually practice some exchanges during their festivals and

²⁶⁶ In this regard Mauss' argument has been found significant where he called 'obligatory gift presentations' which involve whole groups or 'total presentations' which involve families with one another, because these carry with them many aspects and functions: religious, economic and political. They are embedded in a system of overall circulation: the circulation of goods follows that of men, women, and children, of festival ritual, ceremonies, and dances jokes, and injuries (Mauss 1954[1925]:44-45).

ceremonies. Here it has been observed that these people have different reasons behind these practices and these are elaborated below.

- i) All of them consider this exchange during festivals and ceremonies having socio-cultural importance. This means that through this practice it becomes possible for them to extend their relationships with each other both within their families, kins as well as with their neighbors belonging to different ethnic communities. This, in other words, displays their social-cultural-political interactions among these people who are involved in the exchange events. They do not think for a balanced exchange of gifts to be taken place in between the exchanging parties, rather they mainly focus on the ways they become able to control and maintain good relations with each other.
- ii) They have argued that whatever the nature of exchanges take place among them – whether it is trade or gift exchange – there is the development of a relationship operating among them. This involves people who are engaged in different types of economic activities in their *paras* such as grocery business, restaurant owner, cloth shop owner, business men and women and also the farmers who are producing for market. Thus, according to their understandings, these exchanges give them ample opportunity to cultivate on their relationships despite the existence of a conflict of interest over the question of ethnic identity and nationality of the Chakmas and Tripuras.
- iii) According to their belief this exchange economy or circulation of commodities, gifts, goods, and services link them with lots of people both within and across their regions. This refers to the fact that the modern day's economic exchange is characteristic of crossing the boundaries existing between the Bangalees and the Chakmas and Tripuras. This, in other words, shows that despite critical boundaries operating among these communities, exchanges play vital roles in their social, economic and political sectors as well.
- iv) They have placed special importance to gender dimension during exchange relations. And particularly gift giving by women is recognized by them as embedded in their network of social relations as well as expectations.
- v) Through any sort of exchange they have further illustrated that a bond is created which refers to the mutually-dependent ties among them. Thus exchanges during ceremonies and festivals are crucial for them as these determine their relationships not only to things exchanged but also to each other.

Taking all these factors into account it has been identified that the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are experiencing three types of exchange relations in their economic activities – *first*, exchanges taking the label as a social one in which bond of trust and inter-familial relationships are of crucial importance; *second*, exchanges taking place in between different personnel labeling them as members of a global community of consumers or representing their communities; and *third*, exchanges (or more importantly commodity exchanges) taking place in between individuals belonging to their respective communities but with special focus on market places or market economy becoming the determining factor for their livelihood strategies.

From household to market (engagement of power, production and labor): Today there is a strong connection seen in between the households and market spheres of the hill *paras*. This involves several things such as power relations in the household, family labor, product of

labor and its controlling authority, access to the means of production, sexual division of labor within the households, and control over the decision making regarding economic and livelihood strategies of the family and household members. These belong to the key aspects of their livelihood strategies and help in determining their position in the market spheres of the hills. In other words they have argued that through changes brought about by the market economy, they have been able to find out as well as cope up with the features of current market scenario. For example, for a household head of a Chakma family in Paltanjay *para* (the Chakmas and Tripuras are patrilineal) the father is the household head and the prime decision comes from him over almost every issues of that household which include production, consumption, expenses, education, marriage of children, etc. These are some common features and seen in almost every families of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras here. However, coming to that Chakma household they try to pull out their income from household production (as they have agricultural activities both in the hills and plain lands beneath those hills), and wages from labor and crafts (as they have small scale craft business through producing their traditional cloths and ornaments to put on the market). Thus their activities follow a chain i.e. from family through several productive and economic strategies to the market. It, ultimately, refers to a tendency of production for market or bringing every of their products into the market to transform these into commodity with definite economic value.

Therefore, this tendency shows a changing aspect of production, distribution and consumption strategies as well as relations within the households of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in the hills in these days. Following are some of these aspects addressed by them –

Firstly, the overall economic system of the hill *paras* (i.e. production, distribution, consumption and commoditization or commercialization processes), today, depends on the socio-economic status of individuals, families and households in relation to market economy.

Secondly, almost everything belonging to these communities are turning into commodities which include human being having labor value, land and related other properties going to market (this is significant because, in these days, a lot of Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to get as much economic value as possible from their land and hills), and maximization of opportunities created by higher education received by the family members.

Thirdly, due to harsh environmental condition of the hills women of these families are also engaged if different income generating activities and have direct connection with the market. As it has been discussed earlier, the Chakma and Tripura women are almost equally the bread earner of their families and households. On the other hand the Bangalee women have less involvement than the others despite the fact that those who are relatively with low economic position in the society are engaged in different economic activities. They think that modernization and globalization have brought some changes in the hills, opened new avenues for the women in the hills, and associating their families and households with capitalistic economic system.

Taking these factors into account it has been observed that in these hill *paras* the interaction of people and households to local and town markets has increased. And this is predominated by the spheres of exchanges that these people and households are

engaged with and altogether these articulate them into their markets and larger world of globalization under four stages – *first*, these people and their households have developed social links with each other and the flow of goods, commodities and services go along these lines as well; *second*, the development of a capitalistic market system (around which these people and households have been bound to organize their economic activities) in the hill town has not only raised the importance of money but also penetrated into the inner workings of the households; *third*, the market and capitalistic economic systems have generated the social, economic and political relationships among these households and created spaces for different people and households of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras to organize their livelihood strategies; and *fourth*, during economic activities, exchanges in the market, and buying and selling in this impersonal market these people always remember to maintain and respect the cultures and traditions of their neighbors, friends and relatives as well. Following three case studies from each of these communities show the nature and tendencies of the interactions as well as engagements of their households with the market taking into account the issues of the importance of money, market, cultures and traditions.

Case Study-18: Money is everything in the capitalistic world

Moslem Uddin (58) lives in Singinala *para* with his family of five members. He has a grocery shop in the town market of Khagrachari *Sadar* and is directly involved in the market economic system. Moslem finds it difficult to make the living of the Bangalees in the CHTs very tough. The main reason for this has been identified by him as the obstacles created by the Chakmas and Tripuras. He argued that the Chakmas and Tripuras are very strict in displaying their customary laws (their traditional rules and regulations) not only in the *paras* but also in the market. They consider the entire CHTs as belonging to their ancestral property and territory and at this stage the Bangalees like Moslem find it difficult to make a livable life here. He thinks that money is everything for their lives and today the market economy is developed around the best usages, investments and capitalizations of money. Moslem, thus, figured out that the economic system of the hill *paras* has turned into a capitalistic one where they have to cultivate in every of their relationships with different people and ethnic communities.

Moslem's elder son is married and he helps his father in his business. Both of them have argued that it takes a lot of strategies and interactions with the Chakmas and Tripuras to establish a position in these hill *paras* and town market. There are certain changes that have taken place both within and outside their households and they have seen that not only individuals but also households have entered into the market. To survive well and live peacefully Moslem, along with his family members, has searched for new scopes to remain attached to the market. Ultimately they have been able to start their grocery business in the town market and this has given them the best way to lead their lives. Moslem's other two sons study at university and college and he wants them to seek for an official job (government or private) with the expectation that this will not only help them develop a secured life but also increase their prestige and status in the hill *paras*. Due to these factors his experiences conclude that whether business or job in offices, today, it is all about money which not only make life secured but also help to keep the controlling authority in the society.

Case Study-19: Things count for the Chakmas

Anamika Chakma (44) lives in Paltanjay *para* with her family of four members. She is basically the owner of a boutique house in the town. She is running this business for more than ten years and has observed so many changes in the hill *paras* and town

respectively. In her own words,

“...a few decades ago we were not interested to go for market business. I have seen my parents and grandparents to produce any kind of products (whether it is crop or cloth) usually for our own consumption. A few of these products have been sold among our neighbors within the *para* or with the people of neighboring *paras*. In those days, as far as I can remember, money was not everything in our everyday lives. Today, basically due to modernization and globalization, we are experiencing that market has become an institution where two characters are significant – one is consumer and the other is traders. Thus we have also changed our strategies and have become familiar with the terms such as consumerism, commercialization, market and market oriented economy, and profit and loss among others.”

Anamika, thus, belongs to one of those women in these hill *paras* who have learnt to invest in her business, make profit from it and contribute to the overall economy here. Her husband is also a trader and he produces turmeric, bamboo, and banana for export to other districts of Bangladesh as well. Therefore, both Anamika and her family have become elegant contributors to the economy of their *paras*. And they are now taking these as opportunities to make profit and at the same time to compete with others. However, Anamika has not forgotten her community cultures and traditions and in any case she gives top priority to her ancestor’s beliefs and practices.

Case Study-20: Maximizing opportunities to cope up with current traditions

Prakash Tripura (65) is a farmer and he lives in Beltali *para* with his family of seven members. He has been cultivating in the hills (*jhum* cultivation) and in the plain lands of the hills for many years. The major crops produced by him are turmeric, paddy, bamboo, banana and vegetables among others. He produces these crops on a large scale and he categorizes his production into two groups: one is a production for own consumption at the *para* level, and the other is a cash crop production. He argued that a portion of his hills are heavily used for the cultivation of turmeric and he does this to export to the industries. Prakash has justified his current position as a large scale farmer who has control over the local market economy. But beneath this practice there remains another scenario where he argued that whatever happens in these hills they would not allow the outsiders and the state to take control over their livelihood strategies, their cultures, traditions and also their ancestor’s heritages. But Prakash further mentioned that his community people left alone their fortunes to remain outside of the current market oriented economic strategies. Rather they are maximizing their opportunities ahead and coping up with this to the survival of their communities as well.

6.4 Brief Sketch of the Relations among these Ethnic Communities in the Economic and Market Spheres

Capitalism and the rule of profit are powerful enough to discipline people and that economic differences breed value differences, and vice versa (Blim 2005:315). With this comment it has been observed that the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras of Singinala, Paltanjay and Beltali *paras* have been experiencing a number of changes. These changes have taken place in different spheres and layers of their lives and these are – individuals, families, households, communities and also *paras* and regions. All these together have

reinforced these people to think globally and adjust to the increasing market economic system. This means that the market economic practices have provided them with a number of opportunities and created spaces for different dimensions of interrelations at individual, household and community levels. These interactions, in other words, have formalized two different types of relationships both at the personal and community levels and these are – i) a dyadic or conflict of interest, and ii) a mutually understandable one.

One thing has been made clear from the current status of the economic practices in the hills that a single person is being labeled with different characters and economic values such as consumer, investor, trader, businessmen or businesswomen, or simply passersby. Thus these characters have developed a multi-layer economic sphere not only considering the market but also their overall livelihood strategies in the hills. Along with these they consider their modes of livelihood strategies together with environmental conditions of the hill *paras* having a dominant value in their lives and ultimately affect two aspects of their total livelihood strategies: socio-cultural organization and political system. Diversifications of activities have been increased in these *paras* and, today, a lot of Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are engaging themselves with alternative activities as well. However, a brief sketch of the nature of relations operating among these people in the face of multidimensional economic activities (as discussed so far) and market spheres is given below.

Firstly, they have been going through a dyadic or conflicting relation where this places them in front of each other. This is seen in the spheres of their economic activities as well as in the competition for their scarce resources in the hill *paras*. In other words this resembles that the Chakmas and Tripuras are in better positions in this area than the Bangalees at least in terms of access to resources, power and dominance.

Secondly, the Chakmas and Tripuras still believe in their traditional subsistence economy where they used to produce to satisfy their needs. But with a development of commercial economy, modern education, job diversification, and introduction of industrial products among others has led to the establishment of a monetary income and exchange spheres into the traditional hill economic system. But there are two main reasons for which these hill *paras* have seen the easy passages to the development of not only commercialization but also a capitalistic relationship among these communities. At one hand, the increasing settlement of the Bangalee people, not only in Singinala *para* but also in other *paras* of Khagrachari, has led to the increasing demand found and supply in the area, and this ultimately emancipated the importance of market and market economy. On the other hand, with the development of Chittagong port and free flow movement and trade of goods and services from all over the country have gradually penetrated the exchange economy in place of a subsistence economy. Thus, as these ethnic communities argued, the nature of economic system in their *paras* and town is heading towards a town-village relationship characteristic of capitalistic exchange.

Thirdly, they place their personal relation with different institutions such as business, economic or job offices more than merely the economic relationships. Thus the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras value their relationship with each other mutually settled as well as socially and culturally attached. In this case they use their cultural symbols as markers of their different political and economic interests. This is addressed by them as a cultural strategy which usually did two things for them – showing a dialectical or dyadic relation and interactive strategies – both within and between these

communities. All these refer to a direct relationship between ethnicity and economic strategies.

Fourthly, they further give value to their community ties in the economic spheres rather than only giving importance and priority to individual abilities. This, in other words, refers to the fact that at the community level at one hand the Bangalees have learnt to live an organized life through cumulating and acknowledging the efforts of each member of their households, and on the other hand the Chakmas and Tripuras give priorities to their community prides and ancestor's beliefs and practices. Taken together it has been observed that these ethnic communities have been able to combine the efforts of all their members and these are visible at the levels of individual charisma, group activities, and family and household efforts.

Fifthly, along with different office based job opportunities, in recent times, the communities have experienced a commercialization (commercialism) and corporatization (corporatism) processes developing in these hill *paras*²⁶⁷. This has given rise to a labor industry in these *paras* and created new opportunities for many people who are relatively poor or lack enough expertise to find a suitable job in any office. At the same time the Chakmas and Tripuras have reshaped their cultivation processes where a shift to production for market and valuing everything as commodities has become very common in these days. Accordingly the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have identified following areas where there is the need to work together in the hills and these are – law and order in favor of the ethnic communities, land, agriculture and forest management taking traditional practices into account, animal husbandry, trade and commerce, small and cottage industries, road and communication, land revenue and taxes, *jhum* cultivation, different resources management, and also the management of markets and socio-economic welfare, etc.

Sixthly, however, to some extent, these processes have given birth to a conflict of traditions in the hills. Not all the members of Chakma and Tripura communities of these *paras* are ready to accept these processes. Due to this reason they often criticize and blame the economic policies of the state taken for initializing development in the hills. Along with this they have further identified that they are losing their customary rights to land and other resources due to state's politics and globalizations processes. And there have been many occasions where they were not consulted on the matters which have a direct impact on their socio-economic conditions and hill environment as well. These policies include access to education, information mechanisms, institutional development and proper access to these institutions, business sector development, etc. In due course it has been argued by the Bangalees that there is the need for a comprehensive strategy to overcome the barriers in the hills for a sustainable development for all.

Finally, all these economic spheres and activities show the nature of ethnicity and identity in the hills. In other words through these diversified activities these communities are enforcing inter-personal as well as inter-ethnic relationships both in their *paras* and market areas. At the same time in any kind of interactions they try to uphold their

²⁶⁷ In this regard it has been found relevant where Corry says, "...over the last generation, resource exploitation and extraction has become an even bigger threat than colonization. This usually comprises oil/ petroleum, minerals, or timber, as well as damming rivers for hydropower. As the world's population consumes more goods and energy, driven by its growing population and huge corporations promoting an unceasing demand for new things, the price of such commodities has increased several fold, making it more and more profitable to exploit remote areas, exactly the places where tribal peoples have survived" (Corry 2011:207).

community identity through proper boundary maintenance as well. Above all these account for such an inter-ethnic relationship in these hill *paras* which, in other words, accounts not only for unequal access to resources but also to opportunities for economic survivals.

“Ethnicity is a self-conscious and vocalized identity that substantializes and naturalizes one or more attributes – the usual ones being skin color, language, religion, and territory – and attaches them to collectivities as their innate possession and myth-historical legacy (Tambiah 1996:168). The crucial components are the ideas of inheritance, ancestry and descent, a territory of place of origin, and at least some shared sense of kinship (Lewellen 2003:167)”

CHAPTER-7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Conclusion

7.1 Conclusion

This anthropological study titled “The Dynamics of Interrelations among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura Ethnic Communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts: Understanding the Nature of Ethnicity and Identity’ has been conducted on the diversified interrelations among the Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura ethnic communities living in Singinala, Paltanjay and Beltali paras of Khagrachari district (these *paras* belong to the Perachhara Union of Khagrachari *Sadar Upazila*) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. The major concern of this study has been to address the nature of ethnicity and identity of these people and this has been displayed through their three aspects: i) religious, ritual and cultural festivals, ii) political relations, and iii) economy and market sphere. The issues of ethnicity and identity for these people, i.e. focusing their categories, relationship, and identity, have not been significantly studied earlier and with this backdrop an attempt has been made to conduct this in-depth study. These are further emancipated through an understanding of the internal and external factors which crystallize their different dimensions of interrelations.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) in South-eastern Bangladesh, bordering India and Myanmar, and for administrative purposes the area has been divided into three districts – Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. The CHTs spread itself from the borders of Burma (present Myanmar) and the far off Lushai Hills (Mizo Hills) to the boundaries of the Tripura state in India and those of Chittagong district. Before 1950s this region was inhabited mostly by the ethnic communities who differ significantly from the Bangalees. They are of Sino-Tibetan descent, have a distinctive appearance with Mongolian features, and are predominantly Buddhists with small numbers of Hindus. Currently a total of at least 12 ethnic communities and also the Bangalees are living in the CHTs. Thus the area consists of colorful inhabitants in Bangladesh where all these communities differ in terms of language, social organization, culture, religious rites, and food and agricultural techniques among others. The study *paras* belong to present Khagrachari District which is bounded by the Indian State of Tripura on the north, Rangamati and Chittagong districts on the south, Rangamati district on the east, and Chittagong district and the Indian State of Tripura on the west.

The history of the settlement of the Bangalees in the study village or Singinala *para* is not that old and they are classified into two categories depending on their settlement pattern – naturally migrated (during British period), and settler Bangalees (after the independence of Bangladesh and brought by the Government through the armed forces agencies). Altogether they have come mostly from the districts of Feni, Noakhali, Comilla, and Chittagong of Bangladesh. Historically, two factors have been identified crucial for their settlement in this *para* (and also in the CHTs) – exchange of commercial materials, and development of Chittagong port and expansion of the city to facilitate the exchange of those commercial materials. The Chakmas of the Beltali and Paltanjay *paras* or villages consider themselves as the major ethnic community in terms of number and at the same time identify them to be the indigenous resident of the area. They are residing here for centuries and generations. According to their oral history their ancestors had come from the Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal and Assam regions of Eastern India i.e. from Indo-Aryan group. And the Tripuras consider them to be one of the major and ancient ethnic communities living in the Indian subcontinent and CHTs for centuries. They recall their place of origin to the Tripura State of India where they are the dominant group.

An integrated methodological approach (i.e. combination of qualitative and quantitative methods) has been used in this study. But considering the nature of this study (understanding the nature of ethnicity and identity) the major focus has been given to the use of qualitative methods both for data collection and in-depth analysis, while quantitative methods have been used wherever needed. However, some of the major aspects and strengths of the methodology for this study has been observation and participation with the people in their daily settings, entering the study field with the help of a key informant and taking more time to get involved with these people, contextualization of the locality, triangulation process to test the validity and reliability of data, conversation with a purpose and in-depth discussion, simple survey and open ended as well as close ended questionnaires, checklist and guidelines, analysis of life history and case study, emic and etic perspectives, analysis of structure and function, and an intensive review of existing literatures among others. Altogether the methodology of this study has been an open one which enabled the field to expose its socially constructed phenomena and reconstruct these with a convenient degree of objectivity, impartiality and open-mindedness. However, the analysis of the data and information followed three steps – *analysis* (mostly qualitative), interpreting relationships (considering various aspects of relationships of these ethnic communities), and presentation (study results, detail of methodology, background information and conclusions among others).

For the theoretical and conceptual understandings an examination of several issues has been made. This includes culture, culture area, cultural climax and intensity, status, role and relationship, economy and market, power relations, ethnicity and identity, and globalization for culture and identity. Culture has been defined and described in a multidimensional way. A common view of culture is that of something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication where languages categorize the natural and cultural world in useful ways (Duranti 1997). Following this culture has also been clarified as knowledge through sharing thought, understanding, inferences and predictions. This refers to the cognitive view of culture. Later anthropologists have tried to address culture as communication or as a system of signs and these belong to the semiotic theory of culture. These understandings of culture indicate that culture is a complex phenomenon, but have a close connection with language that people use within any social system for interpretation, interaction and meaningful behavior. From a diffusional perspective the concept culture area refers to a geographical area occupied by people, whose culture exhibits a significant degree of similarities with culture of each other as well as significant degree of dissimilarity with culture of others. In order to give greater historical depth to the concept of culture area Kroeber (1939) added the concepts of ‘cultural intensity’ and ‘cultural climax’ with the feeling that culture could not be wholly understood by observable elements and Kroeber called these the ‘sensitive indicators’ of culture which include art, music, religion, ethos, philosophy and similar aspects of intellectual life. And the term ‘cultural climax’ has been seen as the dynamic equivalent of the term ‘culture center’ which indicated the part of the area where the ethnic communities have a larger contact of culture.

The functionalists have identified that status refers to position in a pattern of social relationship and role consists of behavior associated with status. Following these functionalist orientation interactionists defined the reality of social relationships operating within and among different groups of people. Thus social relationships are generated through exchange, rather than being ‘given’ as part of an existing social structure and people have always been more interested in protecting their social standing

than in the possession of material goods. Developing the idea of distinguishing between modes and spheres of exchange Polanyi (1945) further related the idea of market economy for social interaction. Market economy (or the relationships depended on this) operates in such a place where there can be a form of money. According to Polanyi where the market predominates, it inverts the relationship between exchange and social relationships associated with other modes. Another way to interpret status, role and relationship is the language of social relations in interaction through an understanding of the perspectives of the structuralists and linguists. However, following this a Marxist anthropological perspective has been taken into consideration which illustrates that interaction always takes place within an existing system generated by cumulative social processes.

Michel Foucault's has elaborated the concept of power relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions from a critical and historical viewpoint. Initially Foucault's analysis of power has given a picture about the way various institutions exert their power on groups and individuals, and how the latter affirm their own identity and resistance to the effects of power. Here his basic idea has been developed around the notions of powerful and powerless to examine how it operates in day to day interactions between people and institutions. For Foucault power is not something that can be owned, but rather something that acts and manifests itself in a certain way; it is more a strategy than a possession: "power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain...Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization...Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (Foucault 1980:98). Foucault further argued that "where there is power there is resistance" – which means that power relations between individuals cannot be reduced to master-slave or oppressor-victim relations, but they are productive relations, because they imply resistance; and the state is not mainly something that owns power, but rather something which builds a system of relations between individuals so that the political system works (Foucault 1978). Regarding political power Foucault focused on power relations related to government, asking who can and should govern, who is to be governed, and how should we conceive the methods of government, i.e. the methods of shaping others' behavior. Analyzing "governmentality", Foucault stressed that it would be an error to understand institutions such as the state as being essentially oppressive and as being permanent and solid – which they are not, but just the opposite is true: they are fragile and have a great potential of change (Foucault 1991:85-103). These understandings of power relations have broadened the scope of this study to look into the nature and exercise of power in the hill *paras* where every human interaction, peoples' power is subject to negotiation with their hierarchical places.

The theories and concepts on ethnicity and identity have been analyzed from various directions because the main focus of this study has been to develop an in-depth understanding of the nature of ethnicity and identity of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. Usage of the terms ethnicity and identity as well as their theoretical connotations have helped in illustrating several other concepts such as ethnic identity, ethnic origin, ethnocentrism, and ethnicism. However, Primordialist approaches to ethnicity (first used by Edward Shils (1957) distinguished certain kinds of social bonds such as personal, primordial, shared and civil ties. While the instrumentalist, transactionalist, social psychological and ethno-symbolic approaches to ethnicity (developed by Barth, Horowitz, and Armstrong and Smith) treat ethnic groups as units of ascription focusing social boundaries for the persistence of the group, ethnic affiliation based on kinship myths and on a sense of group honor in relation to other

groups, and myths and symbols play vital role in unifying populations and ensuring their continuity over many generations. Again Weber (1996) addressed ethnicity in the way that ethnic groups refer to those having a subjective belief in their common descent and his ideas help in understanding ethnic groups who initially take part into ethnic relations and also help realizing that in addressing ethnicity and identity the prevailing issues of status and honor will have to be incorporated. On the other hand Eriksen (1993) argued that ethnic identity is marked by the recognition from others of a group's distinctiveness and he further identified that ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity; and in this way it has a political, organizational as well as a symbolic aspect. Barth (1969) has argued that ethnic groups are categories of ascription, identification by the actors themselves, characteristic of organizing interaction between people, and have specific boundary maintenance strategies. With this he focused on the interconnectedness of ethnic identities, and described that categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation. In dealing with ethnicity, and particularly isolating the phenomena and processes of ethnicity, Cohen (1996) argued that contemporary ethnicity is the result of intensive interaction between ethnic groupings and not the result of complete separatism. He further identified ethnicity as essentially a political phenomenon and with this emphasis has been given to political cleavages along with peoples' mutual interest. In another attempt Brass (1996) has identified that appropriate definition for ethnic group is to do with objective cultural markers along with recognizing their susceptibility to change and variation. While using De Vos' (1975) definition of ethnicity (in a sense of ethnic identity) indicates that it consists of the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people to differentiate themselves from other groups. Thus Brass takes an instrumental political approach in dealing with ethnic groups, ethnic categories, and ethnicity. Banton (1996) used the actor's model to describe ethnic relations or ethnicity with the conception of human individual, socializing and optimizing, and belonging to various social groups. His approach to ethnicity (ethnic relations) is a rational choice one rejecting normative and structuralist explanations, and built models of group solidarity on the basis of individual pursuit of public goods. In this process ethnicity has been clarified taking multidimensional aspects of individuals and groups particularly focusing social relations or relationships operating among different ethnic groups illustrating their identity as well. Stuart Hall's (1992) thesis tells us to look into the concept of ethnicity from the perspective of politics of representation which engages various factors such as history, culture, tradition and similar other issues and these are based on differences. Taking religion Enloe (1980) maintained that ethnicity is both objective and subjective and the most common way of rendering the extent to which religion sustains ethnic boundaries operative in the study of ethnicity has been to focus on rates of intermarriage which is the 'bottom line' of ethnicity. Taking postmodern revival of ethnicity Melucci (1989) maintained that industrial capitalism and modernization of complex societies have produced dominant (class) and subordinated cultures within productive relations and thus influencing directly by throwing them into the great machine of mass culture. Ethnicity is seen to be revived as a source of identity. Following these aspects of ethnicity, the ethno-national concept has been brought with a plural meaning: as ethnic identity, as a weapon of revenge, as instrument to apply pressure in the political market, and as a response to needs for personal and collective identity.

Anthropologists became more interested to study identity with the emergence of modern concerns of ethnicity. The Eriksonian approach to identity remained in force, with the result that identity has continued until recently to be used in a largely socio-historical way

to refer to qualities of sameness in relation to a person's connection to others and to a particular group of people. This has led to rather restrictive interpretations of the concept following two more or less opposite tendencies: the first favors a primordialist approach which takes the sense of self and belonging to a collective group as a fixed thing, defined by objective criteria such as common ancestry and common biological characteristics; and the second, rooted in social constructionist theory, takes the view that identity is formed by a predominantly political choice of certain characteristics. Another approach to identity, and consequently to ethnicity, which may be described as subjective, interprets the concepts as deriving from a sense of self formed out of an awareness of distinctiveness, of difference to others. By introducing the concept of ethnic boundaries as an analytical tool for looking at ethnicity, Barth (1969) helped to de-essentialize ethnicity and ethnic identity and to challenge their a priori existence or continuity. Ethnic groups were thus seen to be active creators of their groupness, a process which he described as involving three stages: self-ascription, mutual recognition and mutual ascription. In this way, ethnic identity could be understood as formed on the basis of what is chosen and agreed, rather than as a collection of fixed types. Some scholars discussed the concept of cultural schemas to discuss the 'role of symbols to identity', as cultural schemas (or schemata) are mental representations of prototypical events, behaviors and things; these schemas define for the person the nature of any situation in which he or she is involved. Geertz (1973) worked on the idea of culture as a particular symbolic system promoted by a social group and views this as a politics of difference, whereby group identities assert themselves in opposition to perceived pressures of homogenization and, in doing so, assume roles in the political arena. Likewise, identity came to be understood as a potential ideological construct for political mobilization, alongside that of ethnicity and nationalism. Cohen (1994) argued that ethnicity is continually reconstructed on the collective level thanks to the individual members of the group.

The analysis of globalization for culture and identity has been found significant for this study where globalization is an umbrella term for a complex series of economic, social, technological, cultural and political changes seen as increasing interdependence, integration and interaction among people and companies in disparate locations. Heisenberg (2002) maintained that globalization is the process by which the experience of everyday life, marked by the diffusion of commodities and ideas, is becoming standardized around the world. One of the most identifiable impacts of globalization in Bangladesh is seen in its local or indigenous cultural diversity. These are making greater cultural integration among the people of different culture of origin including the Bangalees and other ethnic communities as well. It is a fact that globalization is opening up economic development potentials for many countries, but it is also overtaking the capabilities of entire regions of the world.

With these theoretical and conceptual understandings on various aspects of ethnicity and identity it has been possible to go deeper into various aspects of the livelihood strategies of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. Though the Bangalee residents have been quite comfortable for interaction, but for the Chakma and Tripura people language difference, cultural variation, and differences in the thought process crested few obstacles at the beginning. However, staying in the *paras* for many days and nights has given ample opportunity to observe and listen to their perspectives and stories comprising the issues of inter-ethnic relations and identity formation. These are some experiences that have been the addition to the anthropological training in due course of this study.

For the purpose of this study some literary works have been studied thoroughly which are relevant to the objectives. At the same time it has been maintained that the selected works have addressed the issues of this study where the main thrust has been to uncover the underlying factors responsible for the nature of interrelations among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras. From the literatures it has been evident that the *Pahari* (as depicted by the outsiders) and *Bangalee* issue of the CHT is not new today. Many discussions and dialogues have been made in different platforms. Activists are trying to bring out measures to resolve the problems. But as the literatures suggest it is significant that a complete study on this issue will address all the aspects of their life such as economic, social, political, religious, and cultural and rights based issues to understand the extent of interrelations between these people.

However, in a nutshell and with these theoretical and methodological understandings as well as the findings from the field, following aspects are crucial to elucidate the nature of ethnicity and identity of the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras focusing the dynamics of interrelations operating among them on the ground of cultures, religions, politics, and economic well being or livelihood strategies.

Religion and culture are the two most significant aspects in determining the ethnicity and identity of these communities and they consider religion to be an integral part of their lives and believe that for every option of their livelihood strategies religion offers them a suitable solution. All of them further consider religion as a way to peace, happiness and a place for common interaction and a basis for social relations, interaction and building social solidarity. On the basis of religion the Bangalees are divided into two groups: Hindus and Muslims.

The Muslim Bangalees have identified their religious beliefs, rituals and values and cultures responsible for several things while getting in continuous interactions with the Chakmas and Tripuras and these are – i) developed a sense of cooperation and enhancement of social relations, ii) showed a path for peaceful living, iii) generated their inter-ethnic relations and social solidarity even during their birth, marriage and death rituals through a sentiment of common ethnicity (keeping their boundaries), iv) reinforced ethnic differences as well as cohesions through sharing their sacred myths, sacred languages, religious orientations and articulations for a feeling of belongingness, v) covered their sense of self-consciousness and self-esteem which shows their separate identity and interaction as well.

The Hindu Bangalees indicate that in maintaining social relations and interaction with the people of different ethnic communities they give preference to religious activities and these are related to their emotional attachment and cultural atmosphere. In other words they put religious rituals, beliefs and activities, and also their ways of thinking, customs, knowledge and behavior (i.e. their culture) as the determinant factors in the processes of ethnicity and identity where – i) it helped shaping their nature of identity in the society, ii) indicated their boundary maintenance (though in recent times intermarriages are taking place between the Bangalees and Chakmas, and Bangalees and Tripuras), and iii) helped maintaining good social relations and interactions with others with the believe that the dynamics of interactions among these three communities bear some connection with religion.

The Chakmas and Tripuras consider their religions and cultures as marked indicators for ethnicity and identity. They shape and reshape their self-consciousness as well as interests

in other peoples' cultures and religions and believe that a sense of humanity has sprung up from their core beliefs, cultural practices and community traditions which are significant indicators for maintaining their multidimensional relationships in the hill *paras*. All these together have brought following changes to their communities and these are – i) helped demonstrate that they are forgetting their past incidences of conflict only at the cost of their traditional rights and demands are not harmed, ii) led the path for a cohesive and comprehensive relationship with every ethnic community in the *paras*, iii) despite their clear differences in religion and culture they have been able to develop an environment of inter-ethnic relations of communication and interaction, and iv) these differences have further determined their identity and pattern of boundary maintenance with the Bangalees and other ethnic communities.

There is no doubt about the fact that the nature of ethnicity and identity of these communities is dynamic and expressed through various aspects of their daily activities. They always interact with each other for religious, economic, social, cultural, and political purposes. These people place their religious beliefs and rituals over and above everything to demonstrate their ethnic identity. This refers to their feeling of ethnic affinity based on shared religious beliefs and rituals despite differences and mechanism of boundary maintenance.

All of them consider their cultures for individual and group relations, origin and identity determination, and establishment of a hill based social bondage. Eventually they have identified this cultural bondage within them as 'hill culture' for a peaceful living as well as believing in a shared understanding. Thus respecting each others' religious and cultural traditions (i.e. their religious rituals, festivals and ceremonies) is seen as a determining factor to establish an affordable social relation. They also evaluated modernization, globalization, access to modern education, and technological advancement as responsible for continuous cultural contact, differences, and change and they believe that their society is culturally highly exclusive. Accordingly they place their differences as a media for interaction and communication, and as another language to incorporate the separateness for a common sharing of thoughts and better living.

The color of the hill and its people (Bangalee, Chakma or Tripura) are represented through the cultural event '*Baishabi*' festival (i.e. to observe and celebrate the New Year). The Bangalees recognize this as an opportunity to interact with the Chakmas and Tripuras through sharing of foods, songs, dances as well as emotions, while the Chakmas and Tripuras keep their doors open during this festival for all with the belief that it brings peace and happiness to the people of the hills irrespective of age, sex and community identity. Most importantly all these people find it a valuable way to highlight or demonstrate not only their identity as Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras but also to indicate that apart from political and other related tensions in the hills, they have something to cheer up.

Politics plays crucial role in the lives of these people. From an instrumentalist perspective it has been identified that they have maintained and established political and economic interests in addressing their ethnicity and identity. In this regard they have capitalized on gain and loss during political relations and regarded their relationships with each other through socio-political contact, which operates through both amicable and dyadic relationships on the basis of the differences in community identity and nature of connection with local as well as national level politics. Thus there is the seed of politics of representation (taking history, language, religion and culture) in dealing with ethnicity

and identity of these communities. Accordingly they have differentiated 'political relations' and 'relations of politics' generated by their inter-ethnic contacts on the basis of communication technologies, exchange of goods and other materials in business and trade, and the utilization of growing population for different purposes including politics. In these hill *paras*, today, there is the practice of a socio-political process of exclusion and incorporation through the position of individuals in inter-ethnic contacts, power and politics among these communities. Thus their participations in multidimensional political activities practically express their fight over origin, identity, destiny, and meaning of life, and which further organizes their patterns of interactions. This is reflected in the fact that the Chakmas and Tripuras do not want to lose their community identity, while the Bangalees are trying to demonstrate their close attachment with the Chakmas and Tripuras and the hills. Thus all these together symbolize their active participation in political activities through formation of various political groups, organization of ethnicity, and expression of identity.

Their engagement in both local and national level politics has given them the strength to politicize their ethnic identity and boundary maintenance (it seems political when the Chakmas and Tripuras use the term '*Jumma*' to address their identities, or when the Bangalees use the terms 'minority' or 'settlers'). This is all about giving importance to their situations in the context of threats to their rights, competition for resources, or simply their physical, social and cultural boundary maintenances.

The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are very clearly concerned with their gender participation in their religious, cultural, and political activities and a number of female members belonging to these communities are directly engaged in the activities related to their struggle and fight for ethnic identity. Though female participation is greater among the Chakmas and Tripuras than the Bangalees, but ultimately they are concerned about the situations of the hills.

A major debate, at least from the Chakmas and Tripuras, is over the issue of their claim to be the indigenous community of these hill *paras*. This has been seen by them as a conflict between the ethnic communities and the state authorities regarding their right to land and resources, and for their identity crisis and recognition. This has become a political agenda and led to formation of political groups by the Chakmas and Tripuras (and also armed struggles, violence and conflicts) through which they have not only criticized those points of the constitution of Bangladesh where they have not been recognized as the indigenous communities of the entire CHTs but also the perspectives of modern bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies which have undermined their practices of close attachment with their social world. Thus they are against the term like 'ethnic minority' or 'minor ethnic community' used to determine their identity and do not like the imposition of rules by the state (through its authoritative bodies) which has violated their customary laws, business and livelihood strategies. Here lies a contradiction of perspectives in between the Bangalees, and the Chakmas and Tripuras where the Bangalees have rejected their demands. The Bangladesh government has not recognized their claims as indigenous and this has created tension among them over their identification and also the development of a politics of identity. Thus the political, economic and development policies taken by the state have done two things to these communities – endangered existence and generated the issue of identity politics for the Chakmas and Tripuras, and created political issues over the settler Bangalees in the hills. This is another dimension of their conflict of interests.

However, these three communities have used stereotyped characters to justify the nature of ethnic identity, division and classification in the society, conditions of power holder and powerlessness, and socio-political and inter-ethnic relations. The Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to protest their external threats, while the Bangalees are trying to be united in their *paras* through developing local political groups. Eventually the historical background to the birth of Bangladesh, growth of Bangladeshi nationalism and its policies regarding CHTs, and conflict of traditions played significant role to build this competitive relation with the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion, internal-external and/or nationalism and counter-nationalism processes in the hills.

The intervention of Bangalee culture and also the development and free flow movement of multidimensional modes of life style have led to the opening of new traditions here. In other words these are the major causes to create an open or multiple society where people of different ethnic identities have come into close contact. Altogether these have increased competitions for resources and livelihood options, developed a critical inter-ethnic relations and boundary maintenance, and deconstructing identity without losing their ancestral history. Clearly then the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are attaching themselves with each other's cultures and traditions in trying to catch up the emerging leadership elites (or dominant groups) in their *paras*. This ultimately refers to the fact that in an intense environment they are not only classifying themselves on the basis of their ideologies, beliefs, traditions, cultures, economic practices, religions and politics but also organizing their individual and community relationships on those grounds.

The hill offers a lot of resources, but the Bangalees have limited access to these resources and need to search for new options which include selling agricultural items, grocery cloths and electronic products in the local and town markets. They have identified that opportunities are not created by themselves for their better living and, hence, they have to explore for chances and create opportunities facing the challenges from all layers of people from different ethnic communities, economic and social organizations, and current agricultural and business practices in the hills. Eventually a market oriented economic system has been well established in the hill *paras* and towns facilitating interactions among production, distribution and consumption practices as well as among these three ethnic communities as a whole.

Historically, the economic lives of the Chakmas and Tripuras have been based on the traditional practices of *jhum* cultivation, fishing in the river, cultivation of 'bamboo' and 'shal' trees and doing small scale business in the locality where customary laws played significant roles in guiding their income generating activities. Now-a-days they are making a combination of their local, traditional and global exercises and struggling to protect their culture, economic interests as well as identity. Thus they attach their cultures and traditions with the aspects of economic activities, collective ownership and usages of means of production, gender participation in almost all spheres of their lives, and maintaining ecologically friendly economic practices associated with their hill *paras*. In this process they consider forests not only as their common property but also as life sustaining resources. So they are against those policies, rules and regulations of the state which have affected their customary rights over land, forests and forest resources. Thus to keep their customs and traditions intake in this market based economic system they are focusing on their friendship, kinship, religion and class connections. However, an alienation process (alienation from their land, forest and resources) has been in action causing displacement, loss of traditional rights, and commercial use of forest resources. Moreover, they are depending on a surplus production for market where capitalistic

mode of production becomes dominant and people from different ethnic communities are coming into regular contact – both as consumers and business enterprises and cross-cutting inter-ethnic issues. Thus in a growing market system they are not lagging behind, trying to produce commercial products, investing their labors, and transferring, exchanging as well as using goods and services to maximize not only their self-interests but also their networks of inter-ethnic relations. So they consider the current economy and market sphere as places for ethnicity in action.

The Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to create social space irrespective of the ages, works and class differentiations for an integrated economic and livelihood strategies. Today, they are capitalizing their habitual set of differentiations to generate their production, distribution and consumption activities associated with market or a system based on goods, money and market. Again through material exchange they try to display their own identities in the market sphere. This is a reflection of their expression of community identity keeping in mind their boundaries maintained. So these communities are exhibiting their Bangaleeness, Chakmaness and Tripuraness while interacting with each other during different activities both in the *para* and town markets. All these together indicate that they are taking this economic practice as a media for their interactions and interpersonal relationships, and a place where these sometimes become commercial – through clearly differentiated and identified products and peoples.

A materialistic understanding is working among the members of these communities based on a money-centered livelihood strategy and materialistic worldviews. Thus with the intervention of a commercially oriented production, they have come to learn about material accumulation of foods, crops, tools, techniques, natural resources, labor forces, and capitalization of their interrelations in the current economy and market spheres. Therefore, from household to market the things generating their nature of interactions with each other are – materialistic view rendering their community philosophy, individualistic understanding displaying material cultures, community identity instructed by a market philosophy, profit-loss mechanism, development of a bondage both as simple consumers and investors, and an inter-ethnic connection guiding people as a composite of relationships and to define their personal and community identity.

At the experience level there is a sharp distinction existing between the Bangalees and the Chakmas and Tripuras. These Bangalees are well aware of this economic system, know to deal with things and people in a multi-faced social system where commoditization, commercialization and evaluation of product and people go simultaneously. But for the Chakmas and Tripuras these experiences are not the same to that of the Bangalees. They had to cope up with new ideas and values which forced them to turn their sustainable economy into a cash economy, valuing everything on the basis of commoditization, and marketing of their cultures and traditions through the engagement of corporate and media activities among others. All these together have shown the current tendency of connection between traditionalism and modernity, and between money and culture.

Exchanges during different festivals and ceremonies carry special socio-cultural importance for these communities. This practice makes it possible for them to extend their relationships through the lines of families, kins and neighbors. This displays their social-cultural-political interactions. These exchanges give them a way to work on their relationships even though a conflict of interest is seen regarding the question of ethnic identity and nationality in the hill *paras*. Thus despite critical boundaries operating among


these communities, different types of exchanges play momentous roles in their social, economic and political sectors. In other words they have placed their personal relation with different institutions more than merely the economic relationships i.e. they value their relationship mutually settled and socially and culturally attached.

Making identical exchanges (both in economic activities and interpersonal as well as inter-ethnic relationships) and giving away goods, services and money among these communities, thus, generates the prestige acquired and relationships fostered. This has been recognized by them to be worth more than the cash/ money or anything exchanged in between. It seems that they do not always go for benefiting themselves in any sort of economic activities or transactions. But one thing has become clear from their understanding that everyone involved in any type of economic activities has enlarged the network among them (irrespective of age, sex, gender and ethnic identity) to be relied on. Thus despite discriminations regarding access to resources and better livelihood options in these *paras* these Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras are trying to enhance their network of relationships for a secured future.

Modernization and globalization processes have led to the development of easy access to education, which in turn, helped in the rapid change and adaptation to advanced technological and agricultural methods, commercialization of even homemade and garden produced products, intensive plough cultivation along with a focus on corporate investment in the lands and hills, and expansion of commoditization for a market economy culture in these hill *paras* respectively. It appears that these people are becoming habituated with the utilization of better methods in every sphere of their economic and livelihood strategies.


Therefore the hill *paras* are going through several economic, social and political changes with the impact of some development projects taken by the state and the most striking of these are – development of ply-wood factory and paper mill, construction of dam and roads and highways, technological development, industrial development, corporate investment in the hills, and overall a concrete market economy structure. Principally all these people have categorized these impacts into two factors and these are – internal factors (i.e. changes from within the communities to adapt to new idioms), and external factors (i.e. through a process of diffusion giving a way to new economic philosophies). It has been idealized that through these changes the relationships among the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have been also renewed with a mentality of capitalizing on each other's options. All these together illustrate the fact that over the last few decades these *paras* and the people residing here have constructed and deconstructed their individual and community relationships depending on their religions, cultures, traditions, political understandings, livelihood strategies, and purpose of interactions among themselves.

However, considering all the above aspects of these peoples in the hill *paras* it has been hypothesized that for ethnicity and identity two distinctive features are operative and these are – *first*, for ethnicity the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras have their own strategies to categorize themselves and maintain their relations on multidimensional livelihood activities and interactions, and *second*, for identity all of them have preferred to be identified with their community names, beliefs, practices and ancestorships where notions of 'Pahari', 'settlers' and 'ethnic minority' are addressed by them as political agenda. Altogether these show the multidimensionality of ethnicity and identity maintained by the Bangalees, Chakmas and Tripuras in their hill *paras* of Khagrachari, Chittagong Hill Tracts.



ANNEXURE-I:
CHECKLIST

1. Understanding the identity of Ethnic and Bengali people through culture and history.
2. Ethnicity, i.e. classification of people and group relationships that is shaping group interaction and communication.
3. Religion as an integrating aspect for group cohesion between Ethnic and Bengali people.
4. Social and political relations towards identity formation.
5. Impact of modernization and globalization towards mutual understanding between different groups.
6. Impact of the dominance of major groups on others taking fundamental freedoms.
7. Cultural rights of both groups reflected in bi-lingual and inter-cultural education.
8. Conflict of traditions over land rights and land use between the groups.
9. Role of women, their position and contribution to the communities in addressing ethnicity and identity.
10. Unfolding elements of exclusion and unequal (intolerable) relations within the groups.
11. Identifying the role of state for the people in CHTs.
12. Analyzing the dynamic sphere of economy and market, a place where interaction for different communities is the most.
13. Marginalization of groups, its causes and consequences.
14. Identifying the politics of understanding (if any) to create a peace accord.
15. Analyzing any pattern of stratification between Ethnic and Bengali people through confrontation.
16. The extent of level of interaction for these people.
17. Internal and external factors for group cohesion.
18. Ethnic people's perspectives towards the outsiders and the settlers.
19. Bengali people's perspectives towards the Ethnic people.
20. Reasons to demand a separate identity.
21. Status and condition of Bengali people in CHTs.
22. Justification of insurgencies that took place over the years in CHTs.



**ANNEXURE-II:
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Nature of questionnaire: Open ended and semi-structured questionnaire for: a) household information, b) ethnic origin and identity, and c) content based questionnaire.

a) Household information for Bangalee, Chakma and Tripura Communities

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. Occupation: a) Primary:
5. Educational Status:
6. Religion:
7. Residing Area: a) Origin:
8. Type of Family: a) Nuclear: b) Joint: b) Current:
9. Number of Family Members:
10. Occupation of Family Members:
11. Educational Status of Family Members:
12. Marital Status:
13. Name of the Community:
14. Name of the Household Head (HH):
15. Totemic Name of the Community (If any):
16. Name of Clan/Sub-clan (If any):
17. Patrilineal/Matrilineal Family:
18. Monthly Income of the HH:
19. Monthly Income of the Family:
20. Amount of Land (homestead + cultivable) Occupied:

b1) Ethnic Origin and Identity for Chakma and Tripura Communities

1. Name of the Community.
2. Origin of the Community.
3. How do you trace your origin?
4. Where do your ancestors came from?
5. When did you first come to this place?
6. How do you address your identity?
7. Which of these do you consider as your identity?
 - a) *Pahari* b) *Adivasi* c) By Community d) Others (If any)
8. Why do you address yourself as-
 - a) *Pahari* b) *Adivasi* c) By community d) Others (If any)?
9. Is there any politics involved in determining your identity?
10. Do you believe in your historically determined identity?
11. Why or why not?
12. What did your ancestors believe in terms of your origin and identity?
13. In there any role of religion?
14. How do the outsiders address you?
15. How do the Bangalees address you?
16. How do you consider the Bangalee's perspective towards you in this case?
17. What are the determining factors in defining your origin and identity?
18. What is your linguistic origin?
19. How do you differentiate yourself from others?
20. Is there any differences between the views of you and your ancestors?
21. If any difference persist, why?
22. What is your future thought on this?
23. In addressing your identity who decides?

- a) Ancestor b) You c) State d) Outsiders
24. For any decider what is your view?
 25. Is there any role of your community leaders?
 26. How do you consider your leaders' role in this regard?
 27. What is the role of your religious leaders?
 28. Do you have a common understanding for your origin and identity?
 29. How do you consider the role of state in addressing your community?
 30. Do you have any written document for your origin and identity?
 31. How do the local administrations (government) document your identity?
 32. Do you identify any confrontation with the administration in this regard?
 33. Do you have any confrontation with the Bangalees in this regard?
 34. If you consider your origin and identity to be politicized what are the reasons?
 35. For years how and why do you have to fight for your identity?
 36. In the face of modernization and globalization what is your position?
 37. What are you doing for upholding your community origin and identity?
 38. How do you justify the role of armed force agencies in affecting your identity?
 39. Your further opinion and suggestions in this regard.

b2) Ethnic Origin and Identity for Bangalee

1. Name of the Community.
2. Origin of the Community.
3. How do you trace your origin?
4. Where do your ancestors came from?
5. When did you first come to this place?
6. What are the reasons for your coming here?
7. How do you address your identity?
 - a) *Pahari* b) Settler c) Bangalee d) Outsiders e) Others (If any)
8. Why do you address yourself as-
 - a) *Pahari* b) Settler c) Bangalee d) Outsiders e) Other (If any)?
9. Is there any politics involved in determining your identity?
10. Do you believe in your historically determined identity?
11. Why or why not?
12. What did your ancestors believe in terms of your origin and identity?
13. How do the ethnic people address you?
14. Is there any variation in this regard based on major/minor ethnic groups?
15. If yes, why?
16. Your religious and linguistic origin. Do these make any difference?
17. Why and how do you differentiate yourself from the ethnic people?
18. How do the ethnic people differentiate you from them? Why?
19. In determining your identity in CHTs who is the key role player and why?
20. Do you have any community/religious leader to take action on these?
21. As Bangalee, do you have a common understanding for your origin and identity?
22. How do you consider the role of state and local administration in this context?
23. Is there any confrontation with ethnic people over the issue of identity?
24. If yes, why? And how do you resolve such confrontations?
25. What are the internal and external factors in this regard?
26. As mainstream population are you privileged in the CHTs?
27. If yes, how?
28. If no, why?
29. At this global age, how do the ethnic people perceive you?

30. Living in a harsh area how do you adapt to address your identity?
31. Do you feel unevenly for the ethnic people?
32. If yes, why?
33. How do you consider the role of armed forces to address your community and ethnic people?
34. Do you have to fight for your identity in CHTs? How and why?
35. Your opinion and suggestions in this regard

c) Religion for Integrating the Communities

1. Your religious identity.
2. Any change to your ancestor's religion?
3. If yes, why?
4. What are the religious festivals/rituals?
5. How do you perform these?
6. Who participates in these festivals?
7. How do you observe Bangalee's participation?
8. Has there been any conflict over religious programs?
9. If yes, why? How do you resolve the problem?
10. How do you consider different communities integration in these festivals?
11. Do you think that religion is playing important role for group cohesion?
12. If yes, why and how?
13. In this context do you live peacefully with others?
14. How do you observe your birth initiation program?
15. How do you observe your marriage ceremonies?
16. How do you observe your death ceremonies?
17. Do these practices create peace and harmony within the communities and in the locality?
18. Do you find anyone playing dominating role in creating discrimination?
19. What is the role of local governing bodies (community role)?
20. What is the role of state level administrative bodies?
21. In recent past do you have any obstacles in performing your festivals and different rituals?
22. If yes, who were they and what were there reasons?
23. Do you expect your separate identity based on religion?
24. Your opinion and suggestions.
25. What are the internal and external factors in this regard?

d) Economy and Market Sphere: Place for Ethnicity

1. Your main income source.
2. Your other income sources.
3. According to you what is the best economic strategy in the hill areas?
4. Why?
5. In case of agricultural activities how is your engagement?
6. What types of agricultural activities are you involved?
7. In case of business how is your engagement?
8. What are the business options open to you and why?
9. Is the participation of all people (Ethnic and Bangalee) ensured in agricultural activities and business work?
10. If no, what are the constraints?

11. In case of service in government and non-government organizations, do you find equal opportunities irrespective of ethnic variations?
12. If no, why?
13. Do you think that education plays key role to ensure participation in all economic activities?
14. Do you find any unequal opportunity for education between Ethnic and Bangalee people?
15. If yes, why? How do you address these issues?
16. 'At this age of modernization and globalization, market is a key factor to integrate people from all ranges of society'- Do you agree?
17. In any case, how do you consider the market economy?
18. Is market places creating group cohesion and maintaining relationship between Ethnic and Bangalee people?
19. Do you have equal opportunities to bring your product to the market?
20. If no, what are the reasons?
21. Do you consider Ethnic/Bangalee people as your rigid competitor?
22. Do you feel any pressure from political parties of hills or Bangalees in doing your business in the market?
23. If yes, how? How do you overcome these situations?
24. In general, what are the positive sides that market is playing to maintain interrelations between Ethnic and Bangalee people?
25. In this case, what are the negative sides?
26. Does the market place creating a ground for common understanding?
27. Do you practice good exchange economic system?
28. If you do so, what are the goods exchanged and why?
29. As customer, do you buy goods from all communities?
30. Your opinion and suggestions in this regard?

e) Issues of Land Rights and Marginalization of groups

1. Do you have land of your own?
2. Types of land owned: homestead, forest land, others.
3. What are the conditions of Bangalees in this regard?
4. What are the legal points of owning land?
5. Who controls the distribution of land in the hills?
6. What is the role of headman?
7. What is the role of state?
8. What is your historical background in this regard?
9. Any evidence of disputes over land ownership in between Ethnic and Bangalees?
10. Time of last dispute?
11. Recent (if any) evidence of grabbing your land by the Bangalees?
12. If yes, what were the reasons?
13. What is your own policy in this regard?
14. Do you know the state policy?
15. Can you freely live in and cultivate your land?
16. If no, what are the obstacles?
17. Any evidence of disputes over landownership within your community members?
18. If yes, what were the reasons?
19. How does your community design land right issues?
20. Are you marginalized in this regard?

21. Despite land based (right based) disputes, do you have mutual understanding (i) within and (ii) between the communities?
22. Do you maintain a mutual social relationship?
23. At the time of any danger do you get support from ethnic/Bangalees communities?
24. Do you think that marginalization should be the terms to address yourselves?
25. If there is land dispute, do you get legal support?
26. Have you ever been victimized?
27. If yes, by whom and why?
28. How did you solve the problem?
29. Do you consider a peaceful understanding for rights based issues and how?
30. Your opinion and suggestions in this regard?

f) Peace Accord: Politics of Understanding

1. Do you know about peace accord signed on 08 December, 1997?
2. Why peace accord?
3. According to you what was the situation before peace accord?
4. Has there been tension between Ethnic and Bangalees?
5. Has there been tension between ethnic people and security (military or other forces) assigned by Bangladesh government in the CHTs?
6. Do you think before peace accord there has been negative understanding between Ethnic and Bangalee people?
7. If no, how was the relationship?
8. Is there similar right for every community in the CHTs?
9. If no, who are the dominant groups and why so?
10. What is the position of your community?
11. What is about PCJSS (*Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti*) and other liked bodies?
12. How do these constitute and function?
13. Basically who are the members?
14. Do the Bangalees have similar groups?
15. How do you justify the activities of these groups?
16. Do you know every points of peace accord?
17. Do you think that peace is really possible through this accord?
18. If yes, how?
19. If no, why?
20. Do you think that this accord is only a political policy of the then government of Bangladesh?
21. If yes, what are the grounds?
22. As per accord, have your rights been equally established?
23. If no, what are the reasons?
24. Do you find any gainer or loser due to this accord?
25. Why is there opposite group of peace accord?
26. Do you think that apart from peace accord a good relationship exists between Ethnic and Bangalee people in the field of politics, economy, education, health and rights based issues?
27. If yes, how?
28. Today people are connected and communicated at every sector and do these shaping your relationship in new ways?
29. What is the understanding of new generation in this context?
30. Your opinion and suggestions in this regard?

g) Confrontation and Level of Integration for Ethnic and Bangalee People

1. Is there any confrontation between the groups these days?
2. If yes, why and what are the grounds?
3. What types of tension do you feel?
4. Who are the dominant groups?
5. For any kind of confrontation, how do you overcome the situation?
6. Do you want to build a peaceful environment or it already exists?
7. In this context how do you help each other?
8. Is there any stratification among your groups?
9. What are the grounds for stratification?
10. What are the constraints in sharing your resources?
11. Do you help each other?
12. How are you integrated with each other?
13. How do you portray individual relationships?
14. How do you observe group relationships?
15. How do you maintain relationships in different events?
16. How do you cooperate in market sphere?
17. Despite the differences in origin and culture, how do you maintain individual and group cooperation?
18. Where do you want to see your future generation from here?
19. What is the role of local leaders?
20. How do you justify the role of state?
21. How do you address the gender relations?
22. How do you justify the role of modernization?
23. How do you justify the role of education?
24. Do you think that free flow of people and goods minimizing any sort of confrontations?
25. What are the internal and external factors for group cohesion?
26. Your opinion and suggestions in this regard?

ANNEXURE-III:
CHITTAGONG HILL
TRACTS REGULATION 1900

A REGULATION TO: Declare the law applicable in and provide for the administration of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bengal. Whereas it is expedient to declare the law applicable in, and provide for the administration of, the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bengal, it is hereby enacted as follows:

CHAPTER 1	Preliminary
Short title, extent and commencement	<p>1. This regulation may be called the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation, 1900. 2. It extends to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and 3. It shall come into force on such date as the Local Government may, by notification in the Calcutta Gazette, appoint.</p> <p>Definition:</p> <p>(1) In this Regulation - (a) The expression “Chittagong Hill Tracts” means the territories for the time being defined as such by notification under sub-section (2), and (b) “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division. (2) The Local Government may with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, by notification in the Calcutta Gazette, define the boundaries of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and may, in the like manner, vary those boundaries.</p>
CHAPTER II	Laws
Chittagong Hill Tracts how to be administered	<p>3. Subject to the provision of the Regulation, the Administration of the Chittagong Hill Tracts shall be carried on in accordance with the rules for the time being in force under section 18.</p> <p>4. (1) The enactments specified in the schedule, to the extent and with the modification therein set forth and so far as they are not inconsistent with this Regulation or the rules for the time being in force thereunder, are hereby declared to be in force in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. (a) No other enactment heretofore or hereafter passed shall be deemed to apply in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Provided that the Local Government, may with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, by notification in the Calcutta Gazette-</p> <p>(a) Declare that any other enactment shall apply in the said Tracts, either wholly or to the extent or with the modifications which may be set forth in the notification; or (b) declare that any enactment which is specified in the schedule, or which has been declared to apply by a notification under clause (a) of this subsection, shall cease to apply in the said Tracts.</p>
Enactments applicable in Chittagong Hill Tracts	<p>5. The local government may, by notification in the Calcutta Gazette- (a) appoint any person to be the Superintendent of the Chittagong Hill Tracts; and (b) appoint so many Assistant Superintendents and other officers as it thinks fit to assist in the administration of the said Tracts.</p> <p>6. The Local Government may by, notification in the Calcutta Gazette, invest any Assistant Superintendent with all or any of the powers of the Superintendent under this regulation or the</p>
CHAPTER III	Appointment and Powers of Certain Officers
Investment of Assistant Superintendents with powers of Superintendent Chittagong Hill Tracts to be a district under the Superintendent	

Chittagong Hill Tracts to be a sessions division under the Commissioner	rule, for the time being in force thereunder, and define the local limits of his jurisdiction. 7. The Chittagong Hill Tracts shall constitute a district for the purposes of criminal and civil jurisdiction and for revenue and general purposes, the Superintendent shall be the District Magistrate, and subject to any orders passed by the Local Government under section 6, the General Administration of the said Tracts in criminal, civil, revenue and all other matters, shall be vested in the Superintendent.
High Court	8. (1) The Chittagong Hill Tracts shall constitute a sessions division, and the Commissioner shall be the Sessions Judge. (2) As Session Judge the Commissioner may take cognizance of any offence as a Court of original jurisdiction, without the accused being committed to him by a Magistrate for trial, and when so taking cognizance shall follow the procedure prescribed by the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, for the trial of warrant-cases by Magistrates.
Power to withdraw cases	9. The Local Government shall exercise the powers of a High Court for the purpose of the submission of sentences of death for confirmation under the code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, and the Commissioner shall exercise the powers of a High Court for all other purposes of the said code. 10. The Superintendent may withdraw any criminal or civil cases pending before any officer or Court in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and may either try it himself or refer it for trial to some other officer or court.

CHAPTER IV

Arms, Ammunition, Drugs and Liquor

Possession of firearms and ammunition, and manufacture of gunpowder	11. (1) The Superintendent may fix the number of firearms and the quantity and description of ammunition which may be possessed by the inhabitants of any village, and may grant permission either to such inhabitants collectively or to any of them individually, to possess such firearms and ammunition as he may think fit. (2) All firearms for the possession of which permission is given under sub-section (1) shall be marked and entered in a register. (3) Any permission granted under sub-section (1) to possess firearms and ammunition may be withdrawn by the Superintendent, and thereupon a firearms and ammunition referred to in such permission shall be delivered to the Superintendent or one of his subordinates. (4) The Superintendent may grant permission to any person to manufacture gunpowder, and may withdraw such permission. (5) Whoever, without the permission of the Superintendent, possesses or exports from the Chittagong Hill Tracts any firearms or ammunition, or manufactures any gunpowder, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with the previous sanction. (6) The Superintendent may, with the previous sanction of the Local Government, by order in writing, direct that sub-sections (1), (2), (4) and (5), or any of them, shall not apply in any village specified in the order. 12. (1) The Superintendent may, with the previous sanction of
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Daos, spears and bows and arrows	<p>the Commissioner, by order in writing prohibit all or any of the inhabitants of any village from carrying <i>daos</i>, spears and bows and arrows, or any of those weapons, in any tract to be denied in the order, if he is of opinion that such prohibition is necessary to the peace of such tract. (2) Every order made under sub-section (1) shall specify the length of time during which it shall remain in force. (3) Whoever disobeys an order made sub-section (1) shall be punishable with imprisonment of a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both.</p>
Intoxicating drugs	<p>13. (1) Whoever, except under and in accordance with license granted by the Superintendent imports, exports, manufactures, possesses or sells opium, ganja or <i>charas</i>, or any preparation thereof or cultivate any plant from which opium, ganja or <i>charas</i> can be produced, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both. (2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) any person may possess, for domestic use, five <i>tolas</i> of opium, ganja, or <i>charas</i>, or of any preparation, thereof, without having license granted by the Superintendent.</p>
Foreign spirit and fermented liquor	<p>14. (1) Whoever, except under and in accordance with a license granted by the Superintendent imports or sells foreign spirits or fermented liquor shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine, or with both. (2) Nothing in this section applies-</p> <p>(a) To the import by any person, for his private use and consumption, and not for sale, of any foreign spirit or fermented liquor on which duty has been paid; or</p> <p>(b) to the sale of any such spirit or liquor legally procured by any person for his private use and consumption and sold by him, or by auction on his behalf, or on behalf of his representatives in interest, upon his quitting a station or after his decease.</p>
Locally made spirit and fermented liquor	<p>Explanation - For the purpose of this section, the expression "foreign spirit or fermented liquor" means any spirit or fermented liquor manufactured or produced in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.</p> <p>15. Whoever, except under and in accordance with a license granted by the Superintendent, exports or sells spirit or fermented liquor manufactured or produced in the Chittagong Hill Tracts shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine, or with both.</p>
CHAPTER V	
Miscellaneous	
Police	<p>16. The Chittagong Hill Tracts shall be deemed to be a general police-district within meaning of the Police Act, 1861, and Bengal Act VII, V of 1851, of 1869 (an Act to amend the constitution of the Police-force in Bengal and the Commissioner conferred on an Inspector-General of Police).</p> <p>17. (1) All officers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts shall be subordinate to the Superintendent, who may revise any order</p>

Control and revision	<p>made by any such officer, including an Assistant Superintendent invested with any of the powers of the Superintendent under section 6. (2) The Commissioner may revise any order made under this Regulation by the Superintendent or by any other officer in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. (3) The Local Government may revise any order made under this Regulation.</p>
Power to make rules	<p>18. (1) The Local Government may make rules for carrying into effect the objects and purpose of this Regulation. (2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may- a. provide for the administration of civil justice in the Chittagong Hill Tracts; b. prohibit, restrict or regulate the appearance of legal practitioners in cases arising in the said Tracts; c. provide for the registration of documents in the said Tracts; d. regulate or restrict the transfer of land in the said Tracts; e. provide for the subdivision of the said Tracts into circles, those circles into <i>taluks</i>, and those <i>taluks</i> into <i>mauzas</i>; f. provide for the collection of the rents and the administration of the revenue generally in the said circles, taluks and mauzas through the chiefs, <i>divans</i> and headmen; g. define the powers and jurisdiction of the chiefs, <i>divans</i> and headmen, and regulate the exercise by them of such powers and jurisdiction; h. regulate the appointment and dismissal of <i>divans</i> and headmen; i. provide for the remuneration of chiefs, <i>divans</i>, headmen and village officers generally by the assignment of land for the purpose or otherwise as may be thought desirable; j. prohibit, restrict or regulate the migration of cultivating <i>raiyyats</i> from one circle to another; k. regulate the acquisition by Government of land required for public purpose; l. provide for the levy of taxes in the said Tracts; and m. regulate the procedure to be observed by officers acting under this Regulation or the rules for the time being in force thereunder; (3) All rules made by the Local Government under this section shall be published in the Calcutta Gazette and on such publication, shall have effect as it enacted by this Regulation.</p>
Bar to jurisdiction or Civil and Criminal Courts	<p>19. Except as provided in this Regulation or in any other enactment for the time being in force, a decision passed, act done or order made under this Regulation or the rules there under, shall not be called in question in any Civil or Criminal Court.</p>
Repeal of certain enactments	<p>20. Act XXII of 1860 (an Act to remove certain tracts on the eastern border of the Chittagong District from the Jurisdiction of the tribunals established under the general Regulation and Acts); Bengal Act IV of 1863 (an Act to amend Act XXII of 1860) and so much of the second schedule to the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874 and of the Repealing and Amending Act, 1891, as relates to either of the enactments aforesaid, are hereby repealed.</p>

ANNEXURE-IV:
CHITTAGONG HILL
TRACTS PEACE ACCORD
(TREATY) 1997

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord²⁶⁸ was signed on December 2, 1997 in Dhaka at the Prime Minister's office between the Government and the *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity* (PCJSS). It has been observed that some hill ethnic groups and organizations have rejected the accord.

Under the framework of the constitution of Bangladesh and having fullest and firm confidence in the sovereignty and integrity of Bangladesh the national Committee on CHT Affairs, on behalf of the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sambati Samiti* (PCJSS), on behalf of the inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, with an objective to elevate political, social, cultural, educational and financial rights and to expedite socio-economic development process of all citizens in CHT, arrive at an agreement described in four parts as below:

A: General

1. Both sides, considering CHT as Tribal Populated Region, recognized the necessity for protection of the character of this region and for overall development of it.
2. Both sides, in accordance with the decisions and responsibilities state in these paragraphs under this agreement, determined to make, change, amend and add concerned rules and procedures as per laws/rules.
3. With an aim to observe the implementation process of this agreement an Implementation Committee shall be formed with the persons stated below:
 - (a) A member to be nominated by the Prime Minister - Convener
 - (b) Chairman of the Task Force formed under this agreement - Member
 - (c) President of the *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sambati Samiti* - Member
4. This agreement shall be in force from the date of signing the agreement. This agreement shall remain in force until all steps and measures according to this agreement are completed by both sides.

B: Hill District Local Government Council/Hill District Councils

Both sides agreed to change, amend, add and repeal the Hill District Local Government Council Acts, 1989. (Rangamati Hill District Local Government Council Act, 1989, Bandarban Hill District, Local Government Council Act, 1989 and Khagrachari Hill District Local Government Council Act, 1989) and its various sections described as below:

1. The term "*Upajati*" shall be in force.
2. The name of the Hill District Local Government Council shall be Hill District Council.
3. Who is not a tribal and possesses land legally in the Hill District and generally lives at a certain address in the Hill District he shall be meant "non-tribal permanent resident".
4. (a) There shall be 3 (three) seats for women in every Hill District Council. There shall be one-third of the said seat for non-tribal women.
 (b) Sub-section (1), (2), (3) and (4) of section 4 of the original rule shall exist.
 (c) The words "Deputy Commissioner" and "of the Deputy Commissioner" placed in the second line of sub-section (5) of the section 4 shall be replaced with the words "Circle Chief" and "of the Circle Chief" respectively.

²⁶⁸ See Tebtebba Foundation 2000. The Chittagong Hill Tracts: The Road to a Lasting Peace. Baguio City, Philippines: Tebtebba Foundation. Pp. 15-29.

- (d) Following sub-section shall be added in the section 4:
Whether a person is a non-tribal shall be determined, along with the identity of non-tribal to which he belongs, by the concerned Circle Chief on the provision of submission of certificate from concerned Headman/*Pourasabha* Chairman/*Union Parishad* Chairman and no person can be a candidate for the office of the non-tribal member without a certificate from the concerned Circle Chief in this behalf.
5. It is narrated in the section 7 that a person elected chairman and member shall make an oath or announce confirmation before Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong. By amendment of it there shall be added the portion that the members shall make oath or announce confirmation before “Justice of High Court Division” in lieu of “Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong”.
 6. In lieu of the words “Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong” shall be placed the words “as per election procedure” in the fourth line of section 8.
 7. The words “three years” placed in the second line of section 10 shall be replaced with the words “five years”.
 8. There shall be a provision in the section 14 that - If the office of the Chairman falls vacant and in absence of the Chairman a tribal member elected by other members of the Council shall preside and perform other responsibilities.
 9. The existing section 17 shall be replaced with the sentences mentioned as below:
A person shall, under the Act, be eligible to be enrolled in the electoral roll, if
 - (a) he is a citizen of Bangladesh;
 - (b) his age is not less than 18 years;
 - (c) he is not declared mentally unsound by any competent court;
 - (d) he is a permanent resident of Hill District.
 10. The words “determination of electoral constituency” shall be added in the sub-section (2) of section 20.
 11. There shall be a provision in the sub-section (2) of section 25: The chairman and in absence of him a tribal member elected by other members shall preside over all the meeting of the Council.
 12. As all the area of Khagrachari District is not included in the Mong Circle, so the words “Mong Circle Chief and Chakma Circle Chief” shall be placed in lieu of the words “Mong Chief of Khagrachari” in the section 26 of the Khagrachari Hill District Council Act. Similarly facility of attending the meetings of the Rangamati Hill District Council by Bohmong Circle Chief also shall be maintained. In the same way there shall be a provision of attending the meetings of the Bandarban Hill District Council by Bohmong Circle Chief.
 13. There shall be provision in the sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 31 that-
There shall be a Chief Executive Officer as secretary in the Council. Tribal Officers shall be given priority in this post.
 14. (a) There shall be a provision in the sub-section (1) of section 32 that-
For the proper conduct of its affairs the Council may with the approval of the government, create posts of various categories of officers and employees.
(b) The sub-section (2) of section 32 shall, by amendment, be made as follows:
The Council may, in accordance with regulations, appoint, transfer, suspend, dismiss, remove class three and class four employees and inflict any other punishment on them. Provided that, priority to the tribals is maintained in the matter of the said appointment.
(c) There shall be provision in the sub-section (3) of section 32 that-
The government in consultation with the Council may, as per regulation, appoint, transfer, suspend, dismiss, remove or inflict any other punishment on other officers of the Council.

15. In the sub-section (3) of section 33 shall be mentioned “as per regulation”.
16. The words “or any other way determined by the government” placed in the third line of sub-section (1) of section 36 shall be omitted.
17. The original rule shall be in force in the fourth of sub-section (1) of section 37.
18. Sub-section (3) of section 38 shall be repealed and by amendment, the sub-section (4) shall be framed as follows:

At any time before the expiry of the financial year, if deemed necessary, budget may be framed and sanctioned.
19. In the section 42 the following sub-section shall be added-

The Council with the fund received from the government shall formulate initiate and implement development projects on the subjects transferred and all the development works initiated at the national level shall be implemented by the concerned ministry/department through the Council.
20. The word “government” placed in the second line of sub-section (2) of section 45 shall be replaced with the word “Council”.
21. By amendment of rules of sections 50, 51 and 52 the following section shall be made-

“The government, if deemed necessary, may advice [*vide*] or order the Council, in order to ensure conformity with the purpose of the Act. If the govt. is satisfied that anything done or intended to be done by the Council or on behalf of the Council is not conformity with law or contrary to public interest the government may seek information and clarification and give advice or instruction to the Council on concerned matters in writing.”
22. The words “if the period of supersession is completed” shall be repealed and in lieu of them shall be added “within ninety days of supersession” before the words “this Act”.
23. The words “of the government” in the third and fourth lines of section 61 shall be replaced with the words “of the ministry”.
24. (a) By amendment of sub-section (1) of section 62- this section shall be made as follows:

“Notwithstanding anything contained in any Act for the time-being in force, all members of the rank of Sub-Inspector and below of Hill District Police shall be appointed by the Council in manner laid down by regulations and the Council may transfer and take disciplinary action against them as per procedure laid down by regulation: provided that in the matter of such appointment tribals shall be given priority.”

(b) By repealment of the words “on the provision of all other laws for the time-being in force” placed in the second line of sub-section (3) of section 62 shall be placed the words “as per rule and regulation”.
25. The words “giving assistance” placed in the third line of the section 63 shall be in force.
26. By amendment of the section 64 the following sub-sections shall be made:

(a) Notwithstanding anything contained in any law for the time-being in force, no land within the boundaries of Hill District shall be given in settlement, purchased, sold and transferred including giving lease without prior approval of the Council: provided that this provision shall not be applicable in case of areas within the reserved forests, Kaptai Hydro-electricity Project, Betbunia Earth Satellite Station, State-owned industries and factories and lands recorded in the name of government.

(b) Notwithstanding anything contained in any law for the time-being in force, no lands, hills and forests within the boundaries of the Hill District shall be acquired and transferred by the government without consultation and consent of the Hill District Council.

- (c) The Council may supervise and control functions of Headman, Chairman *Amin*, Surveyor, *Kanungo* and Assistant Commissioner (land).
- (d) Fringe land in Kaptai Lake shall be given in settlement on priority basis to original owners.
27. By amendment of section 65 this section shall be framed as follows:
Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time-being in force, responsibility of collecting land development tax shall be entrusted in the Council and the said tax collected in the District shall be credited to the Council Fund.
28. By amendment of section 67 it shall be made as follows:
“If deemed necessary for co-ordination of activities between the Council and government authorities, government or the Council shall put proposal on certain matter(s).”
29. By amendment of sub-section (1) it shall be made as follows:
“The government having discussion with the Council may, by notification in the official gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act and even after having rules made the Council shall have special right to file petition for reconsideration of the said rules.”
30. (a) By omission of the words “with the prior approval of the government” placed in the first and second line of the sub-section (1) of section 69 and to add the following portion after the words “may”- “provided that if the government differs with any part of the regulation made by the Hill District Council then the government shall give advice or instruction for amendment of the said regulation.”
(b) The words mentioned in the (h) of sub-section (2) of section 69 “transfer of power of Chairman to any officer” shall be omitted.
31. Section 70 shall be omitted.
32. Amendment of section 79 shall be made as follows:
“If any law by the *Jatiyo Sangsad* or any other authority, applicable to Hill District, is found to be hurtful to the District or objectionable to the tribal people in the opinion of the Council, it may file a petition in writing to the government stating the reasons of its being hurtful or objectionable for the purpose of amending or relaxing its application and the govt. shall, in the light of the petition, adopt necessary measures.”
33. (a) The word “supervision” shall be added after the word “order” in the No.1 of the function of the Council of the first schedule.
(b) The following subjects shall be added in the No. 3 of the function of the Council:
(1) Vocational training;
(2) Primary education in mother tongue;
(3) Secondary education.
(c) The words “or protected” placed in sub-section 6(b) of the function of the Council in the first schedule shall be omitted.
34. The following subjects shall be added in the functions and responsibilities of the Hill District Council:
(a) Land and land management
(b) Police (local)
(c) Tribal law and social justice
(d) Youth welfare
(e) Environment preservation and development
(f) Local tourism
(g) Improvement trust and other local government organizations except *Pourasabha* and Union Councils
(h) Licensing for local trade and business

- (i) Proper utilization of water resources of rivulets, canals, ponds except Kaptai lake and irrigation
 - (j) Preservation of death, birth and other statistics
 - (k) Money lending and trade
 - (l) *Jhum* cultivation.
35. The following sectors and sources shall be included in the taxes, rates, tolls and fees to be imposed by the Council as stated in the second schedule:
- (a) Registration fee from non-mechanical transports
 - (b) Tax on sale and purchase of goods
 - (c) Holding tax from land and buildings
 - (d) Tax from sale of domestic animals
 - (e) Fees from cases of social justice
 - (f) Holding tax on government and non-government industries
 - (g) Part of royalty from forest resources
 - (h) Supplementary tax from cinema, theatre and circus etc.
 - (i) Part of royalty from license or lease for exploration and extraction of mineral resources given by the government
 - (j) Tax from business
 - (k) Tax from lottery
 - (l) Tax from fishing.

C: Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council

1. A Regional Council shall be formed in co-ordination with the 3 Hill District Local Government Council provided that various sections of the Hill District Local Government Council Act, 1989 (Act No. 19, 20 and 21 of 1989) shall be amended with an aim to make the 3 Hill District Local Government Councils more powerful and effective.
2. Chairman of this Council shall be elected indirectly by the elected members of the Hill District Councils where status shall be equivalent to a State Minister and he must be a *Jumma*.
3. The Council shall be formed with 22 (twenty two) members including the Chairman. Two-third of the members shall be elected from among the tribals. The Council shall determine its procedure of functioning.
Composition of the Council shall be as follows:

Chairman	--1
Members tribal (men)	--12
Members tribal (women)	--2
Members non-tribal (men)	--6
Members non tribal (women)	--1

Among the tribal men members 5 persons shall be elected from among the Chakma tribe, 3 persons from the Marma tribe, 2 persons from the Tripura tribe, 1 person from the Murung and Tanchongya tribes and 1 person from the Lusai, Bawm, Pankho, Khumi, Chak and Khyang tribes.

Among the non-tribal men members 2 persons shall be elected from each district. Among the tribal women members 1 woman shall be elected from the Chakma tribe and 1 woman from other tribes.
4. 3 (three) seats shall be reserved for women in the Council. One-third shall be non-tribals.

5. The members of the Council shall be elected indirectly by the elected members of the Hill District Councils. Chairman of three Hill District Councils shall be ex-officio members of the Council and they shall have voting rights.
Eligibility and non-eligibility of the members of the Council shall be similar to that of the Hill District Council.
6. The term of the Council shall be 5 (five) years.
7. There shall be a chief executive officer in the Council equivalent to a Joint Secretary and priority to a tribal candidate shall be given in appointment to this post.
8. (a) If the office of the Chairman of the Council falls vacant then a Chairman shall be elected from among the tribal members for an interim period by the members of Hill District Councils.
(b) If any office of a member of the Council falls vacant on any reason then that shall be filled through by-election.
9. (a) The Council shall supervise and co-ordinate the subjects vested under the Hill District Councils including co-ordination of all development activities conducted under the three Hill District Councils. Besides these, if there is found any lack of co-ordination and inconsistency among the three Hill District Councils in discharging their responsibilities the decision of the Regional Council shall be taken as final.
(b) The Council shall supervise and co-ordinate local councils including the municipalities.
(c) Regional Council may co-ordinate and supervise in the matters of general administration, law and order and development of the three Hill Districts.
(d) The Council may co-ordinate the activities of the NGOs along with conducting of management of calamities and relief works.
(e) Tribal laws and social justice shall be under the control of the Council.
(f) The Council may issue license for heavy industry.
10. The CHT Development Board shall discharge its responsibilities under general and overall supervision of the Council. In case of appointment of Chairman of the Development Board competent tribal candidate shall be given priority.
11. If the Regional Council finds any rule of the 1900 CHT Regulation and other related laws, rules and ordinances contradictory to the 1989 Hill District Council Acts then the government shall remove that inconsistency by law according to recommendation of and in consultation with the Regional Council.
12. Until and unless Regional Council is constituted through direct and indirect election, the government may by constituting an interim Regional Council, entrust the responsibilities of the Council.
13. If the government makes any law on CHT it shall be in having discussion and in consultation with the Regional Council. If there arises the necessity to amend any such law or to make any new law which may be harmful for development of the 3 Hill District or the welfare of the tribals, the Council may file a petition or put recommendation to the govt.
14. The fund of the Council shall be created from the following sources:
 - (a) Fund received from the Hill District Councils' fund
 - (b) Money or profits from all properties vested in and managed by the Regional Council
 - (c) Grant and loan from the government or any other authority
 - (d) Grant from any institution or individual
 - (e) Profit accruing from investment by the Regional Council
 - (f) Any other moneys received by the Regional Council
 - (g) Money received from such sources of incomes as the government may direct to be placed at the disposal of the Regional Council.

D: Rehabilitation, General Amnesty and Other Matters

1. An agreement has been signed between the government and the refugee leaders on March 9, 1997 with an aim to take back the tribal refugees from India's Tripura State based on the 20-Point Facilities Package. In accordance with the said agreement repatriation of the refugees started since March 28, 1997. This process shall continue and with this in view, the JSS shall provide all kinds of possible co-operation. The internal tribal evacuees of 3 districts shall, after determination, be rehabilitated by the Task Force.
2. After signing agreement between the government and the JSS and implementation of it as well as after rehabilitation of the tribal refugees and internal tribal evacuees the government shall start survey of land in CHT as soon as possible and after proper inquires ownership of land shall be recorded and ensured.
3. The government shall ensure providing two acres of lands to each landless family and the family who possesses less than 2 acres of lands, provided lands were available in the local areas. If requisite lands are not available then grove land shall be provided.
4. A commission (land commission) headed by a retired justice shall be formed for settling land disputes. This commission, in addition to settle disputes of lands of the rehabilitated tribal refugees, shall have fullest power for cancellation of ownership of those lands and hills which have been so far illegally settled and occupied. No appeal can be made against the judgment of this commission and decision of this commission shall be final. This (arrangement) shall be applicable in case of fringe land also.
5. This commission shall be set up with the following members:
 - (a) Retired justice;
 - (b) Circle Chief (concerned);
 - (c) Chairman of the Regional Council/representative;
 - (d) Divisional Commissioner/Additional Commissioner;
 - (e) Hill District Council Chairman (concerned).
6.
 - (a) The term of the commission shall be three years. But the term of it can be extended in consultation with the Regional Council.
 - (b) Commission shall settle disputes according to the existing rules, customs and usages of Chittagong Hill Tracts.
7. The tribal refugees who received loan from the government but could not use them properly due to conflicting situation shall be exempted with the interests.
8. Allotment of lands for rubber plantation and other purposes: All the non-tribals and non locals who were given in settlement of lands for rubber plantation and other purposes but had not implemented any projects within the past 10 years or had not utilized their lands properly, settlement of these lands shall be cancelled.
9. The government shall allot additional fund, on priority basis, with an aim to implement more number of projects in CHT. New projects formulated with an aim of making necessary superstructures for development in the area, shall be implemented on priority basis and the government shall provide fund [sic] for these purposes. The government shall, having consideration about the environment in the region, encourage developing tourism for tourists from the country and abroad.
10. Quota reservation and scholarships: Until development equal to other region of the country the government shall continue reservation of quota system in government services and educational institutions for the tribals. With an aim to this purpose, the government shall grant more scholarships for the tribal students in the educational institution. The government shall provide necessary scholarships for research works and receiving higher education in abroad.

11. The government and elected representative shall make efforts to maintain separate culture and tradition of the tribals. The government in order to develop the tribal cultural activities at the national level it shall provide necessary patronization and assistance.
12. The *Jana Sambati Samiti* shall submit to the government the lists of its all members including the armed ones and the arms and ammunition under its possession and control within 45 days of signing this agreement.
13. The government and the *Jana Sambati Samiti* jointly shall determine the date and place for depositing arms within the 45 days of signing this agreement. After determination of date and place for depositing arms by the members included in the list of the *Jana Sambati Samiti* the government shall ensure security for return of JSS members and their family members to normal life.
14. The government shall declare amnesty for the members who shall deposit their arms and ammunition on the scheduled date. The government shall withdraw the cases against whom cases have been lodged.
15. If anyone fails to deposit arms on the scheduled date the government shall take lawful measures against him.
16. After the return of all JSS members to normal life general amnesty shall be given to them and the permanent residents who were involved in the activities of the JSS.
 - (a) In order to providing rehabilitation to all returnee JSS members a lump sum of Taka 50,000/- shall be given to each family.
 - (b) All the JSS members including the armed ones against whom cases have been lodged, warrant of arrest and police circular for apprehension issued and punishment has been sentenced/inflicted in the absence, after surrendering of arms and return to normal life all the cases, warrants of arrest, police circulars and punishment sentenced in the absence against them shall be exempted as soon as possible. If JSS members are detained in the jails they also shall be released.
 - (c) Similarly after surrendering of arms and return to normal life no cases can be lodged, warrant issued and punishment inflicted against anyone only for the reason that he was a JSS member.
 - (d) All the members of the JSS who took loans from various banks and organizations of the government but could not utilize them properly those loans including the interests shall be exempted.
 - (e) The JSS members who were posted in the services of the government or government institutions they shall be reinstated in their own posts and services and the JSS members and their family members shall be given appointment in accordance with their competence. In this case, the rule of the government for relaxation of age shall be followed.
 - (f) The JSS members shall be provided bank loans on easier terms and conditions to give assistance for cottage industry, horticulture etc. self-employment activities.
 - (g) The children of JSS members shall be provided educational facilities and their certificates received from foreign educational Boards and institutions shall be taken as valid.
17. After signing the agreement between the government and the *Jana Sambati Samiti* and immediately after the return of the JSS members to normal life all the temporary camps of military, *Ansar* and Village Defense Party shall be taken back to permanent installations except the Border Security Force (BDR) and permanent cantonments (3 at the 3 District HQs. and *Alikadam, Ruma and Digbinala*) by phases and with this in view, time limit shall be determined. In case of deterioration of law and order situation, natural calamity and such other works the army can be deployed under the civil administration like all other parts in the country as per necessary laws and rules.

- In this case, Regional Council may, according to necessity or time, request the proper authority for the purpose of getting assistance.
18. Permanent residents of CHT, on priority basis to the tribals, shall be appointed to all posts of officers and employees at all levels of government, semi-government, council offices and autonomous bodies in CHT.
Provided that in case of non-availability of qualified candidate among the permanent residents of CHT for a particular post, appointment in that post may be made on deputation from the government for a term of certain period.
19. A ministry on Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs shall be established by appointing a Minister from among the tribals. An Advisory Council shall be formed to assist this ministry with the persons stated below:
- (a) Minister on CHT Affairs;
 - (b) Chairman/representative, Regional Council;
 - (c) Chairman/representative, Rangamati Hill District Council;
 - (d) Chairman/representative, Bandarban Hill District Council;
 - (e) Chairman/representative, Khagrachari Hill District Council;
 - (f) Member of Parliament, Rangamati;
 - (g) Member of Parliament, Khagrachari;
 - (h) Member of Parliament, Bandarban;
 - (i) Chakma Raja;
 - (j) Bohmong Raja;
 - (k) Mong Raja;
 - (l) Three members from non-tribal permanent residents of Hilly areas nominated by the government from three Hill Districts.

This agreement is framed as above in Bengali language and is done and signed in Dhaka on the date of 02 December, 1997 as per 18 *Agrabayan* 1404 Bengali year.

<p>On behalf of the inhabitants of Chittagong Hill Tracts SD/- (Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma) President <i>Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sambati Samiti</i></p>	<p>On behalf of the government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh SD/- (Abul Hasanat Abdullah) Convener Hill Tracts Affairs, government of Bangladesh</p>
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